

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF 522 FIELD SURVEY COMPANY R.E.

1. INTRODUCTION.

It is believed that there are no detailed “official” unit histories for the Field Survey Companies raised in the second world war. It is now perhaps doubtful if any will be compiled. For some of the companies, brief anecdotal souvenir histories were produced towards the end of the war using the cartographic and photographic skills and mobile printing resources of the units.

Hopefully, the following notes on various sources of historical material will serve in lieu of a unit history until the compilation of one is addressed, if ever.

There are four obvious sources of historical material : -

- a. Brigadier A.B. Clough’s monograph “Maps and Survey”, H.M.S.O., 1952.
- b. References, mainly war diaries, held in the National Archives at Kew.
- c. Anecdotal souvenir histories produced by the units.
- d. Personal accounts or reminiscences and correspondence regarding the same.

Notes on a-d above are at paragraphs 2-5 below. Anyone wishing to add to these notes or to suggest improvements of corrections is invited to contact the Defence Surveyors’ Association at www.defencesurveyors.org.uk or : -

Defence Surveyors’ Association, c/o Royal School of Military Survey, Denison Barracks, Hermitage, Berks, RG18 9TP.

2. NOTES FROM “MAPS AND SURVEY” BY BRIGADIER A.B. CLOUGH, H.M.S.O., 1952.

For each theatre of war Brigadier Clough describes the historical background and the strategical and military considerations followed by the survey planning and an account of the phases of the campaign including the survey involvement. These are followed by sections on the maps and map production, triangulation and field surveys, aerial photography and survey and map supply and distribution. For anyone interest in military survey in general or survey unit histories in world war two “Maps and Survey” should be consulted. Notes towards unit histories have been extracted from “Maps and Survey” and these are shown below, sometimes in full, sometimes in brief.

Since these notes were made, “Maps and Survey” has been scanned by DSA and is now available on the DSA website. The notes below may still however provide an “at a glance” summary of the unit’s involvement in world war two.

For 522 Field Survey Company R.E. the index in Brigadier Clough’s “Maps and Survey” gives : -

Theatre	Pages
Clough gives page 551 only.	

Clough states, Used in a static role. It was **not** a Field Survey Company.

Formation of 522 Survey Company R.E.

When, after the outbreak of war, the old Survey Battalion was abolished, a new military unit was formed, comprising mainly of map reproduction tradesmen. This was 522 Survey Company R.E., and it worked directly under Ordnance Survey control, operating an important map printing installation on the outskirts of London.

(Clough 551-552)

522 Company was installed at Waddon, in a London suburb. Each of these dispersed branches had its quota of draughtsmen and reproduction plant, and was more or less a self-contained entity.

(Clough 552)

3. NOTES FROM REFERENCES, MAINLY WAR DIARIES, IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES, KEW.

As far as possible, the brief notes from unit war diaries listed below are in chronological order. War diaries from world war two are generally foolscap in format. In addition to the war diary proforma which may be in manuscript in pencil or ink, or typescript, the files usually contain the periodic returns of soldier and officer strengths. Some also contain technical diary annexes but many are confined to mundane notes on arrivals and departures and movements and their content as a source for a historical and technical account can be disappointing. The following “shorthand” notes are generally based on initial hasty examinations of the diaries simply to assess their scope and possible worth as sources for a unit history.

522 Ordnance Survey Company R.E. War Diary Feb 1942 to Aug 1942.

A slim war diary, 3 pages, manuscript. Signed by Maj A.R. Martin.

8-2-42 War Establishment and Mobilization order received. This unit formed up with effect from 8-2-42 from the former Survey Battalion R.E. to carry on the technical duties concerned with the Ordnance Survey of G.B. Capt G. Kendell R.E. is shown as 2 ic. Officers listed are Capts Gardner?, Murrell, Lts Adams, Bullock, Henry and Johnson. Attached are orders in the event of invasion, placing unit at disposal of O.C. Troops, Southampton.

PRO WO 166/8215

Seen 4-4-09

4. NOTES FROM SOUVENIR BROCHURES.

None are known for 522 Field Survey Company R.E.

5. NOTES FROM PERSONAL ACCOUNTS.

None known.