

The Royal Engineers Association

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

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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20 October 2020

THE MINUTES OF 52th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION HELD IN RE HQ, Brompton Barracks and online on 09th OCTOBER 2020

1. Presidents Opening Address

Attendees
: 41
delegates
23
members
11
Trustees,
Controller
Asst Controller

Good morning everybody. Welcome to the AGM, it's rather an unusual AGM, I hope it's the only one we run like this. We're doing our best to socially distance where we are, but we did feel it was appropriate for the presenters to come into an insular room to present to you, that which we do at each AGM. It's a great shame that we're not meeting, but so be it. I don't think I'll

dwell on that anymore. A couple of things that will be different this year..., with your agreement, what I intend to do, is when it comes to proposing and seconding, we're going to use the list of attendees. And I'll run through the numbers of whom we've got.

But we're going to use attendees and pick a proposer and a seconder, so as long as that's okay. I'll then leave the mics open for five to ten seconds, where I'll unmute everybody. If anyone's got something to say which specifically says that they don't agree...? I don't think we can afford opinions, to say it's a good thing to do or not a good thing to do.

If you don't agree, then please say so. If not, then we'll just move on. So we use basically what you might call silent [unclear] and I hope that means that you're in agreement. So welcome to everybody, we have more than we would normally have at the AGM today. We've got 11 board trustees, and you're all very welcome.

And the non-execs as well, so thank you very much indeed for all you do on my behalf, and indeed on your behalf, you trustees. And we've got about 60 branch delegates attending from the 106 or so branches that we've got. And we're up in the 80s in terms of overall attendance. Which is, as I say, more than we normally have.

Around the room, just so that you know, you won't be able to see them all, but we've got the Corps Colonel Matt Quare Andy Craig, Chairman of Benevolence and Chairman of the REA as well. And myself. Chris Davis, who runs the Finance Committee as you well know. Ken Kirk, the Controller and Ian George, Assistant Controller But that's who's in the room on your behalf as it were. Ken will take the minutes. It is being recorded, but only I suspect to help Ken write the minutes down range. And I don't expect we will retain this recording then going forward, it will just be used for minutes and then the transcript will be taken. Just so that you're aware. We have had apologies from one, sorry, from Jane Thompson who is the non-exec director.

And Jane, very ably, represents that part of the sector which is things like Alcoholics Anonymous, prisons and those types of welfare facilities that we as a charity and a benevolence organisation plug into. So Jane sadly can't be with us today. We've turned off all your microphones, so I'm afraid that I am on send, or we are on send and you are on listen.

There are a number that can comment and I think there is a message facility

off to the side that you can use if you so wish. And we can see those messages as they're going on, so please feel free to put those messages up, and we can respond to them as and when. All trustees and representatives have received copies of the papers, and I think that's the case, but I'm reliably informed that that is true.

And the agenda has been distributed, which we've got in front of us. The first five agenda items today are classified as ordinary business, so everybody can vote on them. But as I say, we've gone through that process already. But what it does mean is that everybody has the opportunity to flag up if they've got an issue with that particular agenda item, when we go to the five to ten second time strategically.

The rest of them are delegates only. So as last year, we will do any other business, so if you have any, please send it in through the notes, and if we can get to them, we will go through them. I'm assuming that we ought to have covered most of the agenda items, most of the issues, because we've got it on the agenda. But if not, please put it in the AOB.

2. To confirm the Minutes of the 51st Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 12 October 2019

The first order of business is really to accept the minutes, which reflect the meeting that we had this time last year, and it seems so long ago, this time last year. But essentially, those minutes have been distributed. I have to say, I have personally read them and I don't have an issue with their content. But just in case, are there any amendments that anybody wishes to make? One amendment to change a name from Ted to Kevin Bazely.

Meeting approved the minutes

Proposer Eric Hargreaves
Seoconder Larry Inge

Matters arising from the Minutes of the 51st Annual General meeting

In terms of matters arising, there are no matters arising.

