



# Military History Group U3A Dorking

## Newsletter Number 14 September 2021

Any contributions to the newsletter are very welcome and should be sent to Robert Bartlett at [938at938@gmail.com](mailto:938at938@gmail.com)

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## Parish Notes

### Barrie Friend

Our September meeting was held for the first time - and eventually - in our new home, The Pavilion in Middle Street Brockham.

Those who remembered meeting in the previous venue heartily welcomed the change and saw how it would accommodate our much-enlarged group (we are now thirty-three) with space to enable us to grow larger. I know that our new members were impressed with the new venue and could see how it would benefit us.

### Membership

Whilst we should remain ambitious to expand our membership, early fears about our withering on the vine have abated. Thanks were expressed to all who played such a positive role in keeping the faith and adopting a proactive role in supporting our growth ambition with Zoom talks, Newsletter production and encouraging like-minded enthusiasts to come and experience the atmosphere of the group. Two new members joined just before the September meeting and I wonder when we will reach forty?

Why is maintaining and growing the membership important?

New members bring new military history topics to talk on and discuss, fresh thinking, and add to the discussion following the speaker's presentation. This was shown clearly after Bob's talk on Tuesday when his stimulating talk (see below) on a military topic, which too few historians have addressed, encouraged so many 'hows' and 'whys' and 'whats.'

Another reason why growing the membership is important was demonstrated by apologies from seven members who were either on holiday or were unwell. We do go on holiday, regretfully become unwell, move away or even the car breaks down so we do need to keep meeting attendance high, and this is through maintaining and growing our membership.

### Speakers

Our Zoom speakers during lockdown by offering such interesting topics enthusiastically presented, have played a big role in raising our profile and membership. I know that they are willing to continue with their talks which we will enjoy but we need a bigger pool of speakers for the coming year and beyond. To this end we are befriending several u3a Military History Groups to 'borrow' their speakers in exchange for ours. Our meeting in October in Brockham Pavilion will be with members of Milford (near Guildford) u3a to meet their speakers and hear of their range of topics. Bookham u3a MHG's speaker organiser has also been invited and its heartening that Liz has been invited to Bookham to give her talk on WASBIES. We will hear this in October at our meeting.

## Walks and Trips

That's not all... George has made good inroads into planning Walks and Trips - another offering to add to understanding military history. These are on our doorstep and behind the doors of museums. Watch this space for an announcement.

From an embryonic group of five members only a few years ago we are now moving into a new era and with your continuing support the future is bright and the grapes are ripening nicely.

see you at 10.00 for coffee on 5th October at our new venue.

## Wargaming The Battle of Waterloo



**Nick Goddard with Dave Burden and brother Adrian**

On Friday 20th September a group of adult war-gamers laid out the 1815 Waterloo battlefield in a school hall in Brockham and then set Napoleon's and Wellington's armies upon it. Over the next two days they fought the 15th of June battle, and variations of it, with 6,000 carefully crafted and painted 20mm model soldiers.

The principle is one that is used at military colleges and by some historians to explore some of the 'what ifs' about potential future conflicts and to see how by changing strategy and tactics of historical battles whether a different outcome would emerge. I've heard that in very many games of The Battle of Waterloo Napoleon is the victor.

It's said that Blucher's belated arrival on the battlefield was the move that tipped the battle in Wellington's favour. Wellington's plea 'Give me night or give me Blucher' was not uttered without thought but what if Blucher had arrived even later or maybe much earlier? What impact would these scenarios have had on the outcome of the battle? By using the war gaming battlefield and armies along with the carefully drawn up gaming rules these situations can be played out to see if Wellington really had cause to be concerned.

Whilst the thought of grown-ups 'playing' with toy soldiers (and horses and artillery) may sit uncomfortably with some, behind it others may recognise a useful learning tool. To participate the gamers must be very familiar with all aspects of the actual historical battle, the armies and leaders and have the knowledge of warfare and the personal creativity to be able to change the strategy and tactics of their army. Research and discussion both help build knowledge and understanding of battles and warfare. Wargaming is time consuming, and the models can be expensive, but like all interests the benefits to the individuals are well worth the costs.

It was Hilda's son and friends who organised the weekend and they invited our group to visit - about a third of us attended - and learn a little about the process of wargaming and in my case to refresh my understanding of a battle that gave nearly a hundred years of peace in Europe and allowed the British to continue speaking in the mother tongue of English and not French.

## **Light Car Patrols Libyan Desert 1916-1918 Progenitors of the Long Range Desert Group**

**Presentation to the MHG 7 September 2021**





hills – no rivers, not even wadis – no oasis, no springs- just nothing but nothing and plenty of that!”

In the south east region is the Gilf Kebir size of Switzerland more than 1,000 meters high and the Gebel Uweinant at over 1900m, the highest point in Libyan Desert.

Nothing rusts – sardine tins from First World War, mummified bodies thousands of years old have never rotted

The desert has major low-lying depressions often bounded by steep cliff which have been excavated in part by millennia of wind. The depressions at Fayum, Farafra, Bahariya, Dakhla, Kurkur, Kharga and Siwa have underwater ground reservoirs approaching the surface and allow oasis of date palms to occur. The oasis critical to survival of life and military operations.

Great Sand Sea south of Siwa continues almost without interruption for 600km to Gilf Kabir plateau and covers some 150,000 square kilometres of eastern Libya and Egypt. Vast areas of dunes some 1000m high, steepness and instability pose a formidable travel barrier.

In 1915 the British Army commenced trials with motorized forces for desert reconnaissance and raiding operations. Could be exciting driving – heavy bump - exploded detonator – fire – other bombs/ammunition! The failure of the Dardanelles operation 1915-16, committed the British, if they were to defeat Germany’s ally Ottoman Turkey, to a full-scale land campaign in the Middle East, waged in some of the most difficult desert terrain on earth.<sup>1</sup>

#### Desert caravan routes - Masrabs

With desert conditions without many features the Masrabs, or extraordinarily ancient came routes were a significant help for navigation – the tracks taking the the place of prominent landmarks in a featureless desert. Masrabs began as routes for camel caravans transporting slaves and precious commodities and were Marked by bones of beasts and humans overcome by the desert. They consisted of wavy camel tracks a few feet apart; running parallel to one another and varying in number from five or six to 50 or 60 according to the importance of the route and were deeply scored into solid rock. Every place of importance is linked to other places of importance by a spider’s web of masrabs and became essential routes for the early explorers and the military who in a light car could cover in an hour what the caravan covered in a day. As part of a caravan if a man or beast falls sick, he must march or die. There can be no rest, loitering mostly mean a terrible death for the whole party from thirst.

