



# The NetWorker

**Newsletter of the Pen & Sword Club**

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**Editor: Colonel Mike Peters**

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## **Making life easier- But no less dangerous**

One of the reasons your editor keeps working is the technology that makes life so much easier and successful for communicators.

I was impressed this month when checking through accounts of serving officers of Media Operations Group (V) to see work by Major Paul Smyth,

a public relations consultant based in Henley-on-Thames, reported in his local newspaper and then to see him featured in PR Week. Paul has served tours in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and is just back from Helmand where he was S02 Media Operations and is now based at Permanent Joint HQ. His PR Week interview appears later in this issue.

Contact with Paul, via e-mail, revealed just how much is available on the world wide web about the Army in its current deployments. Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr all have sites that portray the Army and there are blogs galore from serving soldiers. This rapid and world wide spread of news and facts about the Army differ so greatly from the experiences of most of our club members.

I recall those days when all we had in the way of equipment were hand-me-down, much battered Pentax cameras and the occasional call on a BAOR TV camera. As for vehicles and G10 equipment much was begged or borrowed and of dubious quality. Even our weapons were borrowed for annual practice and we were tacked-on to various headquarters from time to time. . Today it is pleasing to note the unit has its own permanent headquarters at the TA Centre in Kingston-upon-Thames; is fully equipped and the concept of the combat camera team, launched in our early days as a one per Brigade option in British Army of the Rhine, is now thriving and working.

There is little doubt that Media Operations has not only become more recognised than ever before but that it has, at last, become fashionable within the Army. There is now an Army School of Media Operations!

For anyone who wants to see what can be done by the enthusiastic MOG (V) officer take a look at <http://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news.php?id=36148> and you will soon be sucked into YouTube and clips from the front line.

There are a number of sites to visit and, if you find more, please let The NetWorker know. Try the following:

[www.flickr.com/photos/mediaops/sets](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mediaops/sets)  
[www.helmandblog.blogspot.com/](http://www.helmandblog.blogspot.com/)  
[www.twitter.com/MediaOps](https://twitter.com/MediaOps)

## Things just ain't what they used to be!

"We are nowadays so accustomed to uncensored real time live broadcasts via satellite links from almost anywhere in the world that it is easy to forget how different things were back in the early 1980s when the expansion of the TA Pool of Public Information Officers (TAPIOs) took place, writes Major John Boyes, the club's South East regional chairman..

"Had there been a TAPIO G10 truck to take on exercise, apart from the necessary tentage and domestic requirements, the 'professional equipment' would have consisted mainly of sheets of A4, typewriters, Nikon F3 cameras with plenty of 35 mm film stock (b&w of course), pens, pencils, Snowpake – lots of it for the digitally inept - etc, etc. 'Local boy' stories, many superficially the same were laboriously and repetitiously typed out individually, one after the other. Sometimes a photocopier would help, but only for a background article to specific coverage.

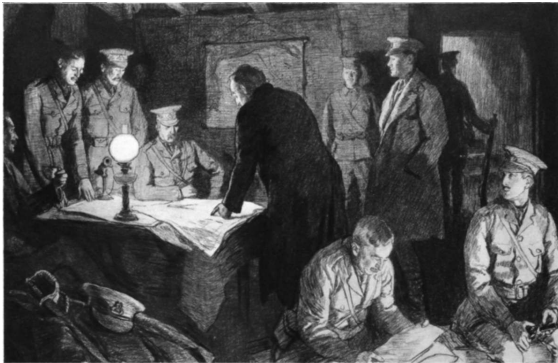
"Film was taken away to be processed and returned maybe a couple of days later and the story and photo sent by Royal Mail (albeit that it was a more reliable service back in those days) to the newspapers. P Info photographers, WO1 Bill Bain and S/Sgt Morris, covering the Army in Scotland Ski Championships were an ingenious pair. The P Info cell occupied a log cabin B&B somewhere in the wilds of Aberdeenshire. The bathroom was blacked out with blankets and the whole turned into a highly productive but impromptu darkroom.

"And then Major Bob Peedle was seen on deployment with a newly acquired state of the art Canon portable electronic typewriter. It could store two A4 pages of text which could be seen on a tiny screen – about twelve characters long – and corrected, modified and reworked. Overnight the production of local boy stories and press releases was transformed.

"The basic story could be stored and 'name rank and number' changed. Snowpake too was redundant. But as the author (having acquired the said model of typewriter) discovered, if it was left out in the overnight cold of a Scottish based exercise its meagre memory (by today's standards) would be erased if the temperature fell below freezing. It was not very soldier proof but it was a welcome development and the finished press release looked so much better.