3. To receive the Board of Trustees 52nd Annual Report to the AGM

The 52nd annual report to the AGM, which has been prepared by REA HQ this the second report in this format and it contains a wealth of information relating to the Association and the work being carried out as well as the Annual Accounts and required corporate reporting.

4. To Receive the Annual Report of the Honorary Treasurer and Financial Statements of for the REA for the period 01 January to 31 December 2020

. Morning everybody. I have submitted my report, which you will have seen. I don't intend to go through that in great detail. The first thing to note that there's quite a lot of doom and gloom and despondency over the last year with Brexit and this meeting is principally talking about last year, 2019.

And then this year of course we've had the pandemic, so there's a lot of doom and gloom and despondency this year as well. But I'm happy to say that the REA's financial position remains in good health. And that's thanks to the Corp Treasurer, Ian Sidebottom, who does a lot of nimble work on our behalf.

And also because the people who control our investments, BlackRock, continue to spread our investments so that we continue to gain money from that. And in fact, if you look at the financial statement in the annual report, you will see that our fixed assets investment has actually gone up. In the report, £12 million, 2019, at this point in time.

We're looking at reserves of something like £13 million, which is why we're looking very healthy for the foreseeable future. I won't go into the figures of the budget, but we've remained pretty well, to budget. You'll notice that the benevolence project was slightly overspent last year. But setting a budget as you know, is an intelligent estimation, otherwise known as guesswork.

And we're not too fussed about going slightly over that budget. The President's already mentioned our commitments.

The commitments that we've taken over from the Royal Engineers Central Charitable Trust amount to about £120,000 a year and we hope that everybody will accept that they come under the general heading of Esprit De

Corps. And so it's right that those expenditures should have been taken on by the REA rather than from the RECTD.

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The welfare grants, you will remember a couple of years ago when we first instituted the welfare grant, we decided to allow £250,000 available a couple of years ago for units and branches to bid against. In fact, we didn't get anywhere near that sort of expenditure in the first year.

Now that we've trialed it for a couple of years, it seems about the point to set a level going forward of £100,000 a year for welfare grant initiatives. And in 2019, we came in under that budget, as you might expect. But we're now getting units and branches putting together sensible, realistic bids, and actually there's quite a wide spread of welfare benefits being distributed by the welfare grant.

So going forward, we plan to set aside £100,000 a year to continue welfare grants. RBLI was mentioned, and a main reason for splitting up the

investment, rather than giving them £2 million in one go, but to spread it over stages, was that we could manage that spend of current income.

Rather than taking a chunk out of our investment funds, our investments for that expenditure. They are happy with the receipt of £220,000 a year. The Finance Committee is happy with that and we are happy to not take a sizeable chunk of our investments at this time.

When the whole world knows, the return on investments is challenging, shall we say. Benevolence is a key part of our expenditure, and as Andy had already said, we've got a budget of about £300,000 a year. We were slightly over the budget in 2019.

But as Andy pointed out, we do actually spend something like £1 million on benevolence, when you take into account what we get taking care of each of the benevolence requests. We very often have a share of that request paid for by the ADF and by the Royal British Legion. We pay both of them a fixed sum a year as a donation. We get many more times what we pay them in terms of them paying that gap.

So our beneficiaries are actually benefitting up to about a £1 million a year from the benevolence at the REA. I'll take any questions if anybody has anything. Brilliant, no questions. Thank you.

5. To note the appointment of Kreston Reeves LLP as the Auditors of the Association

It's done by the Chief Royal Committee. And the Chief Royal Committee in July appointed Kreston Reeves LLP as our auditors of all Corp charities. And your board had that report included and we as a board all approved that appointment.

6. Appointment of Honorary Treasurer

Chris should be due to step down in November - currently could we ask him to stay for another few months.

And Chris has been the Honorary Treasurer for some considerable time and we're incredibly grateful for all the work that he does leading the team that he's got. And what I would like to do is to propose that we ask Chris to remain as the Honorary Treasurer for another year. And we formally have to do that at an AGM.

