

**Royal Engineers Association South Western Group**

**22 Engineer Regiment**

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20 Mar 17

**MINUTES OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION SOUTH WESTERN GROUP  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – SATURDAY 18 MARCH 2018**

Committee:	Lt Col D J Bickers MBE RE	Group Director
	Maj (Retd) P Gill MBE RE	Deputy Group Director
	WO1 (RSM) P C Carney RE	Group Secretary

Members Present: 36 members from 10 branches

Meeting Opened: 1145hrs

**PRE-MEETING PRESENTATION**

A short presentation was conducted by SSM 52 AES on 52 AES recent deployment to Iraq.

**ITEM 1 – OPENING ADDRESS BY THE GROUP DIRECTOR**

1. The Group Director introduced himself and welcomed all attendees to the 2017 AGM. The Group Director addressed attendees on the following:

- a. An update on 8 Engineer Brigade including current missions and tasks.
- b. The future of the Corps as the Army develops Army 2020 Refine.
- c. The Corps and the REA had an excellent year celebrating Sapper 300 including family days, guest nights and much more. Specifically for the group the Weymouth Branch Cocktail Party (also marked the Branch's centenary) and the Taunton Branch music festival.
- d. The focus of spending of Group funds in 2016 was Sapper 300 celebrations. This year the Director will aim to use the funds to support recruiting activity at branch level aiming to recruit younger members and advertise what is on offer.

**ITEM 2 – CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2. The Group Secretary confirmed there were no outstanding matters from the 2016 AGM. It was proposed that the Minutes from the previous meeting be accepted with a minor alteration agreed by all present.

Proposed by: Father ER Littler

Seconded by: Mr Scarfe

Vote: Carried.

### **ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 2016 AGM**

3. The President commented on the fact that the number of Branches represented at the REA AGM appeared to be dwindling. Branch delegates attending the AGM make up just 25% of the total number of Branches. He noted there were Branch members from a number of Branches attending the dinner but not represented at the REA AGM. He hoped for better attendance and representation at the next meeting.

4. 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 2017 AGM.

5. Members of the Group stated that attendance numbers are dwindling as there is little opportunity to engage during the REA AGM and that it seems more like a rubber stamping exercise.

6. The Director explained that any branch issues should be directed to him (through the Group Secretary) so he can aggregate issues and provide a Group response to REA HQ.

### **ITEM 4 – RECRUITMENT**

7. Recruitment remains a concern due to a general lack of younger members joining both whilst serving and on discharge. RCMOs are being encouraged to signpost leavers to their local REA Branch and to issue Welcome Packs. The other area of specific concern is the lack of DE Officers joining which the Corps Col is addressing.

8. REA HQ has now purchased two REA branded "Pop Up Tents" and Banners for use at appropriate events. The tents will primarily be held in Chatham and are available via the REA Controller. The Plymouth Branch explained how the use of an REA tent during Plymouth Armed Forces Day 2016 had led to the recruitment of 30 people to their branch, this however led to a cost to the branch of £300 to collect and return it to Chatham. The Director explained that this will be brought to the attention of the recruiting committee.

**'Post-Meeting Note: The Director raised this issue in a letter to the REA controller dated 20 Mar 17.'**

9. Members requested uplift in recruiting aids such as stationery, key rings and stickers with the REA branding to support recruiting at events. The only branding currently on offer is out of date tax disk holders. **'Post-Meeting Note: This was also addressed in the Director's letter dated 20 Mar 17.'**

10. The Deputy Director Maj (Retd) P Gill MBE RE has resigned making his role available. The Director has distributed a letter requesting a replacement; it includes the roles and responsibilities and the deadline for applications.

11. The Director explained that recruitment is a branch activity. How each branch is managed will have a positive or negative impact on its attractiveness to new members and therefore on its number of new joiners. The Group will provide support where necessary.

#### **ITEM 5 – GROUP FUND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

12. The Group Secretary announced that the South West Group Fund was worth £1665.75 as at 15 Mar 17. He emphasised the need for branch members to claim their travel expenses for attending the meeting.

13. The Group Secretary explained that as the fund remained healthy at the end of the financial year a Crystal Sapper 300 water jug has been purchased for each branch to commemorate the special occasion. The jugs were distributed after the meeting.

14. It was then proposed that the Statement of Accounts be accepted.

Proposed by: Mr K Glover

Seconded by: Mr D Quinn

Vote: Carried.

15. The Group Secretary stated that the majority of branches returned their 2016 Annual Branch financial summaries to HQ REA in good time. This must to be maintained in 2017.