"After that the relentless march of technology proceeded apace. On a training weekend at Land Command, S/Sgt Arthur Brown showed us how a photograph could be downloaded by telephone modem from the computers at Wilton. Capt Kevin Harvey showed us similar capability with Reuters equipment. Line by line it took about ten minutes, but amazing stuff nonetheless. Colour

too was beginning to supplant b&w. But mobile phones were still the size of a couple of house bricks.



***Well it wasn't quite like this!***

"On one of the ever popular MOG (V) annual camps in Cyprus, a colour photograph taken at the start of the 'O Group' was returned as a print within about five minutes. The age of the digital camera (still Nikons) had arrived but still with a hefty price tag above the scope of all but the most dedicated amateur photographers. And three megapixels was considered cutting edge capability.

"Concurrently of course the concept that 'the photo never lies' went out of the window – albeit, nonetheless, that our Soviet counterparts had for years airbrushed out any dissidence in their photographs as a matter of routine. Naturally the question of censorship was a popular topic of discussion, but realistically it had become 'what censorship'?"

"Fortunately MOG (V.) as always had the broad range of professional expertise on board to move with the times and it was not long before Major Doreen Cadwallader's stores became filled with computer equipment requiring a mountain of flight cases and paraphernalia needed to deploy on exercise. QuarkXPress enabled newspaper articles to be produced almost indistinguishable from 'the real thing' and often a good deal more entertaining! Remember the 'Saving Private Brian' stories on the infamous Ex Arcade (Con) fusion?"

"By the time of Ex Saif Sareea in Oman which, as it turned out coincided with the start of operations in Afghanistan, the modern media were to be seen operating in the full swing of electronic wizardry. Unfold the solar panels on your laptop sized comms equipment, aim the antenna towards the satellite and start typing. A fraction of a second later after a journey of c46,000 miles your copy was in the editor's office in Fleet Street. The satellites were of course by then owned by civilian organisations so that last bastion of censorship evident in the Falklands conflict, when only the military had access to COMSATS and journalists had to queue up to file their copy through naval channels, had been finally overcome.

"Journalists seeking to operate independently in hired Toyota Land Cruisers could now do their own thing un-harassed by the military, yet foolishly perhaps risking unexpected contact with the enemy, but in instant contact with their head offices. Unimagined freedom compared with a quarter of a century earlier. Those MOG (V)s deployed on Gulf War 2 and the continuing operations since then in the Middle East will have experienced at first hand the cluttered unregimented multi-coloured ranks of the world's media, bristling with satellite dishes and antennae, satellite phones beaming back live broadcasts.

"The 20th century prepared us for rapid advances in technology as no previous century had done. Think of the relatively short time between the precarious Wright brothers' first powered flight and the bombers delivering destruction on cities or the 747s taking us on our holidays. It was only a quarter of a century between the first V-2 landing on London and Neil Armstrong landing on the

Moon. And of course it was this same development in technology which gave us the ability to place satellites high in the sky above us leading to the rapid expansion of communications around the world, based, as with so many of these advances, on the needs of the military.



### **One of the photos to come out of Exercise Saif Sareea**

"It is all too easy to take it for granted, but for the younger MOG (V) s surrounded by the today's invisible veil of electronic communications, Twitter, MP3 players, Blackberrys and so forth, spare a thought for the TAPIOs of yore sitting in a rain sodden trench (it isn't training if it isn't raining) somewhere in Germany bashing out stories on a typewriter. One indisputable advantage of the typewriter: if the power supply was interrupted or the post-nuclear electromagnetic pulse wiped out all non-hardened electronics the typewriter could have soldiered on regardless. But perhaps by then the potential readership, or those of it that had survived, would have had its mind on other things."

## **Commanding Officer's Update**

Lt Colonel Tim Purbrick, Commanding Officer Media Operations Group (V) tells The NetWorker that Lt. Julian Allen wounded in action on March 7 last, while leading a Combat Camera Team on Operation Herrick in Afghanistan, has now returned to light duties. We wish Julian well and hope he returns to full health as soon as possible.

Two of the unit's officers are currently deployed in Helmand with Captain Jo Timmermann the OC Combat Camera Team. Jo is the first ever female officer to hold this appointment and only the third to be deployed to Afghanistan.





***A MOG (V) Combat Camera Team gets involved with a politician's visit to Helmand***

First deployments to Afghanistan of a higher readiness capability in the Group, the Rapid Reaction Reserve (RRR) took place over the last few months. Lt. Colonel Rosie Stone, Captain James Ogglesby and Corporal Bob Seely deployed as part of the PJHQ Pulse Teams.

A number of other Group officers, including the CO, will be undergoing RRR training in May to enable deployment to Afghanistan, or elsewhere, over the next six months.