So I'm going to propose that as the President, if that's okay with everybody. And I expect I could get the Chairman to second it. Chris, you don't have an

option, but you do have an option obviously. Is that okay with you first and foremost?

7. Update on Corps Activities form Corps SM

Update on Corps current deployment and activities

Generals, distinguished guests, the Corp of Royal Engineers update 2020. It has definitely been a challenging year for the Corp, however, as always, we have adapted and continued to see success on operations in the UK and abroad.

Whether dispersed across the UK following government direction, been integral to the UKs COVID-19 response supporting the NHS establishing the Nightingale Hospitals, and fundamental in the design of mobile testing facilities. However, I can still report across the various formations as we speak, Sappers are still deployed on 18 operations or training missions around the globe. With troops committed to overseas operations around the world, the following is a flavour of some of those deployments.

The United Nations mission in South Sudan has sadly come to an end. This saw over 200 RE troops return from deployment on Operation Trenton. The final taskforce was made up from troops from 75 and 36 Engineer regiments. Who not only had to focus on the collapse and return of all personnel and resources, but also the development of refugee facilities and other aid related construction projects?

The threat in Eastern Europe continues. The Corp has 97 personnel from 220 Engineer regiment currently deployed in the region on Op Cabrit, conducting multinational live exercises from Battle Group level upwards. In March, elements of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment returned safely from Op Horral after successful supporting the 2 Para Battle Group in Kabul in Afghanistan.

12 (Force Support) Engineer group remains highly committed across the UK and overseas. The past year has been high tempo and 12 Group have delivered across the globe on multiple operations and tasks. At home, the Group have been at the tip of the spear for supporting the UK government response to COVID-19, assisting with the construction of the Nightingale

Hospitals and generating mobile testing units to provide the required uplift in case of incapacity.

Deployments over the last 12 months include the Americas, Canada and The Falklands, in Europe, Cyprus, in Africa, Mali, South Sudan and Kenya. And in the Middle East and Asia, Oman, Afghanistan and Iraq. 25 (Close Support) Engineer Group, the last 12 months has been marked with three specific phases. Pre COVID normal jogging, with all well-established exercising operations across the globe.

An Op Rescript period, when all troops were withdrawn back to the UK less those deployed in Estonia as part of the enhanced hold presence. And now a new normal, which sees the training focus on the group move from BATUS in Canada to Germany. At the height of the pandemic, large swathes of the group were held at readiness and they are currently awaiting for the call to come again this winter as figures slowly increase. 29 EOD and Search Group remains extensively committed, delivering EOD, search, military working dog and ammunition technician support across the globe in support of defence.

With 2A Engineer Regiment, countless CBRN now under command, delivery of specialist counter CBRN is already included in the already extensive mission set. Whilst overseas activity is reduced due to COVID-19 pandemic, UK MACA operations have not dropped, and in places, have seen an increase. Preparation continues to support the UK's contribution to the UN mission in Mali due to deploy in late 2020.

Further elements of the group remain prepared and trained at readiness to support formations across defence with regular exercise and training events to prepare and assure them. As always, activity continues in working on ways to improve how to carry out the role from procuring new capabilities to innovation at unit level. Major changes this year now include providing EOD support to the RAF following a reorganisation of how Defence delivers EOD. 170 (Infra Support) Group have had a tremendous year, continuing to support operations across the world, including Lithuania, the UAE, Oman, USA, Mali, Iraq and Afghanistan to name but a few.

It is here in the UK where they are provided the biggest impact. Embedded in the NHS planning teams from the start to advise and help design the much needed infrastructure to accommodate the extra influx of COVID related cases, including London, Manchester, Harrogate, Exeter and Bristol Nightingale Hospitals. The Louisa Jordan Hospital in Glasgow and providing

medical gasses support to the Cardiff and Nightingale Hospital.