#### **ITEM 6 - GROUP STANDARD BEARERS' COMPETITION AND ANNUAL BBQ**

16. Due to the Regiment hosting the RE Games there will be no Families Day. The next Standard Bearers' Competition will be tied into the BBQ on Sat 8 Jul 17 timings and details will be distributed in April 2017.

17. The National Standard Bearers Competition will be held on the Corps Memorial Weekend on 15-17 Sep 17.

#### **ITEM 7 – POINTS RAISED IN ADVANCE BY BRANCHES**

18. There were no points raised in advance.

#### **ITEM 8 – BRANCH ORAL BRIEFS**

19. A representative from each of the following branches gave a branch update to the meeting:

- a. **Andover and Winchester.** Branch membership is 37 with an average attendance of 18. A branch member was lost and two new members joined. Monthly meetings are held in 26 Engr Regt's WOs' & Sgts' Mess who also support with a serving Warrant Officer as the Branch Secretary. A thank you was made to both the

CO and RSM as holding meetings in a military environment has really helped to increase attendance. The Standard has been paraded three times and the Branch donated to worthwhile causes including the RE Museum and RE Benevolent Fund. Regular engagement remains with both 22 & 26 Engr Regts, this has proved beneficial to all parties including direct support to a serving soldier of 26 Engr Regt. The branch remains engaged with 'The Victims in Action Charity' which is run primarily for injured ex Sappers.

b. **Bath and West Wilts.** Branch membership is 109 with an average attendance of 30. Numbers remain high because they make themselves seen in the local community. The Branch maintains regular meetings both during the day and in the evening. Functions include Branch Spring and Christmas Dinners and attendance to all Group events. The Branch supports a host of charities including raising £7660.86 manning the Trowbridge RBL Poppy stand. The Branch Standard has been busy having been raised at funerals, memorial parades and remembrance services.

c. **Bournemouth and District.** Not represented, but sent a report detailing: 67 life members, and four associates (including 10 members transferred from the disbanded New Forest Branch and one from the Weymouth Branch). The Branch holds 12 meetings a year followed by a demonstration or talk and a biannual fish & chips supper with bingo or skittles. Members laid wreaths at Poole and Bournemouth on Remembrance Day and the Branch Standard has been paraded 5 times at local events and funerals. In recent months three guards of honour have been carried out at the funerals of members. The Albert Hicks Award was presented to Spr Keating from 22 Engr Regt in Perham Down.

d. **Bridgewater.** Branch membership is 30 with an average attendance of 14. Regular monthly meetings are held in the Sea Cadet Hall. Summer and Christmas lunch had 79 and 56 people attend respectively. The Standard has been raised on 9 occasions.

e. **New Forest.** Due to a lack of volunteers for Committee roles the Branch has now disbanded. The Branch Standard was laid up in the Abbey Church Beaulieu on 22 Jan 17 and a final lunch held on 7 Feb 17. Members who wished to remain as active REA members have moved between Southampton & District and Bournemouth & District branches.

f. **Newton Abbot and District.** The Branch currently has 33 Active members, one has recently passed away and members have been lost to the Plymouth Branch. Flash lunches (which are free to attendees) maintain active membership. The Standard is raised regularly.

g. **Plymouth.** Branch membership is 90 with an average attendance of 25. During its first year recruitment has been a priority, this has been done with FaceBook (30 new members) and showing a presence at Plymouth Armed Forces Day 2016 (30 new members). It had the Standard re-dedicated at HMS Raleigh, attended other branch events and national events. The Standard was raised for funerals, remembrance parades and at Chatham for the Queen's visit.