Other squadron level exercises are planned. In between tasks the Group has also been supporting pre-deployment training, training in staff colleges, overseas exercises and defence diplomacy tasks.

An officer is on intermittent secondment to ACGS's office to provide strategic communications advice. Major General James Bucknall, ACGS recently attended a briefing at MOG (V) GHQ at the Kingston (Surrey) training centre.

A huge number of tasks are undertaken every week by the group, says Tim. The Group's officer strength is now fully recruited- although recruitment will continue due to the turn-over of officers. The next selection days will aim to recruit TA soldiers and civilians with skills, knowledge and experience to enable the Group to add value.

The establishment is 137 and the unit is currently 80 strong. The Group has doubled in size in the last 2 ½ years with further officers and soldiers in the transfer, recruiting and training pipeline coming towards the Group.



***Major Vickie Sheriff, pictured above took time out of her job as Deputy Spokesperson for the former Prime Minister to lead her squadron on a PJHQ exercise based in Faslane and at sea.***

## **Putting a slow e-mail server into perspective**

More than a few members of the Club have found themselves under the spotlight of a PR Week Profile in the past. Now this month serving MOG (V) officer Major Paul Smyth also found himself being grilled by Gemma O'Reilly. The story makes interesting reading.

Writes Gemma: "It is your first day in a top comms role. What do you need? Fashionable – yet serious attire? Check Blackberry? Check flak jacket and gun?"

"Although dealing with journalists can sometimes mean standing in the firing line there are very few PR roles that actually require protective clothing and arms. But Major Paul Smyth, the media centre ops director for the British Army at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan regularly finds himself in situations that can genuinely be described as life threatening. All of which puts a slow e-mail server into perspective

"As Smyth, 38, is based in Helmand Province, PR Week had to conduct the interview over the phone between operations while Smyth avoids the local Taliban. This makes it difficult to get under his skin, but he could not hide his enthusiasm as he told PR Week that he has just become a CIPR Chartered practitioner – one of only 25 in the UK.

"Smyth's main role is to chaperone journalists who want to report from the front line. However, if it is deemed too dangerous, he takes out a combat camera team to gather information and report back on the action. 'We are a window into what goes on out here,' explains Smyth. 'Where we



### **Major Paul Smyth**

don't have the opportunity of putting journalists on the ground, we need to make sure that people still see what's going on.'

"It's a little different from other PR jobs. I carry the same kit as the other soldiers, which includes a gun, because people will be shooting and launching rockets at you. But the team's skills-set enables to get the footage the media sometimes cannot.'

"While Smyth is a soldier and deploys with a weapon, his other kit includes a camera, video camera, lap top and portable satellite dish, so he can send out stories and pictures as quickly as possible, without compromising location.

"Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube all feature heavily. 'I use as many means as I can, just as I would if I were at home with a client,' he says. 'Twitter and Facebook are fantastic ways of pushing out information and images that would otherwise not see the light of day.'

"Pictures from the frontline are important', he adds,' in order for people at home to see, what is really going on, Smyth believes there is an appetite for people in the UK to see what is happening Afghanistan. 'We are making the most of the fact that a lot of people are interested in what we are doing and the more chance we have of allowing people to see the good work we are doing here the better.'

"While the worldwide media may be preoccupied with how many soldiers have died during the conflict, Smyth is trying to promote other stories from the country.

"Every soldier has a story to tell, 'Smyth points out. 'From the chef who provides the boost to morale with a meal when they come back, to the guys who are fighting.'

He adds: 'There are other fantastic stories that are a million miles away from the fighting that dominates the news. But that's the challenge we face and have to work hard to overcome.'

"He denies that the troops are demoralized by the war. 'There is a misconception in the media that it is all doom and gloom here. People are here because they believe they are making a difference. Morale is high pretty much all of the time because we are doing the job for which we are trained.'

“Smyth says the soldiers feel particularly satisfied when talking to local communities and being involved in reconstruction projects: ‘The security that the military brings means good work such as redevelopment can take place. Each time the guys go out and talk to the locals, there is a huge sense of satisfaction with the progress.’

“Smyth decided to become a soldier relatively late in life, after seven years spent in various PR roles in the UK. He recalls that it was his childhood ambition, but it was not until he realised he could transfer the skills he had achieved in his PR career to the Army that he decided to enlist. He has now completed tours in Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan. Despite telling his wife, with whom he has two children, that he ‘just needed to get it out of his system’ he still loves the role seven years later. ‘In terms of experiences, the things that I’m doing at the moment are once in a lifetime.’

“Smyth was heavily involved with the comms planning for the withdrawal of troops in Iraq, which is one of his proudest achievements from his Army career. ‘To have the honour of orchestrating events in our British history like that is absolutely amazing. Deep down although I’m a tiny cog in a massive team here, I am hoping that I’m making a valuable contribution and a bit of a difference.’