#### Model T Ford - the vehicle of choice

It was a simple process for the military transport managers of the day to choose the Model T Ford. There was little competition on the market!

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<sup>1</sup> The Other Desert War: British Special Forces in North Africa, 1940-1943 John W. Gordon Page 1

In September 1908 Ford designed and manufactured a lightweight, flexible, and simple cheap to produce motor car. One came off the production line every three minutes. Ford had a remarkable reputation for durability. In 1920s a car cost \$300 about \$4000 in 2021, still cheap!

In 19 years 15 million cars were manufactured mostly in Detroit but also Trafford Park Manchester, and by the time Ford made his 10,000,000 car 9 out of 10 cars in the world were Ford.

The cars were of 2896 cc., 20 hp., four cylinders, two forward and a reverse gear. Top speed 45mph. Rear wheel drive with transmission controlled with 3-foot pedals and lever to the left of the driver's seat. Throttle a lever on the steering wheel with no separate clutch pedal. Braking achieved through the transmission rather than calliper brakes on the wheels. Right foot pedal applied a band around a drum in the transmission thus stopping the rear wheels turning

Fuel relied on gravity feed to flow from tank to carburettor so it was not possible to climb a steep hill when low on fuel- go up steep hills in reverse!

Suspension semi-elliptical spring for each of the front and rear axles. Wheels originally wooden artillery wheels, later pneumatic tyres.

Making these "Tin Lizzies" into machines of war required little more than the mounting of a .303 calibre Lewis gun on two of them in a patrol of six. Modifications were possible to include 3 1/2-inch-wide desert tyres, radiator condensers mounted on the running boards, and primitive sun compasses secured to the dashboard.

GB purchased 19k Model T during First World War used in North Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia and France and remained in production until **1927** becoming preeminent in desert travel until the Fords, Chevrolets and Willys Jeeps of the LRDG.

### Navigation

Navigation was by speedometer, milometer, compass and "simple sun-dial device". Dead reckoning with vehicle mileage, compass (must get away from the vehicle to use) and sun compass to maintain the course. Theodolite star recording and use of sketches and limited maps. Recording the position of the sun in the sky was essential for the calculations and use of Azimuth tables. Difficult and delicate task of taking the Berlin or Paris time signal at the wireless receiver to establish the chronometer error. (Berlin at midnight or 2am Egyptian time). Extreme accuracy was necessary for it was desirable to estimate the error to within 1/10<sup>th</sup> or even 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a second

Assisted by Dr Ball from the Egyptian Survey routes planned but first ensuring exact locations of features and/or locations recorded. Detailed accurate sketches of features and views were prepared to supplement the featureless maps.

Navigation and detailed mapping an essential and prerequisite for working out requirement for petrol oil and water and therefore return to base. Often difficult decisions when in unexplored country.

Why were the British there?

“There are several ways of spelling Sanusi. I have gone for one and stuck with it!”

Libya was part of the Ottoman empire and was invaded by Italy in September 1911 and not surprisingly Ottoman Turks with assistance of local Arabs fought back. Outbreak of the Balkan war October 1912 forced Turkey to sue for peace in Libya leaving the Italians to fight local Arabs. Following the invasion, a 20-year struggle continued between Italians and Sanusi centred on the Jebel Akhdar in Cyrenaica and on the Kufra oasis not ended until 1931 with conquest of Kufra by Italians.

In September 1914 Sayyid Ahmad moved with the Sanusi to the Libyan side of the Egyptian border where the British colony began at Sollum. Camped with his army on the Libyan side two miles west of Sollum a year later were still there. Relations with British was good until spring 1915 when allies landed at Gallipoli, threatening Constantinople the seat of the Caliphate. The Italians, the Sanusi great enemy joined the world war on the side of the allies.



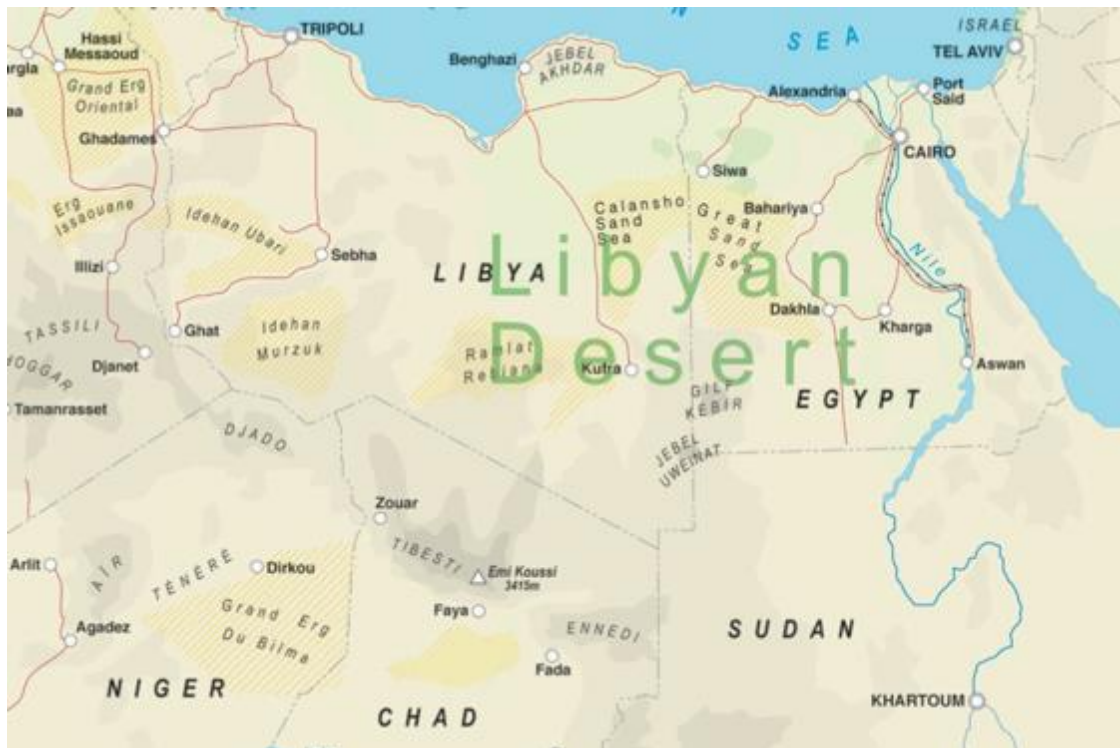
**Al-Sayyid Ahmed al Sharif al-Sanusi aka Grand Sanusi**