They have also been involved in flood and disaster relief operations, including deployment of the Infrastructure Reaction Force to Beirut following the devastating explosion. 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, the first part of 2020 saw 9 Para Squadron maintaining readiness in support of 16 Brigade, conducting routine training in squadron level exercises.

515 was deployed to Kenya from January to March with the 3 Para Battle Group to construct a temporary landing zone and successfully execute both para-drop and air land seals in preparation for mountain readiness. April to September saw small groups of regiments deployed to Cyprus under the command and coordination of 51 Para Squadron to complete a number of construction tasks, all completed within the COVID lockdown.

Pre summer leave saw the regiment conduct in house training across all disciplines with the focus being to develop rock barracks as a legitimate and sustainable training estate. Much hard work has seen transformational works across camp and now nearly accommodate the whole spectrum of combat engineer, driving training and plant specialist serials so that they are not dependent on other training availability in order to conduct routine activity.

The first week back after summer leave saw the R1 elements of the regiment stood down. This was a joint effort with the Ukrainian armed forces that saw 250 soldiers from 16 Brigade mount from the UK and fly to the Ukraine, conducting para drop and air land serials in the biggest readiness test for deployment in over 20 years. It served to prove the capability as a useful and unusable asset with strategic reach and has been considered a resounding success.

Another exceptionally busy year for 24 Commando, providing engineer support to 3 Commando brigade. Over the past 12 months, the commando Sappers have been involved in the following activities. Went into deployment [unclear] in Norway, COVID response planning support to Op Rescript and Broadshare. Op Caribbean with crisis response troops trials and experimentation in line with the future commando force model.

The next 12 months sees the Commando Sappers in Cyprus, supporting 40 Commando, California, Scotland, Greece and Winter Deployment 21. Finally, next year is the 50th anniversary of the Commando Sappers at Chivenor. Please spread the word, and I'm sure the Commando branch can send all

further details out through our HQ REA. Brute Corp strength is at 91% with recruiting across the army steadily on the rise. The current climate has also had an impact on those people looking to terminate their service, with a large majority, approximately 150, deciding to remain, and over 90 rejoin applications being registered.

With the wide and varied career opportunities across several capabilities and specialism's, the Corp continues to be a very attractive offer. The offer of continuous professional development and professional accreditation by InstRE to the serving and veteran communities has grown in popularity. With training our excellent people will always remain challenging, especially when considering how well armed they are in terms of professional accreditation and qualifications.

Sappers are desirable candidates for our competitors outside the military. We must be smart, as an organisation, if we want to hold on to them. RE CPD unit grants and REA welfare grants go a long way in improving the lived experience of the serving Sapper and many are taking opportunities to better themselves. Presenting the REA polo shirts within Phase 1 establishments has been very well received. Polo shirts are still being given to each new member of the Sapper family by the permanent staff.

However, we hope to get REA members into Fulbright, Winchester and Harrogate at the earliest opportunities. Having spoken to a number of trainees, we are the envy of other badges and they truly enjoy the interaction with REA members. Sport.

Unfortunately due to the COVID restrictions, a lot of Corp sport and AT activities have been unable to take place. However, prior to lockdown, the Corp enjoyed a number of key sporting achievements. The Corp are the current Rugby Union Masters Champions, beating the gunners in a hard fought contest. The Inter Corp Winter Tennis League saw the Sappers successful in retaining the title for another year.

This follows on from a recent regain in the Corner Cup, an annual grudge match, again, against the Royal Artillery. Blues were again the dominant force across eight disciplines of winter sports with a fantastic season in early 2020, winning the Army Championships in Alpine and being crowned Inter Corp Champions for the third year running. A number of the team also being selected for the army team.

Unfortunately, the outlook for this winter season does not look so good.