“‘It certainly beats wrestling with e-mails!’”

## Club time machine takes us back to the earlier days

Looking back into the history of our unit brings many memories. Here Lt. Colonel Graham Barnett starts up the time machine and looks back.

“In 1983 the first major expansion of the TA Pool of Public Information Officers was given the go ahead. The establishment was to increase from eight officers to 24 and recruiting started in earnest. Initially the new members were drawn from existing TA or retired Regular Army officers with journalistic or public relations experience.

“I joined the Pool in 1984, having left the Army in 1979 to take up an appointment as PRO for East Sussex County Council. I was the first ex-Regular to join and, as such, enjoyed being in at the beginning of a major leap forward for public relations in the Army.

“The TA was not new to me. I had spent two happy years from the end of 1966 as adjutant of the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment (TA).

“By late 1986 Mike Peters had taken over command of the Pool from Alan Protheroe and I became his 2i/c. A major national recruiting campaign had been launched a year earlier, in an effort to fill vacancies in the new establishment. And, for the first time, people were selected to join, with no previous military experience. It was at this time that a decision was taken to run a short induction course for potential officers.

“A week-long prototype course was put together and held at Bridgend House, home of PR at HQ United Kingdom Land Forces, Wilton at the end of March 1987. The three students, John Boyes, Mike Glynn and one other arrived on the Sunday evening and settled into the HQ Officers’ Mess. Instruction, which kicked off on the Monday morning, started with a four- mile run, led by Bob Peedle with Mike Glynn bringing up the rear!





"The course covered an introduction to the Army, starting with evolution of the New Model Army under Oliver Cromwell, up to the present day. With the help of slides and wiring diagrams all aspects of the Army and PR within it, were covered – no mean feat in five working days! The instructors were Bob Peedle, Warren Armstrong, Vicky Evans and I, with an introduction to public information in the services. We even covered mess etiquette.

"I think that it would be fair to say that both instructors and students enjoyed the interactive participation of the course and all three students went on to be commissioned. Alas one of the group later decided that his professional commitments didn't sit easily with TA soldiering and left. But both John Boyes and Mike Glynn threw themselves into the task and soldiered for a number of years.

"Mike Glynn retired at 50 in 1993 but John Boyes was with the Media Operations Group (V) until much later. Both have become stalwart supporters of the Pen & Sword Club. Unfortunately the Induction Course didn't survive. One more was run during 1987 Summer Camp at Chatham. But then training on the job became the sensible option."

## Pictures from the Past

***Pictured below just before the Winter Olympics in 1972 is the British Army of the Rhine camera team filming on the frozen lake at St. Moritz in Switzerland.***

***Snow was scarce in the Alps that year and the British team – four Welsh soldiers from the Queen's Dragoon Guards who had all once worked in the same coal mine – had to resort to practicing their push starts in the up market resort.***



***Here, legendary German civilian cameraman Gerd Medoch, left, prepares to roll as Mike Peters, then the HQ BAOR Information Officer, gets a brief from Major Tim Wakefield, centre. (Actually he was saying don't screw it up again we're running out of film! - Editor)***

The camera team covered the pre-Olympic training at Igls in Austria. The edited film was shown by BBC Wales just before the Wales-England rugby international at Cardiff Arms Park – that's real prime time in the Principality.

Says Mike: It was a fantastic time for the camera team. We also had civilian and Army still photographers with us. I remember it well because for the Army 'phot' was using the first, and newly acquired, Nikon camera in the Army. He left it in our transport and it was stolen. The paper work went on forever. At that time I was a Captain in the Royal Military Police attached to the Provost Marshall's office in Rheindahlen. So I was able to tell the story to the right people but we didn't get another one."

## **Nerves of steel and hot shot helo-pilots**

.In a joint British/US air defence exercise in Germany the British Army camera team got the shots they wanted by courtesy of US Army aviation. Allocated their own Huey for the duration they were cabbied around the country by some hot shot pilots. The crew's favourite sport seemed to be to test their passengers' nerves by fly between trees – they got closer and closer together!

Says Graham: Gerd was hanging out of the aircraft to get his shots. He had nerves of steel and was enjoying the whole process like any cameraman with a new toy to play with.



Mike adds: I can recall the 40lb Nagra tape recorder swinging on its strap from around my neck as we banked hard right and wondering was I going to cope with the G forces. No digital miniaturization in those days.



***Pictured above, on the left, are Mike Peters, Graham Barnett and Gerd Medoch.***

“One of the other factors we learned was the truth of the old phrase -two nations separated by a common language. The helicopter crew kept telling us they were ‘looking for some reefers.’ These turned out to be refrigerated trucks bringing up the rations rather than the wacky-backy cigarillos we were worried might be up in the cockpit.”