The Grand Sanusi began to accept financial and military assistance from Turkey who began to appear in ever greater numbers on the frontier, British ties with the Sanusi came under strain. Hostilities became inevitable when on 5 November 1915 a German U boat torpedoed British steamer HMS Tara and delivered 92 survivors to Turkish troops on the Libyan side of the border.

The same U boat off Sollum attacked two Coastguard cruisers at anchor and shelled the British camp. This resulted in the British deployment of an emergency squadron of six Rolls Royce armoured cars and 12 Model T cars, supported by Western Frontier Force (WFF) to bolster defences at Matruh the Cairo side of Sollum on the coast.

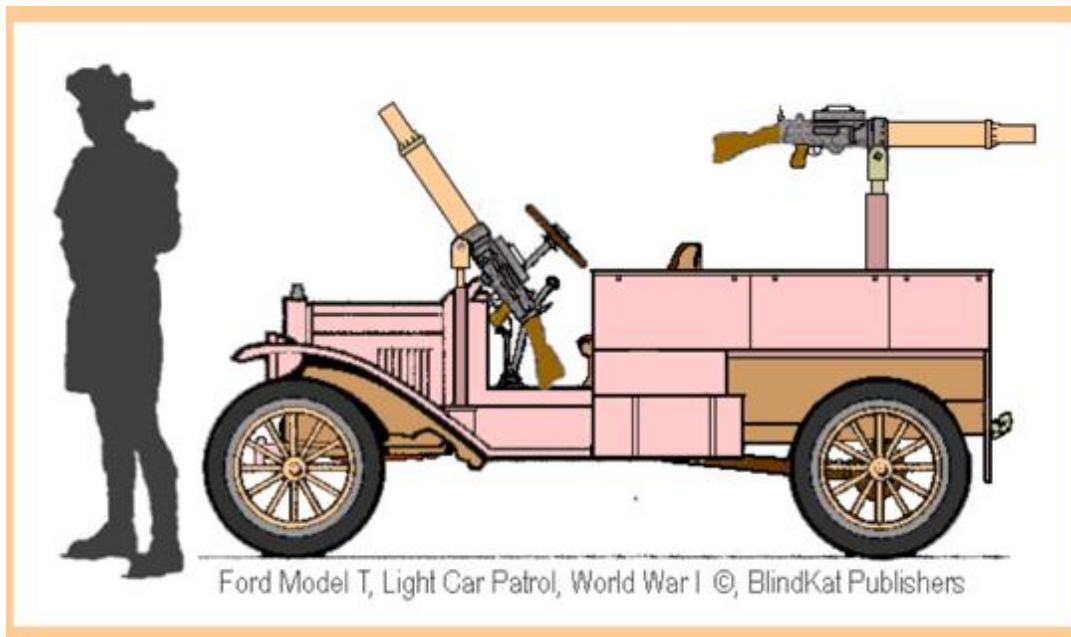
The response was insufficient, and the units had to concentrate at Mersa Matruh as the Sanusi army marched into Egypt taking control of the coast to the west of Mersa Matruh. Matruh became the established western base of the British and colonial troops of the WFF. During the next four months the WFF fought four battles against the Sanusi pushing them back to Libya.

The last of clashes on 26 February 1916 at al-'Aqaqir, Sidi Barani, the Sanusi withdrew to Siwa deep into the desert not of Libya but British Egypt occupying also the central oases of Dakhla, Farafra and Baharia with al-Sharif establishing HQ at Dakhla. This was a considerable presence of enemy in Egypt a response to which led to the formation of the LCP.



An armoured car detachment of Rolls Royce led by Duke of Westminster rescued the sailors when on the 17 March 1916, a 41-car column moved into Libya, 10 armoured cars the rest mostly Fords many ambulances. In 12 hours found and rescued the hostages and returned them to Egypt. The Duke was recommended for a VC but it was not awarded.

## Manning and Role of the LCP



### **The first of the LCP with weapons at the ready a rig copied by the LRDG and later the SAS**

General Sir Archibald Murray seized upon the use of motor vehicles as a means of solving the problems of desert warfare. He knew camel regiments had limitations of no artillery or machine guns and made them no better than the Senussi and still less knowledgeable of the desert. More firepower and mobility was needed, and the answer was LCPs.

The Light Car Patrol members were mainly British Yeomanry with drivers and mechanics from Army Service Corps all part of the Western Frontier Force. Originally there were six patrols of six Fords one a baggage carrier with at least two cars a patrol fitted with machine guns

Each Patrol was made up of 30 men including support staff. over 200 men all from UK except two New Zealanders

Six Patrols were formed with additional Patrols including 7LCP deployed east of Suez where they performed with distinction 8LCP and 9LCP in the summer 1918 were deployed on the Egyptian western frontier



**Captain Claude Williams a member from inception of the LCP**

The British Light Car Patrols were formed to patrol the north-western desert frontier of Egypt against the Senussi threat.



The role was long range reconnaissance, act as eyes and ears for outposts, exploration and cartography for present or future operations. Long range preventative/fighting patrolling that justified presence by reduction in warlike activity. Operated like cavalry using flags to give instructions – line ahead or abreast!

Patrols to resist hostile incursion by the Sanusi, prevent illicit traffic, individuals, or communication with Sanusi, detaining/destroying enemy, caravans and vehicles.

As part of larger formation attacking enemy securing ground including Siwa February 1917, virtually only “organised” fighting LCP undertook in Egypt when members were awarded MCs and DSO.