Only just, we managed to squeeze in a hugely successful Corp boxing championships in Chatham, a fantastic evening which saw 1RSE Regiment crowned Corp boxing champions. At elite level, the Corp has five athletes employed on the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme, an incredible number, noting that the army liability currently sits at 51 fleets in total. Unfortunately, the much anticipated sporting highlight of the year, the RE Games, due to be held at Marne Barracks in June was cancelled.

However, the date is already set in June 21 for Sapper Games 21, which will make its debut at Rock Barracks, home of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment and 28 Engineer Regiment. The Corp continues to drive the sport for all ethos's for all serving soldiers and officers, and hopefully we will have the full sporting calendar back up and running as soon as possible.

Lastly, the Salty Sappers, the Corps entry in the Telescope Whiskey Atlantic Rowing Challenge, predominantly a team from 21 Engineer Regiment. The team are sponsored by the REA and are currently training to take part in the race in 2022.

Please follow them and give them your support on social media. Going on to social media, the Corp maintains a strong presence across all social media platforms.

The Corp headquarters run its very own You Tube channel. I strongly recommend you access the site and save within your favourites. The latest video features operational updates, sports and AT, when they're available, plus many other streams. It's the fastest and most up to date point of reference for information on the Corp online.

The Headquarters also run a number of social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. As my last AGM in the post of Corp Sergeant Major, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all in the REA for their support throughout my tenure and look forward to [unclear] involved when I move on to my next post.

The REA is an integral part of the Sapper family with a vital role in not only supporting those still serving in the Corp, but also each other. With World Mental Health Day tomorrow, please pick up the phone, send a text or write an email to that Sapper you haven't spoken to for a while. I'm sure they will appreciate the gesture. We are one Sapper family, once a Sapper, always a Sapper. Sir that concludes the Corp of Royal Engineers update for 2020. Thank you.

8. A short Presentation on how our support can help - Sam Taylor

Brief report on how Sam has been assisted by the REA Gabriel Fund and Wings for Warriors

I was in the Royal Engineers from 2007 to 2013. I served in 51 Parachute Squadron

23. I was injured on Op Eric 13, I was shot between my [unclear] carrier and my helmet and it sort of ricocheted past my neck and came out my neck at the front, which damaged by right arm quite a bit.

That led to a medical discharge and I didn't really settle after that. I sort of took to travelling for a few years and yes, I never really settled. And an ex Sapper, in fact, sent me a link for a charity called Wings for Warriors. And I looked into it and it was for injured veterans, and the charity offered to train you up to commercial standard pilot. So yes, I applied and after some interviews and testing I got in.

And it's been great. It's been great ever since. About a year ago, I started my PPL, of which I'm coming almost to the end of right now. I've got a couple more tests and then I'll have my private pilot's license and they'll move me down to Bournemouth where I'll start the commercial side of things, which I'm really excited for, really excited for. Yes, all this has been enabled, as you can guess, it's a very expensive endeavour, training to be a pilot.

But the charity is funding it, which we applied to the Royal Engineers Association for and some other charities. And got a great grant from the Gabriel Fund, so it's a massive, massive thank you. It's been really good. Yes, thank, thanks to Wings for Warriors for initiating and running the programme. So it's been a great opportunity.

They also got us in front of 2A earlier this year, and we went through an application with 2A and a few interviews, and they have offered us positions as first officers.

Three of the lads and myself, which will probably got into our roles in late 2022 when we've completed our commercial training, so it's absolutely life

changing. Absolutely life changing, I've got a steady future ahead and a great job getting to travel the world, which should be fantastic.

So yes, thanks to everyone involved. And the charity wanted me to make a note of, if any of you know any other medical discharge Sappers, get them to apply. If you think it's suitable for them and they'd like to apply, get them to apply, because the charity's always looking to train up more injured servicemen. But yes, thank you very much to the Royal Engineers Association and the Gabriel Fund, thank you.

10. AOB

None

11. Date of next meeting Saturday 09 October 2021 at the VSC followed by the Annual Dinner

12. Presidents Closing Statement

The date of the next meeting is Saturday the 9th of October 2021.