## **Bridging the gap and not losing the Way**

### **Major Ian Proud reminisces on BAOR training**

Between 1945 and 1989 NATO faced the Warsaw Pact across Central Europe. Commonly known as the Cold War it was actually World War 3 where the weapons were NATO's multi lateral commitment to reacting to Warsaw Pact aggression, the possibility of MAD (mutually assured destruction) by a nuclear war and the West's ability to by-pass Communist censorship and show the quality of; life in the West as opposed to eastern Bloc countries, writes Major Ian Proud.

Ian served with the Royal Engineers in a number of Sapper roles – one of the most unusual being with a searchlight company that provided artificial moonlight for British Army operations. He is the only officer with three Bars to his Territorial Decoration in the Club

Part of the NATO strategy was military exercises to display determination and co-operation between alliance countries, practice war fighting capabilities and show the Warsaw Pact countries that NATO was always ready.

“These exercises, in comparison to today, were huge. In the immediate aftermath of the re-organisation of the TA into the TAVR in 1967, TAVR personnel started to be regularly deployed. There had been some sporadic TA participation in BAOR and in the 1960s, as a Sapper Subaltern I took a group of 20 from 51 (Highland) Divisional Engineers (TA) from Aberdeen to be attached to a Regular Sapper squadron in Germany.

“On this exercise the main task for the squadron was to build a 212 feet long heavy floating bridge (HFB) across the Weser where it was to be used for three nights. During daytime it was to be broken up and moored along the banks of the river. A HFB is a substantial piece of kit, with pontoons, decking rails etc and when it is 212 ft long it is, to say the least, really substantial.



“The bridge assembly area was about 30 miles from the bridging point. It might seem to be well back but so much kit has to be in a secure area to ensure its basic assembly. I was tasked with being the convoy commander to take the vehicles with pontoons, bridge tugboats, ancillary equipment and our protection force to the site. The vital aspect for success was to produce a route card which had to be outstandingly accurate and yet incredibly simple, as the quality of the convoy drivers was varied to say the least. Besides this there was no way I could double back to rescue errant drivers.

“In due course the convoy departed the assembly area. I would have liked to have recce'd the route and the site but recce vehicles were easily identified and could have indicated planned activity. Full of youthful enthusiasm and self confidence in my map reading – courtesy of a three year geography degree, I departed for the bridge site. As the convoy spooled out from the assembly area I rapidly lost contact with my tail end Charlie, and when I did make the occasional contact with him I discovered the convoy was spread out over seven miles!

“Heavily laden 10-ton trucks, trailers, supply vehicles and assorted Land Rovers trundled along the roads; many were the German farmers who watched us waiting for the opportunity to claim manover-schaden (exercise damage) payments. Eventually, unscathed and complete the convoy arrived on the bridge site on schedule and the only damage was one knocked down gate post which was rapidly replaced to the consternation of the local farmer.



"Just before sunset the Squadron set-to to assemble and launch the HFB. Target time was 90 minutes but practice makes perfect and the time was achieved. In the middle of the build, as a section of sappers was lifting and positioning a panel to be pinned into its neighbour one of the sappers stepped on the foot of a sightseer. 'Don't bloody stand there, grab hold and lift!' shouted the sapper. The stranger duly obliged and when the pin was successfully banged home the sapper turned and said: 'Thank-you, mate.'

"To the sound of a dropping jaw, identification dawned. And the sapper found himself looking at a grinning and understanding Brigadier. 'Don't worry. In any case I needed the practice.'

"The bridge was complete and what looked like the whole of NATO started to cross. Every sapper, including myself, lined the route yelling at drivers to switch off their headlights. Some people had no idea of how to drive tactically at night. We logged 1,300 vehicles across the bridge that night.

"Yet along the British sector of the Weser for this exercise there were about six such bridges, each carrying the same number of vehicles. It was a big exercise! And times have changed.

"The camaraderie of those days was illustrated by the late supper served up. My SSM from the Peterhead based squadron appeared with a stew, which he and his team produced. Delicious, rich and very meaty it drew a comment from the OC – 'Pork isn't it?'

"'Well, yes sir,' came the reply. 'There was a wee accident in the harbour area farmyard and a pig was killed. The farmer was calmed with a bottle of Scotch, We butchered it and it's in the stew.'

"On that long night as the volume of traffic diminished we took turns to have a quick kip on piles of camouflage netting in the lee of trees. Eventually just before dawn the squadron broke up the bridge and moored the pontoons along the river banks. Then for the next two nights the whole exercise was repeated although the volume of vehicles decreased to 800 and then 400 vehicles on respective nights.