Additional tasks: establishing advanced equipment/food/petrol dumps; force protection during railway building; searching for downed aircraft to rescue crew; spring 1919 policing riots in Egypt Delta and lower Nile Valley



Kennedy Shaw one of the most influential members of the LRDG wrote just after the Second World War, the LCP, “They were our pioneers. They invented the sun compass and made the first condensers for their boiling radiators. With simple methods of survey, they ran their traverses far into the desert, going out beyond the range of the old camel-explorers. But in spite of all these difficulties the Light Car Patrols did their job, showing for the first-time what cars could achieve in desert travel.”

In theatre were also mostly 1914 Rolls Royce with a thin layer of armour weighing 3 tons with a crew of four and mounted machine guns. Appear to be mobile ovens!



The RR tended to bog down and used a considerable amount of fuel so had to be supported by several tenders. Needed lighter faster form of motor vehicle better suited to the task of scouting the enemy over long ranges - move swiftly and carry the additional fire power that the camels lacked. Trials with motorcycles were a failure.

Initial deployments were as part of a combined force of Light Car Patrols, the Armoured Machine Gun Motor Battery (Rolls Royce Armoured Cars), Camel Corps, and BE2 fighters of No. 17 Squadron.

Eventually the LCPs would corner the Senussi in their stronghold at Siwa oasis, and through some luck and pure tenacity drive the Senussi out of the oasis and virtually eliminate them as a potential threat.

## **Operations**

Before First World War Egyptian Coastguard Camel Corps policed the smuggling from Libya of drugs, tobacco and firearms in the northern coastal strip. With war came the requirement to find out what was happening over the horizon – what the enemy were up to. Prevention of surprises when success is measured by the absence of contact not tales of daring do!

Principle function was to resist any hostile incursions and to detect and prevent any illicit traffic or communication. Eyes and ears of outposts It was a policing role, prevention through patrolling, gathering intelligence, identifying threats, and countering them. Interestingly Captain Williams LCP uses the term BEAT.

If you wanted a fight, first find the enemy! Often patrol for ten days finding nothing but also half a dozen camel convoys may be found in as many days. A patrolling LCP came across a camel train carrying illicit weapons and bombs. They were detained and it was discovered they were part of a plan to assassinate prominent people in Egypt. Also, on this operation came across the missing bodies of two officers who had become separated from their Imperial Camel Corps troops. Another patrol chased and stopped a caravan of traders, smugglers burning their goods, and shot the camels. No space or means to recover camels and goods along with prisoners to be returned to base. When a capture was made a pigeon released giving details of arrests and route back to base so they could be met and handed over.

The cars assisted by infantry, cavalry and artillery and supported by aircraft that could spot and strafe the enemy, often making short work of the poorly equipped desert irregulars.

On 14 June 1916 Petrol dump established near Dakhla and then undertook reconnaissance patrols working with Imperial Camel Corps. No 1 Patrol on reconnaissance of an old caravan track, Gubari Road, planned to meet up up with two RFC aircraft.

Pilots became lost and one machine made an emergency landing and was damaged. Second plane also landed, and they remained overnight and next morning pilot in the undamaged plane flew back to get help. When help arrived the damaged aircraft had gone and for five days the area was searched. Finally missing men found by LCP, but pilot had committed suicide with his revolver and the mechanic died of thirst. Mechanic had kept a log which showed they took off again but had to make another forced landing.

In mid 1916 the half a dozen LCP patrols were ordered south to cover the southern Egyptian Oases where they quickly proved themselves to be more than just auxiliary to the air and Camel Corps patrols trying to contain the Senussi. In fact, the LCP soon acquired the primary role. As

a first step dumps of fuel and food were established to increase the range and duration of any mission.

Siwa was where a concentration of Senussi who had moved from Baharia were located, and the LCP were tasked to find a route in that could give an element of surprise.

Battle of the cars that gathered at Matruh two batteries of armoured cars of the Light Armoured Car Brigade and three LCP of six Fords each, plus, a supply column. Moved 120 miles first day, 80 miles day two, taking them to within 20 miles of Siwa. Approached down a slippery slope and when spotted by the enemy they withdrew onto the cliffs. LAC Brigade stuck but were safe against small arms fire and Senoussi safe amongst the rocks! Official casualties 150-200 enemy killed but more likely just 9 wounded! Two British officers were wounded. Senussi withdrew 70 miles to Jarabub avoiding troops sent to cut off their retreat. However, finished the Senussi menace for good!

In many ways this was a backwater for the war and many of the soldiers wanted to be more involved and, in any case, to get out of the harsh exitance they had stumbled into! However, the men had little choice but to stick with the role no matter how physically and mentally demanding it was – because they had to. They were highly trained and became very experienced specialists with every one of the officers and men key players in the team. Multi skilled in case of injury or illness. Leaders because officers and NCOs not always present when decisions were to be made. Having comprehensive knowledge of the western desert could not be replaced without spoiling the efficiency of the unit for some time.

LCP was disbanded at the end of the war and much learning lost, to be “re-invented” by the explorers. The Italians formed a self-contained unit with motorized scouts, armoured cars and aircraft. The unit was so integrated that the ground commanders had to be licensed pilots! This unit was the Auto Saharan Company, and they were once again fighting the Senussi and other Arab tribes in Libya and met with the LRDG in the next war

The use of cars in the desert however did not cease. Explorers some of them initially linked to the LCP and other soldiers during the inter-war years acquired a considerable knowledge of navigation and survival in the deserts. One of the explorers a military man and scientist, Major Bagnold was to use his vast experience and his knowledge and contact with a range of explorers to bring them together to form the core of the Long Range Desert Group. Bagnold and others recognised the origins of the concept for this unit lay with the pioneers of the Light Car Patrols.

They deserve that recognition and a prominent place in the pantheon of Special Forces.