- h. **Southampton and District.** Branch membership is 35 with an average attendance of five. Members from the Branch attended the Weymouth Branch Centenary Cocktail party.
- i. **Swindon.** Branch membership is 38 with an average attendance of 12. Monthly meetings are held in casual manner to encourage recruitment. The Branch has attended all Group activities and branch days out. The Standard has been raised at funerals, remembrance parades and at the Double Hills Memorial Parade.
- j. **Taunton.** Branch membership is 16 with an average attendance of 13. Taunton Branch is a social branch that has attended seasonal lunches at various branches, Group events and organised a Sapper 300 Musical Concert attended by Maj Gen Urch CBE (raising over £1600 spread across four different charities). The Standard was raised at several remembrance parades and the Mayor making ceremony.
- k. **Truro and Cornwall.** Not represented, but sent a report detailing: 59 members, averaging nine per meeting. Attending events: Sea Sunday in Falmouth, Somme Memorial Parade in Bodmin and VJ Parade in Penryn.
- l. **Weymouth.** The branch has an average attendance of 16-20. The highlight for 2016 was a reception at the Nothe Fort to celebrate the Branch Centenary attended by 96 guests including nine previous Commandants of the Wyke Regis Training Area (WRTA). The Branch Standard Bearer won the SW Competition and was joint 2nd in the National Competition. The Navy (RNA) were hosted during the annual games evening at the WRTA and the year was finished with a great Christmas Dinner at the Weymouth Golf Club.
- m. **Armoured.** Not represented.
- n. **Commando.** Branch membership is now in excess of 500, however 34 members cannot complete membership until photos have been added. Over 120 members and guests attended the Branch AGM in Oct 2016. This was tied in with the unveiling ceremony of the 59 Indep Cdo Sqn Falklands Conflict Memorial Plaque at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) which was witnessed by over 170. A second plaque is hoped to be unveiled at the Commando Memorial Spean Bridge. In 2017 the Commando Engineer Reunion will be held on June at RMB Chivenor followed later in the year by the AGM and Dinner with additional activities such as Clay Pigeon Shooting, Golf and a visit to the NMA.

20. The Group Director thanked Branches for their updates.

## ITEM 9 - DATES OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

21. The forthcoming events were advertised:

- a. Group events:
  - (1) 8 Jul 17 Standard Bearers Competition and annual BBQ.
  - (2) 17 Mar 18 SWG AGM (provisional date).
- b. National events:

- |     |              |   |
|-----|--------------|---|
| (1) | 8 Jun 17     | Founder's Day – Royal Hospital Chelsea.                                     |
| (2) | 23-25 Jun 17 | Chilwell Veterans' weekend.   |
| (3) | 28-30 Jul 17 | Minley Veterans' weekend.   |
| (4) | 1 Sep 17     | Double Hills Memorial event.  |
| (5) | 15-17 Sep 17 | Corps Memorial Weekend including the National Standard Bearers Competition. |
| (6) | 14 Oct 17    | REA AGM and Annual Dinner.  |
| (7) | 15 Oct 17    | Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea.                                    |
| (8) | 9 Nov 17     | Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey.                                    |
| (9) | 12 Nov 17    | Remembrance Sunday.   |

#### **ITEM 10 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

22. Keith Glover attended REA management committee and reported on the change of criteria for the Badge of Merit nominations to including a new system that will 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.

23. It was proposed that Keith Glover remain the Group representative for the REA Management Committee for a further three years.

Proposed by: Father ER Littler

Seconded by: Mr S Smalldon

Vote: Carried.

24. The Weymouth Branch thanked the Group Director for the increased funding for the Sapper 300 / Centenary Cocktail Party.

#### **ITEM 11 - AWARDS**

25. The Award of The Badge of Merit was awarded to:

##### **a. George Elliott – Swindon Branch**

George Elliott joined the REA in 1990 becoming a member of the Swindon Branch in 1995. In 2000 he became the President of the Branch a position that he still holds today. He is the reserve Standard Bearer for the Branch, having attended several

repatriations in Royal Wootton Bassett. George has been pivotal in maintaining the status of the Branch and the welfare of its members through various difficulty situations in the past 21 years. He organises the Branch Annual Dinner an event that is well attended by members throughout the South West Group. For his support and dedication to the Royal Engineers Association George Elliott is awarded the Badge of Merit.

**b. Anthony Franklin – Newton Abbott & District Branch**

Mr Anthony Franklin was one of three ex Sappers in 2003 to form the Newton Abbott & District Branch of the REA, becoming the first Chairman a position that he still holds today. He has previously been the Branch Standard Bearer for 8 years serving the branch with distinction in several counties of the South West region. Anthony's enthusiasm promoting the branch and REA has encouraged close co-operation between branches in the South West Group. With regular high attendances to the branch seasonal lunches. He makes himself available to all branch members, ex Sapper and families who need help or advice, often signposting them to other service organisations. For his support and dedication to the Royal Engineers Association Anthony is awarded the Badge of Merit.

**ITEM 12 – CLOSING ADDRESS**

26. The Group Director thanked everyone for attending and encouraged attendance to the REA SW Group events by all branches to ensure a complete understanding of what are the group issues.

27. There being no further business the meeting closed at 1320.

28. Date of Next Meeting: 17 Mar 18.

*[Original Signed]*

*[Original Signed]*

P C Carney  
WO1 (RSM)  
SWG REA Secretary

D J Bickers MBE RE  
Lt Col  
SWG REA Director

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Controller HQ REA\*

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