"Exercises of such size were few and far between and the last one for me was the TA's complete mobilization in 1980.

"For us there was a boring aspect to exercises – the travel. We came by train from Aberdeen to London and then to Brize Norton for the trooping flight to Germany and later repeated the journey in reverse. Flying in and out of Edinburgh airport or from a nearer RAF station was not then possible.

"A year or two later I went to Germany on a singleton attachment. My travel warrant was from London to Luton so I asked for a ticket on a through train to London and then back up the line to Luton as opposed to a slow train stopping at every station for the best part of 500 miles. 'Oh! No,' said the booking clerk in his little booth. 'Your warrant says Aberdeen to Luton and that's what you'll have. If you want it changed it must be authorize by an officer.'

"Letting rip with some expletives at this intransigence the man behind me in the queue muttered that he had the same problem. 'Great,' I said, 'If I endorse your amended travel warrant, will you endorse mine?'

"So a TA RAMC Lieutenant Colonel endorsed my warrant and I his. The jobsworth booking clerk was seriously discomfited that his approach to customers had been circumvented.

"For TA units their visits to Germany to exercise with the Regular Army were a highlight of the training cycle. As TA units went to the same place for every exercise with the same Regular units

the Army began to realise the value of the part-timers. This slowly but surely created the foundations of the One Army Concept, which is so fully appreciated today.”

## Club Treasurer John Boyes lends a hand

### Managing the finances of the Bomber Command memorial Project

“It’s possibly fair to say that following my successful publication of ‘Project Emily: Thor IRBM and the RAF’, which is now in reprint, I am spending more time in the RAF Club than either ‘The Rag’ or the Cavalry and Guards Club,” writes Major John Boyes. “Still I did see Peter Caddick Adams( a serving officer of MOG(V) ) with Seb Cox, the Head of the Air Historical Branch in the RAF Club only last week. So it seems I am not the only MOG (V) with light blue tendencies.

“But my other reason for being there was in response to a request to manage the finances of the Bomber Command Memorial Fund. The degree of slight felt by the Second World War bomber crews who were systematically incised from the post war list of national gratitude is still remembered today by the ever fewer who are still with us. So too is the word ‘Dresden’ by those who still wish to criticise the strategic bombing campaign and the aggressive leadership of ‘Bomber’ Harris.

“The idea in itself was simple: to build a lasting memorial to the 55,573 gallant airmen who had died in the skies over Germany. It is worth remembering that the average life expectancy of bomber air crew was just six weeks and that more airmen were lost in one raid over Nuremberg than during the entire Battle of Britain. Try communicating that to today’s youth who demand ‘respect’.

“Headed by Robin Gibb (BeeGees) and Jim Dooley (Dooley Bros) from The Heritage Fund and with the blessing of The Daily Telegraph, the initial public support was overwhelming. Liam O’Connor, the architect responsible for the memorial at The National Arboretum and the eminent sculptor Philip Jackson – the Ghurka Memorial and the Falklands Memorial amongst others - the number of obstacles that have dogged the progress of the memorial came as an unwelcome and to be truthful unexpected surprise.

“The site was chosen at the Hyde Park Corner of The Green Park, directly opposite the RAF Club. Simple bureaucracy could perhaps be expected as there is an embargo on any further memorials in central London. But from the start there were objections. If in doubt order another survey: we have had arboreal surveys, ecological surveys, archaeological surveys, pavement strength surveys, lighting surveys, the list seemed to be endless and all conducted by City firms of the ‘highest quality’ and, inevitably, fees to match.

“To say nothing of the decision by the planning officer to take three and a half weeks leave starting one week before the original proposed date for the plans to be presented to Westminster Council – further delays. The PR efforts and a viral marketing campaign which is only now gathering momentum are being managed by The Flipside Group but they were frustrated in their efforts by pleas from the architect not to try and presume the outcome of the planning decision to be made by Westminster City Council.

“There are also some very active pressure groups with a highly professional approach to objecting to planning applications, especially as with this one an area of grass and four lime trees were in the way. Twenty nine new trees of species more suited to the anticipated warming of our climate would be planted as part of the design proposal, but such minor details can so easily be overlooked.

“In the end it seemed at times a close run thing when the planning application was eventually agreed by Westminster City Council at a meeting attended by a number of Bomber Command veterans and also a number of those seemingly systematically opposed to any change in Central London. It was an interesting meeting but the outcome was correct and now at last the full PR and marketing campaign can finally be allowed to proceed without hindrance.

“At the end of the war, the Lancasters and Halifaxes of Bomber Command turned from dropping bombs to dropping food and supplies on a beleaguered Holland. Operation Manna has never been forgotten by the grateful Dutch who have risen magnificently to the challenge with a target to raise one million Euros for the Memorial. The British public has shown their habitual generosity, but we still need more funds.”