**Brigadier Ralph Alger Bagnold 1896-1990. Geophysicist born Devonport Ed Malvern College and RMA Woolwich. 2nd Lieutenant 1915 - served Ypres, the Somme, Passchendale; Captain 1919. Studied at Gonville and Caius Cambridge, Engineering Tripos.**

Founder's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, 1935

Officer of the Order of the British Empire 8 July 1941

Mentioned in Despatches 2 January 1917, 1 September 1931 and 30 December 1941

Knight, Order of Leopold with palm (Belgium), 5 April 1919

**“Panic invading our thresholds”<sup>2</sup>**

**Recruit soldiers for the Surrey Constabulary!**

**Robert Bartlett**

When things are not going well for the police it is not unusual for the media to respond with a call for more recruits from the army as if the soldier personified some magical element! Recruit army officers to bolster the needy leadership of the police. Such appeals reveal a misunderstanding of the distinct difference between the role and responsibilities of a police officer with their independence of action and encouragement to use initiative which differs greatly from the experience of most conventional soldiers. The “military solution” is not new

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<sup>2</sup> Morning Herald London 13 December 1850

and can be traced back to the formation of the Metropolitan Police and onwards to the point in 1851 when the Surrey Constabulary was recruiting. Such calls have not gone away!

From the outset it was a deliberate policy to recruit men “who had not the rank, habits or station of gentlemen.” There was to be no “caste system” as in the navy or army and ranks of up to superintendent were to be drawn typically, from ex-warrant officers and NCOs. When vacancies occurred, promotion to higher rank was to be given to men within the force.<sup>3</sup> --- From the start the police were to be homogenous and democratic body, in tune with the people, understanding the people, belonging to the people, and drawing its strength from the people. The military model, however, was inescapable with the first commissioner, a lieutenant-colonel from the Light Division, who made an early appointment, former sergeant major John May as superintendent “A” Division at Scotland Yard. May undertook preliminary interviews of recruits, passing the more promising for final selection by the commissioners.<sup>4</sup>

Early chief officers with a military background found the comprehensive lack of control over the lives of the police officers both on and off duty, frustrating and difficult to cope with. The need to control or even dominate, led to ever increasing rules, regulations and orders. The need to notify, backed up by registers and reports to try to keep control of the policeman’s working life. Stipulating where he was to live; where he was to work; when he was to go to work and come home even controlling when he left his house when off duty! Withholding authority from individuals to decide was one way early chief constables controlled their superintendents and they the men who worked with them.

Following the murder at the Frimley parsonage in the autumn of 1850 waves of concern and even fear were spreading across the country and pressure piled onto those areas where still, there were no professional police officers. The village cobbler reporting to his gentleman of leisure JP was as good as it got in many rural areas!

The parlous situation in Surrey was established by the **Morning Herald, London, 13 December 1850**: “A little while ago the insecurity of life and property in some parts of England was a matter discussed with the liveliest interest by the public and commented on with emphatic earnestness by the press. In some of the southern counties there was something very much like a panic invading our thresholds. A grim shadow of personified burglary darkened our doors. Householders in rural districts, alarmed and astounded by the frequency of the outrages committed around them, closed their doors, and guarded their premises with tenfold vigilance, and still laid their heads on their pillows with a disturbing sense of insecurity within them, and woke with mingled feelings of gratitude and astonishment that they had not been robbed and murdered in the night.

There was then a vehement outcry against the inefficiency of the rural police, and a loud clamour for immediate remedial measures for the protection of the lives and properties of

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<sup>3</sup> A principle cast with direct entry to superintendent in 2014 though this, not surprisingly, has not gone well!

<sup>4</sup> “A History of Police in England and Wales” TA Critchley 1979 page 52

dwellers in the country. But before we had ceased to talk and to think about this matter, a greater and more astounding act of burglary than that which, baptised in the blood of a Surrey clergyman, had convulsed southern England, burn out the burning of the old excitement. -----  
-- Ernest and energetic in the defence of our faith we have forgotten the insecurity of our window-shutters. The broad brim of the cardinal's hat had overshadowed the burglar's mask -  
-----.

Still, we do not think that the report of the committee of Surrey Magistrates appointed to ascertain the best means of establishing a more effective policing system of rural police in all the unprotected parts of the county, ought to be passed over unnoticed, even in these times. The committee have recommended the institution of a county constabulary, and the division of the county into three police divisions, to be called the Chertsey, Godalming and Dorking Divisions – the last being considered as the headquarters of the force, and residence of the chief constable.

It is calculated the entire cost will not much exceed, in round numbers, £6,000 against which there is a set-off, of £2,500 for savings on account of the expenses of the old system. It is computed that the necessary amount maybe raised by a rate of 3d in the pound, “a rate which” the committee say, “it is believed will be little felt by the rural portion of the county whilst they are convinced that the security afforded to life and property will amply repay the expenditure incurred; and that this recommendation when carried into effect will prove of the utmost advantage to all classes of the community.”

All this appears to us to be very satisfactory. That many people will grumble at the rate we do not doubt. Indeed, it is by no means improbable that some of those that have clamoured most lustily for the extension of the police will be the first, now that the panic which once beset them has subsided, to cry out against the cost of the measures which they once advocated with such frantic earnestness. All this is to be expected. Many people are reasonable enough to want adequate protection for life and property without the inconvenience of paying for it. But security even at the cost of a threepenny rate, is always cheap in the end. The suppression of crime is a cheaper thing than its punishment and men often spend much more money in private efforts to guard their houses and protect their property than they are called upon to contribute towards the public institution of a well organised protective force.

As to the efficiency of the new constabulary body, it is a mere commonplace to say that it will mainly depend on the judicious selection of the components of the force. Every man will not make a good constable; but every man out of employ thinks he will. Judging by the performance of ordinary village constables under the present system and the nature and extent of their capabilities, it is not strange that a very low estimate both of what it is necessary for a constable to do, and what is necessary for a constable to be, should be formulated by the commonality at large. The immense number of incapable men will offer themselves for this service is as certain as incapacity itself; but we have sufficient faith in the judgement and discretion of the Surrey magistrates to believe the members of the new police force will not be hastily chosen.

One only suggestion would we wish to offer. It was stated in Parliament by Mr Sydney Herbert when Secretary at War, that the best conducted and most effective members of the Metropolitan Police were discharged soldiers; and our hope is that to whomsoever may be entrusted with the duty of selecting the new Surrey Constabulary, this significant fact will be suffered to have due weight with the selectors. Supposing, of course, an equal amount of physical health and energy, and general good character to be possessed by the military applicant, we venture to hope that due consideration will be given to the favourable antecedents of a life of discipline and regularity, and the habits engendered by the necessities of obedience, vigilance and punctuality.