We've booked the usual venue, the Victory Services Club, and then to be followed by the Annual Dinner, that's all booked and arranged. But we'll see whether that actually comes to fruition down range. But that's our plans at the moment. Moving on to some closing remarks, can I just, again, reiterate my thanks to everyone for attending.

It's heartening to see just how many people are really interested in the Association and play an active part that for me is great to see. Our primary role is a benevolent charity. It's to support our Sapper families, serving soldiers, veterans, families etc.

And the reason that we get together, the reason that we have these meetings, go out for beers in the good old days, that sort of thing, is that that function provides the eyes and ears for us to make sure that those that are in need, for whatever reason that may be, be it age, be it financial worries, be it accidents that have happened, be it service issues that have taken place, whatever, it doesn't matter.

Physical or mental, whatever, it's about helping people that have actually signed on the dotted line to join the Corp. The moment that they've done that, as far as we are all concerned, they're in. We've just got to keep our eyes and ears open, and that's why we exist. For me, that's a really important

point to remember.

Funding a benevolent charity is important, we simply cannot rely on BlackRock, I believe it is, I can't remember [unclear] or BlackRock, to keep churning out more and more money from the £11, 12 or 13 million that we have. So please keep up the good work at the unit level in terms of, when you're doing charities, do think of the Association.

Remember that as a charity, as an Association, we give to the British Legion. We actually provide money from the REA to the British Legion, it's a symbiotic relationship. So have a think about who and which charity you wish to support in the first instance. Legacies, legacies are important things for us all to remember about.

Some of us are getting to that age where we're probably working that through. We're always grateful for them, we do get some, and we do get a number. So please think about those sorts of things as well. Can I thank Ken, Ian, and the whole of the REA HQ, I think they've done excellent work this year in some really difficult circumstances.

Now I know, as Chris said, this is about the year ending December 2019, but we have the AGM sort of at the end of 2020. So I will include the COVID area and the COVID timelines. But things have changed significantly, we've all experienced working differently. The REA HQ team taken on board technology and they've taken on board new ways of working. And as the service that we receive from the Benevolence Committee or the Finance Committee has actually been seamless.

So our heartfelt thanks to the committees and staff. I've already thanked Chris, I've already thanked Andy. They are stalwarts of the Association who do key functions from a Trustee's perspective. So again, thanks to you both and again, both of your committees as well. If you could pass that on, I'd be very grateful.

Not forgetting you guys out there, the Association, the branches, the hard work. That's the unseen donkey work that's got to be done. So I am very grateful that I have a structure below that makes my life really easy. And more importantly, we've got a structure below that enables us to give out £1 million worth of benevolence, and that's down to the folk that have put themselves out and are on the screen, or some of them are on the screen in front of me here.

So thank you to you, and please pass it on to your various committees in the branches as well. The management committee, the recruiting committee, all do significant work. And of course, your new board again, well it's always, are in attendance today. So on behalf of me, thank you for putting your shoulder to the wheel.

There's a lot of responsibility being on a charity board, you sign up to be responsible for quite an amount of money and some decisions that you are responsible for taking. So I am grateful for that.

And it would be remiss of me, those of you that know Charles Holman may know that Charles is, I think he put in his email, after a short tour of duty with the Corp, I don't know how, it must be over 40 years or so. Charles is now retiring. The moment he sent out an email saying he's retiring, he got sent four or five emails back, not from me, from people like me saying, don't forget, you've got to do this, this and this.

Actually, I wouldn't have told anyone and just gone. So can we formally record our thanks to Charles for a significant amount of work that he has done for us all. Okay, that's it. Thank you all for attending. Hopefully next year it will be different. If not, we made it happen and the only thing that I would say is, as I say at every AGM, just have a think of the one individual that you've not heard from and give them a bell.

09th October 2020

Chief Executive
Mr Kenneth Kirk

Minutes Approved

Dated

President
Major General Alastair Dickinson CBE