For more details see: [www.theygaveeverything.co.uk](http://www.theygaveeverything.co.uk)



***A computer image of the Bomber Command memorial which will be built in Green Park, London. It will feature a bronze statue of an air crew***

## **Crisis Tourism in bomb blasted Beirut**

Today overseas deployments by MOG (V) officers to operational theatres are common place. It was not always so as there was a genuine reluctance on the part of the Army – and, indeed, politicians, to call upon reservists. There was also an equal resistance by some employers to let senior staff go. As preparations were made for Gulf War 1, for example, the unit was fighting hard to be included and to arrange call up papers. After much discussion and negotiation we were called on in a big way.

In earlier years the majority of such deployments for TAPIOs came mostly to those were employed in the Ministry of Defence information service. And they were rarely in uniform. But those who had a TA connection were favoured by the Army and usually uniform was packed in case it was needed.

Over the next few issues The NetWorker plans to call on those information officers who went to hot spots like the Falklands, Borneo, Rhodesia, The Sinai and Northern Ireland to relate their tales.

First in the list is Club National Chairman, Mike Peters, who was only a few weeks back from a three month tour in post war Falklands when he was asked to join the tiny, 90 strong, British Contingent off to join the Multi-National Force in the war torn Beirut of 1983.

Says Mike: "It was surreal. I had run the Army Press Desk in MoD throughout the duration of the Falklands War and had pestered the Boss to let me put on my uniform and go south. It was not to be – and the reasons why are another tale. But punch drunk from months of overtime in the MoD press office, where we slept at our desks or with the luxury of a rubber mat in the underground gymnasium, followed three months in a small hotel in Port Stanley that had been called The Malvinas a few days before I arrived, I was being asked to once again pack my bags and 'fight' the media.

"This time it was to be different, or so I was told. Beirut was a strange and dangerous place and I was to pack my TA uniform, draw a Diplomatic Passport and head for Cyprus to prepare the British contingent for the pressures of working in the media spotlight. The MoD was very wary following the behavior of certain elements of the media during the Falklands conflict and was determined not to be caught out again.

"Cyprus was a great place to teach the lads of the Queen's Dragoon Guards, and their accompanying specialists, about what was to come. The audience was attentive and learned rapidly. At that time volumes of material were being written about the alleged failure of MoD media relations. Indeed an official inquiry was still raging in London.

"The day dawned when the CO of the task group, Lt Colonel John Cochrane and me plus an advanced headquarters flew out by RAF Hercules to Beirut. We were not prepared for the Stalingrad appearance of the city that lay before us as we flew over what had once been the jewel of the Middle East.

"What we were ready for was the greeting on the ground. We were only yards away from the aircraft when we were surrounded by British and American press.

"John Cochrane immediately proved himself a natural and handled the interviews with ease and announced our media plan. This came as an acceptable surprise to the press who were eager to prove that the MoD had not learned media handling lessons of 1982. They were also different from the run of the mill reporters- tough, hardened, skeptical, international Middle East based journalists with a depth of knowledge of local politics and, in many cases, veterans of the recent battles fought in the city.

"The plan was simple: interviews for one hour on the first day; a two day wait while we prepared, and fortified, the British accommodation and then fuller briefings. Another short wait and full briefings and photos as the QDG's main party arrived by ferry. The Welsh cavalry played the cameras to perfection. Their Ferret armoured cars gleamed and they rolled off their ferry to the calls of a hunting horn.

"By this time the local media pack had realised the British were prepared for them and relationships started to develop. Two days later the QDG were out on their first patrol with the Union Flag prominently displayed for the entourage of media that followed the first recce mission.

"With this phase successfully out of the way the press turned its attention to seeking less formal interviews and with soldiers and officers displaying ease and skill in their dealings with the press the publicity the Army and the MoD wanted began to flow. Every night with my trusted Army