We are writing now only with reference to the efficiency of the force, convinced it will gain much by a due intermixture of the military element, but we cannot lose sight of the larger and more important question which forces itself on our attention, or neglect the opportunity of again expressing an opinion. The more we can open out fields for the employment of our retired soldiery the better, both for the efficiency of the army and the welfare of the state.”

This was 1850 but it was 21 years earlier that the template for recruiting of police officers was established. Recruiting from the army was not so clearly an advantage as some thought as not surprisingly, many would have brought “baggage” with them including the infamous ability of soldiers to drink! Superintendent Mallalieu of the Metropolitan Police when appearing before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1853 was asked whether he thought soldiers were the “class of man” most suitable to policing. He replied, based on 24 years of Metropolitan Police experience, “I have never considered them the most efficient men for the purpose. I have been rather disposed to think that the intelligent part of the agricultural labouring community after training made the best policemen.”<sup>5 6</sup> Such a view was held by many involved in recruiting not just at the start but as the decade’s past. The rural man, brought up with harsh working and living conditions, strong, reliable, disciplined by labour and employers, to some extent knew his place, with limited education on offer, but with drive and ambition to improve the lot of himself and his family.

Many agricultural labourers were tempted by the better terms and conditions and prospects of police work. In the Norfolk parish of Scarming 31 sons of the soil joined the Metropolitan Police in 30 years and were described locally as “The very pick of the parish.”<sup>7</sup>

One of the criteria for recruiting to the newly formed Surrey Constabulary was to have served in the military. It is not known if such men did not apply or if those that did were below the standards required. The Surrey Constabulary recruited six soldiers and marines amongst the first 100 recruits in 1851.<sup>8</sup> All but one who served for 12 years, service came to a premature end.

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<sup>5</sup> Second Report from the Select Committee on Police 1852-1853, page 21 q/a2874-2875 – Rowan and Mayne page 288

<sup>6</sup> “Rowan and Main: by Tony Moore 2021 page 288

<sup>7</sup> Victorian Village Life page 113

<sup>8</sup> Surrey County Archive 9152/1/2/1/1 [www.surrey-constabulary.com](http://www.surrey-constabulary.com) The First 100

15	William Anderson	Army, 56 Regiment of Foot and Metropolitan Police	Age 22 1851 sworn 25 January	<b>Resigned</b> May 8, 1854, Good conduct
40	Joseph Robinson	2 Btn. 60 <sup>th</sup> Rifles for 17 years	Age 35 1851 5 feet 8 ½ inches. Joined Surrey Constabulary 13 Jan 1851 sworn 25 Jan 1851	<b>Dismissed</b> 16 October 1852 four offences of drunkenness
49	John Coston	Grenadier Guards 1838-1845 Lancashire Constabulary 1847 - Dec 1850	Age 34 5 feet 8 ¾ born Godalming	<b>Resigned</b> 12 Sept 1853 conduct good – no discipline
51	George French	Labourer. 7th Hussars 17 years	age 40 1851 5 feet 9 inch born Camberwell joined Surrey Constabulary 16 Jan 1851 sworn 25 Jan 1851	<b>Resigned</b> 26 January 1863 with a <b>gratuity</b> of £49 8s – one offence drunkenness in 1862
52	Francis Webb Henson	Royal Marine Artillery 4 years	Born Worcester age 25 in 1851 5 feet 8 inches. Joined 1851	<b>Dismissed</b> Feb 15, 1854, 6 discipline records last two drunkenness
91	James Woodley	Royal Marine Artillery	Age 31 1851 5 feet 8 ½ born Portsmouth joined Surrey Constabulary 7 March 1851	<b>Dismissed</b> 17 August 1852 drunkenness after 4 postings and 4 discipline events

After years of experience of recruiting, in 1875 Hertfordshire the chief constable reported that his officers were made up of, “Some farm bailiffs, some shoemakers, some labourers, some of all sorts, we have soldier /pensioners, all sorts” The chief constable thought the agricultural labourer made the best policeman though rules on literacy denied many the opportunities to serve.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1856-1880 in Buckinghamshire and Staffordshire, 50% of all recruits were agricultural labourers<sup>10</sup> (Was that because most of the working population in a rural county

<sup>9</sup> “Policing Victorian Community” Carolyn Steadman page 70

<sup>10</sup> “Policing Victorian Community” Carolyn Steadman page 70

were agricultural labourers?) However, at this time in Surrey, agricultural labourers made up about 16% of the initial recruits.<sup>11</sup>

It is likely that the pool of former military never was to become a significant source of recruits other than after a major war. Every effort was made to ensure the new police were not to be considered a military force, a yeomanry or militia. Acknowledging the English antipathy to a standing army quartered at home, efforts were made to ensure that the new police did not look like soldiers, so were given top hats, uniforms of blue, swallow-tail coats with the minimum of decoration.<sup>12</sup>

It was not even a certainty in 1829 that the police would be uniformed. Many feared a uniformed force becoming a militia or gendarmerie. Commissioner Rowan thought the uniform should “be quiet, and the design adopted resembled a civilian livery. So quiet that except for a few buttons and the lettering on his collar there was no embellishment. The top hat was discreetly reinforced. He carried a rattle, a hidden truncheon (except when a great coat was worn), carried beneath his blue coat with stiffened collar. The trousers were of blue cloth with white optional for the summer months. The double-breasted great coat had a detachable cape for wet weather all provided by Charles Herbert of Pall Mall East.<sup>13</sup> Inspectors and superintendents in a smack of military precedent had to buy their own uniforms which at first bore no uniform badges of rank.<sup>14</sup>

The constable’s weaponry as stated, was limited to a wooden truncheon though some from the start, had access to firearms and sabres.<sup>15</sup> There remained concerns of a military structure supported by former army officers as commissioner and chief constables who brought with them what they knew. There was a hierarchy and uniform, rigid discipline and coming together often in London in units of 50 men under a superintendent for crowd control. Military ranks in the main were avoided, the rank of superintendent and inspector came from parish and Bow Street policing, however sergeant came from the army. The title constable remained, following the use of this ancient designation associated with law enforcement from the 13th century.