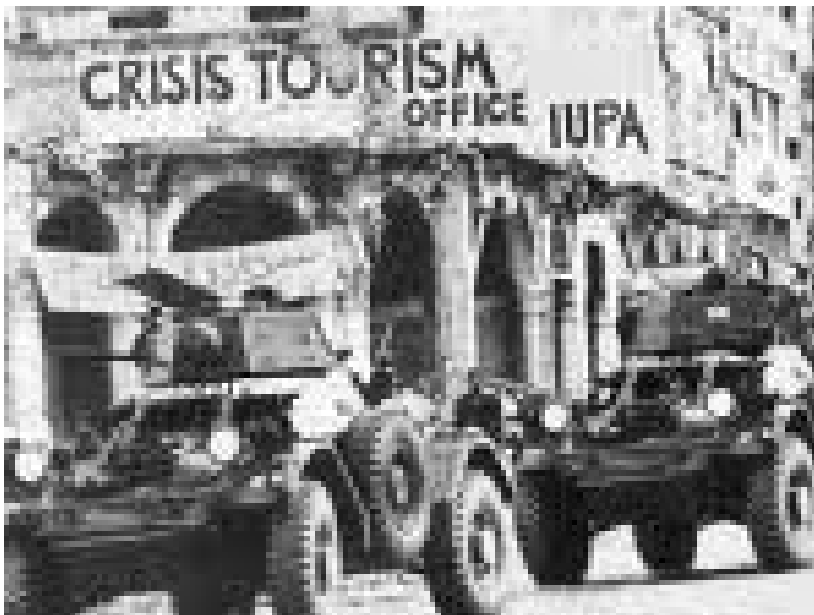
photographer, Sergeant Monty' Montgomery we visited the Associated Press building in down town Beirut with a selection of photos that soon were on the wires around the world.

"To quote the local picture editor on seeing the first results from a media trained military photographer – 'this is going to knock their socks off in Washington.' Why? Well the agency had become tired of US macho military pictures and the sight of Brit soldiers in the full swing of a hearts and minds campaign was very different.

"Photos of mugs of tea in standard issue mugs plastered with Union flags being drunk while locals dished out strong Turkish coffee to the troops were appreciated. As were those of the British buying their vegetables and fruit in a local market. And so it went on.

"There were only a few sour notes. A TV journalist parachuted in from the UK tried to break the media plan and the local press agreement by demanding exclusive interviews. Told to wait he complained to his London Office. This resulted in urgent signals from MoD asking what was happening. Re-assured by the ambassador and John Cochrane that we were on track the MoD calmed down and the offending reporter wrote me an apology. I still have it.

"I could not resist a call across the bar in The Commodore Hotel that night to the errant reporter. I told him, in full earshot of his colleagues that London agreed that he should not take precedence. He was mobbed by his "friends" and our relationship planning was justified.



"There remained only the task of producing home town news stories and telling the successes of a British operation for the families and public back home. Unlike today it was case of pack and post the material by snail mail.

"I spent many weeks in Beirut before being called back to the UK. I cannot say I was reluctant to leave the city – it was a hellish place for all and particularly the citizens – and I knew I would miss the QDGs and, particularly the photographic skills of Monty. His most famous picture was of the QDGs in their Ferrets in a ruined downtown Beirut under a large sign painted on a blasted wall. It read Crisis Tourism! There was no better comment.

"Back home again and first day into Main Building at MoD the Chief Press Officer shook my hand. It was not to say well done – though that came later – but to take me aside and say 'we've got this little problem developing in.....'"

"Very mindful of a family that hadn't seen much of me in the last year my answer was terse: 'I'm owed a full year's worth of holidays – I'm off.'"

## Reports from the regions

### Lt. Colonel Graham Barnett, club regional chairman in the South West reports:

The South West regional branch met at The Wardrobe in Salisbury in April for their annual gathering. "It was a very enjoyable and varied event attended by ten members including myself. In the group were Sue Nelmes, the regional secretary, Doreen Cadwallader, David Falcke, Karen Moseley, John Mills, Peter Williams, Sarah Shepherd and Dermot Hill and his wife.

"Sue put together an interesting programme which encompassed a talk by the curator of The Rifles Museum, Colonel Michael Cornwell, covering the history of The Wardrobe and the establishment of the museum in this historic house. This was followed by a tour of the museum. We then sat down to a delicious three course lunch.

"I think the success of the gathering could be safely measured by the volume of chatter over lunch as old stories and anecdotes were exchanged. But more importantly we did not disperse until after 1600! It was an enjoyable day which we hope to match next year. "

### Colonel Bob Purvis, regional chairman in Wales and The Marches reports:

"We held a highly successful dinner at Pencraig Court Hotel, near Ross-on-Wye in March. The next day members travelled on to the Army Benevolent Fund lunch at Stirling Lines, the home of 22 SAS. The region plans to hold at least two events this year. One will be in South Wales and is planned for Monday, August 23 when we go on a trip along the Monmouthshire and Breconshire Canal. The other will be held in North Wales and the time and place will be available later. The South Wales event will include a DIY picnic with the cost of the trip being less than £12 a head. We would be very happy to see members from the club's other regions. Please contact me if you wish to attend."

The NetWorker doesn't come together easily- or on its own. Please spare a thought for the Editor and put pen to paper or digits to keyboards; look out your old photographs and write, please! Contact Mike Peters on 01202 559950 or e-mail to: [michaelpcoms@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelpcoms@btinternet.com)