In a further move to ensure a distinction between the police and the military, Peel laid down a ruling that ranks were to be filled from below. As set out above, at the start the senior ranks had to be filled by men accustomed to exerting authority such as non-commissioned officers of the Army; but there was to be no officer class. Gentlemen were not to be appointed. Peel in October 1829 wrote to John Crocker. “A sergeant of the Guards at £200 a year is a better man for my purposes than a captain of high military reputation if he would serve for nothing or if I were to give him a thousand a year.”<sup>16</sup> Most of the appointments above the rank of superintendent were external so there were few opportunities to reach high rank. High ranks

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<sup>11</sup> “Policing Victorian Community” Carolyn Steadman page 92

<sup>12</sup> “The English Police: A Political and Social History” Clive Emsley page 26

<sup>13</sup> “The Rise of Scotland Yard” 1956 Douglas Browne page 82

<sup>14</sup> “The Rise of Scotland Yard” 1956 Douglas Browne page 83

<sup>15</sup> “The Rise of Scotland Yard” 1956 Douglas Browne page 83

<sup>16</sup> “The Rise of Scotland Yard” 1956 Douglas Browne page 82

were filled by the “gentleman” Class. However the Surrey Constabulary over several generations appointed a local superintendent retaining that rank, as deputy chief constable.

The Metropolitan Police recruiters hoped to employ as sergeants and inspectors, those with previous police experience at parish level, with the Bow Street patrols or former army or marines though many recruited in haste at the beginning were found to be unsuitable. It is difficult to criticise as every day was new ground with no precedent.

Rowan and Maine’s first General Instruction Book illustrates on every page of Part 1 how Rowan adapted the teaching of his former general, Sir John Moore. Rowan approached the organisation of the new police as if it were a regiment with a company for each division which was divided into eight sections and each section into eight beats (or patrols). The idea of flexible and mutually supporting beats came directly from Light Infantry outpost training.<sup>17</sup>

Originally consisting of six companies divided into 16 parties each a sergeant and nine constables. Sixteen men, one from each party was a company reserve at the station-house. Four parties were supervised by an inspector.<sup>18</sup>

Peel to the point of obsession believed the new police must be free from the taint of militarism and should be “filled from below.” He was to achieve this by setting a low rate of pay for the constable, less than a skilled man would expect to earn. This low rate of pay may have a bearing on the large numbers of police soon discharged many brought down by the working man’s proclivity to consuming large volumes of alcohol! Every recruit was seen by the commissioners after Superintendent May thought them suitable, but there remained a high rejection rate. The churn of men within two years of the formation of the Metropolitan Police when the strength was 4,000, 1,250 had resigned and 1,989 had been dismissed, 80% for drunkenness. By 1838 over 6,000 constables had resigned and 5,200 dismissed and of the original 3,000 only 850 were still serving.<sup>19</sup> The time, energy and resources wasted on recruiting the wrong people was exacerbated by the low pay along with harsh conditions of service with frequent extended hours of duty often associated with maintaining public order. A “rest day” was not invented for several years!

By 1 June 1830 when all 17 divisions of the Metropolitan Police had been formed the total strength had risen to 3,314. The ranks of superintendent and inspector were almost exclusively filled by former warrant officers and NCOs of the Guards and Cavalry although the superintendent F Division was a former parish constable from Covent Garden. Recruits in general by June 1830 consisted of 402 soldiers and 101 sailors.<sup>20</sup> By 1927, 28 or 2.2% of recruits came from the army.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “The Queen’s Peace” David Ascoli page 85

<sup>18</sup> “The Queen’s Peace” David Ascoli page 86

<sup>19</sup> “The Queen’s Peace” David Ascoli page 89

<sup>20</sup> “The Queen’s Peace” David Ascoli page 89

<sup>21</sup> “Scotland Yard” JF Moylan 1929 page 101

In the first 100 years of the Metropolitan Police there were 11 commissioners all but three were soldiers and all came from outside the police.<sup>22</sup> It is understandable that these military men, put in charge of a uniformed body, fell back on what they knew and inclined towards military solutions. Police officers were not soldiers and their independent spirit did not respond well to authoritarian leadership then or today. (By 1929 120,000 men had passed through the ranks of the Metropolitan Police)<sup>23</sup> Has anyone ever seen police marching – it is an embarrassment. Saluting of senior ranks declined in the 19080s and has just gone out of “fashion” – withered on the vine!

In this country the police are taken from the population at large. They are not it is clear, other than to a limited extent, taken from the army or any other reservoir of trained men. From the start the Metropolitan Police recruited from the agricultural community not just because they were robust and strong but were not “tainted” through having been brought up in the poorer parts of London making them more trustworthy.<sup>24</sup>

Military recruiting in the 1930s equalled about 8% on average across the country. From the mid 1930s a quarter of Surrey’s recruits were ex-soldiers, no doubt linked to the large number of military establishments in the county. Some forces gave priority to ex-soldiers not troubled by reserve commitments. However, the Metropolitan Police felt constrained in employing ex-soldiers on the reserve as they considered London to be in the front line of any future war.<sup>25</sup> A Cabinet committee in 1937 revealed the counties had the highest percentage of ex-service recruits at an average of 25% with 19% in the boroughs and 9% in the metropolis.<sup>26</sup>

Many forces forgot the lessons of the First World War only to be learnt again in 1939.

There are many very successful police officers who have served in the armed forces. It does not have to be argued that the military man of 1829 is a world away from modern times. Many of the modern engagements have been referred to as “corporal’s wars” as they led their sections on patrols from Northern Ireland to Afghanistan. Following orders with initiative driven out can no longer be the operational imperative for the modern serviceman or woman. It may be argued that there is a more coming together of the skill sets and temperament of the modern serviceman with the police officer, but much will depend on their role and for how long they served. It does, however, remain a long way from the drill square to the loneliness and frequent isolation of a patrolling constable. That was the case in 1829 and remains to this day.

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<sup>22</sup> “Scotland Yard” JF Moylan 1929 page 29

<sup>23</sup> “Scotland Yard” JF Moylan 1929 page 30

<sup>24</sup> “Scotland Yard” JF Moylan 1929 page 98

<sup>25</sup> “The Best Police in the World” Barbara Weinberger 1995 Page 20

<sup>26</sup> “The Best Police in the World” Barbara Weinberger 1995 Page 20

## Major Hume Grogan

The Times 30 July 2021

# Major Hume Grogan

Irish Guards officer and Royal British Legion representative in Dublin where he

It is said that Hume Grogan very nearly persuaded Mary McAleese to wear a poppy at her inauguration as president of Ireland on November 11, 1997. The ceremony coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Enniskillen bombing in Northern Ireland (also known as the Poppy Day massacre), when the Provisional IRA detonated a bomb near the town's war memorial during the Remembrance ceremony, killing 11 people and injuring more than 60.

After the 1994 IRA ceasefire there had been a ceremony in Dublin to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VE Day, with representatives of both Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionist Party present, and some thought the poppy could become the focus for a common act of reconciliation. The gesture would have been controversial, however. While the new president had declared her commitment to building bridges with the unionist community in Northern Ireland, many nationalists still saw the poppy as a symbol of British imperialism. In the words of one Irish journalist, it would have been "a Brit too far".

At the time Grogan was Dublin representative of the Royal British Legion. His poppy advocacy was not primarily about reconciliation. "It is very unfor-

**'It is very unfortunate that the poppy has been waylaid by the unionists'**

fortunate that the poppy has been waylaid by the unionists", he told *The Irish Independent*. "It is really a symbol of remembrance that came from the poppies that grew in Flanders field." More than 200,000 Irishmen had served in the First World War, a great many of them from what in 1922 became the Irish Free State, and some 35,000 from the south had been killed. After partition the five Irish infantry regiments that recruited in the south were disbanded, along with the South Irish Horse.

It was not only the First World War. In 1939 Ireland remained officially neutral, but 50,000 men and women from the south served with the British. Even after Ireland declared itself a republic in 1948, the contribution continued. Today, besides the Irish Guards, a third of

the Royal Irish Regiment, whose headquarters are in Belfast, come from the republic.

Grogan himself had impeccable credentials for his advocacy of Irish remembrance, not least his lineage. Hume Meredyth Ellis Grogan was born in Plattenstown, Co Wexford, in 1931, the only son of Lieutenant-Colonel George Grogan, DSO, of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment. His mother, Eva, was from nearby Coolgreany.

Like many an old Irish family, the Grogans were occasionally of two minds. During the rebellion of 1798, Cornelius Grogan, an MP in the Irish parliament, fought for the rebels. His two younger brothers, one of whom was killed, wore the king's coat. In a foretaste of the Easter Rising of 1916,

Cornelius Grogan was arrested, tried by court martial and shot.

Hume Grogan was educated at prep school in Dublin and then at Wrekin College, Shropshire, followed by Harper Adams agricultural college. His agricultural prospects being uncertain, he enlisted in the Irish Guards in 1952 and went to the officer-cadet training unit at Eaton Hall in Cheshire.

One of his first jobs after commissioning, when the Irish Guards were training in Egypt, was to collect the shamrocks flown to Cairo for St Patrick's Day. It proved a bureaucratic marathon, with Grogan going from one government department to another filling in forms and having to spend an extra night in the city. He only got the necessary clearance after agreeing to



Hume Grogan in about 1954. Right, the poppy superimposed on the shamrock

## e promoted the poppy as a symbol of remembrance

pay duty on each sprig, which at 1,000 sprigs was more money than the paymaster could command. Thereafter shamrocks were sent overseas via the diplomatic bag.

Back in England, his agricultural interests led to an invitation from the Queen Mother to visit the royal pig farm at Windsor. He subsequently arranged for pig slurry to be spread on the lawns outside the officers' mess. The smell was so bad that the mess had to be evacuated.

Contemporaries remember Grogan as an old-school guardsman, moustachioed since an ensign, and possessed of great charm. He commanded a company in the Guards Armoured Brigade in the British Army of the Rhine in the 1960s and on active service in Aden, but made his real mark commanding a training company at the Guards Depot at Pirbright, Surrey.

In 1962 he met Jennifer Rake at a drinks party in London. She was eleven years his junior and a trainee fashion buyer at Harrods. They married the following year at Holy Trinity Brompton. Jenny was a matchless cook. It was said that hostesses in Germany and Dublin would not hold a dinner party a month either side of one held by the Grogans. Jenny died in 2020. He is survived by their three children: Alice, a teacher and special needs co-ordinator; Susannah, a fashion designer; and James, a businessman.

Growing deafness forced Grogan to leave the army in 1971. After the death of his father, his mother had married Arthur Donel MacMurrough, The O'Morchoe, hereditary chief of Clan Murphy. She was widowed in 1966 and Grogan was at last able to put his agricultural training to use, running the family farm for the next 20 years.

In 1991 he became secretary of the Irish branch of the SSAFA, also taking on responsibility for the Royal British Legion in Ireland and combining their operations in one Dublin office. He subsequently reinvigorated several other charities under the same roof, notably the British Red Cross. Long after

retiring in 2002 he was a SSAFA case-worker.

Although Lutyens's Irish National War Memorial Gardens in Dublin had been renovated in 1988, Grogan found the annual summer wreath-laying ceremony somewhat neglected.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland meant that he, like other ex-servicemen, had to tread carefully. Nevertheless, he set about improving matters.

Today the ceremony is attended by hundreds of veterans, together with members of the government and the diplomatic community.

In 2001 Grogan was appointed MBE. Seeing no conflict in his loyalty to both the crown and the republic, he said he would prefer to receive the honour at the British embassy in Ireland rather than at Buckingham Palace. As a mark of additional respect he was instead invested by Prince Michael of Kent at the Freemasons' Hall in Dublin.

As Remembrance Sunday 2017 approached, Leo Varadkar, the taoiseach, broke the poppy taboo. During questions in the Dail he wore a lapel pin specially designed by the Royal British Legion in Ireland: the poppy superimposed on the shamrock and the scroll "Lest We Forget". Varadkar said that "sometimes in the course of Irish history we've reinvented our history, and I think now that we've a decent distance from that period, we can perhaps be a little bit more honest about it". He then went to Enniskillen to lay a wreath.

It was perhaps the fruits of Ireland's "decade of commemorations" leading up to the centenary of 1922 — the strikes of 1913, the First World War, the Easter Rising, the flu pandemic, the election of 1918 and the first Dail — and of President Higgins's *Machnamh* (reflection, contemplation). In his own way, however, Grogan had helped to sow the poppy seeds.

**Major Hume Grogan, MBE, Irish Guards officer and charity administrator, was born on October 28, 1931. He died on July 17, 2021, aged 89**

