

**Roger Trenfield**

**British Army**

**Royal Army Service Corps - Royal Corps of Transport**

**Ceredigion**



**West Wales Veterans Archive**

**Aide memoir to Film TWO of the interview with Roger Trenfield**

The viewer will note that the interviewer can be heard on the film, directing questions to Roger. The interviewer's voice was included for the viewer to understand the context of Roger's conversation. The interview is largely unedited, which is a deliberate decision. This contributes to a very authentic interview which offers the viewer an insight into Roger's unique and endearing character.

## **Description**

In this second film, Roger continues to tell us about his experiences as a Driver in the British Army. We begin as Roger arrives in Cyprus.

## **Cyprus**

Following the withdrawal of the main body of British forces from Jordan, Roger was posted to support the British efforts to stem the activity of the EOKA movement in Cyprus.

EOKA, was an organization led by former Greek Army officers. Frustrated with the slow progress of political efforts to obtain independence from the United Kingdom, EOKA determined to execute a military campaign, targeting British forces, personnel and infrastructure. Ultimately, their aim was to end the island's association with the British crown and unite with mainland Greece.

Roger arrived on an island which was experiencing regular bomb attacks, assassinations and organized public disorder. At this time there was upwards of 17,000 British military personnel stationed on the Island.

Roger was posted initially to British Army general headquarters Episkopi. His role was a Staff car driver in the RASC Staff driving detachment. As casualties rose, he moved to manage the tool and tyre store and drive Ambulances at the main hospital in the capital, Nicosia. This was a busy and important hospital and the scene of a significant military engagement in 1956, when EOKA successfully sprang one of their members who was a prisoner receiving treatment at the hospital.

Although Roger was an NCO driver with the RASC, all soldiers had to support patrol requirements, which were necessary to safeguard the British military personnel and their families living in accommodation throughout the area. Roger met and married his wife in Cyprus. His family were living in accommodation beyond the perimeter of a military base. He explains a particular practice that would raise an eyebrow in today's Army. Roger's wife along with others, received instruction and practised firing their husbands service issue sub machine guns on the Army range. The wives were permitted to retain the firearm and ammunition at home, whilst their husbands were at work. The husbands were armed with side arms only. Given that EOKA had already targeted the homes of British military officers, this seemed a necessary precaution. Roger recalls that it was the threat from Turkish guerrilla groups that provoked this practice. However, it is a documented fact that Greek EOKA terrorists were targeting the homes of British military personnel.

## **Hong Kong**

Roger moved with his family to the British territory of Hong Kong in the 1960s. At the time he had three children. He remembers it was a hot country with high humidity. In the interview, he focuses on family life and the problems with life on the Island. The Chinese authorities would turn off the water supply to Hong Kong. He explains the problems this caused the families and how the British authorities attempted to counter this problem by building a freshwater lake. He also goes on to mention how the British families were alarmed by some of the local customs. He shares memories of witnessing debt related suicide amongst the local population.

His posting was to 56 squadron RCT at Sham Shi Po camp. This was a small detachment situated in the barracks near the waterfront at the end of the Lai Chi Kok Road, western Kowloon. The



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barracks dated back to the 1920s and Roger remembers that a boat ran from the barracks across the straights to Hong Kong island. Roger again remembers a practice that the soldiers undertook on the fast launch boats, that would be severely frowned upon today.

## London

In the early 1970's a return to the United Kingdom followed the posting to Hong Kong. He reported to the Royal Corps of transport (RCT) squadron at Regents Park barracks, London. Here, he was allocated to drive the resident Quartermaster General, General Sir Antony Read. This senior Army officer had a wide remit and travelled extensively, overseeing the procurement and distribution of stores for the British Army. Roger describes his daily duties and routine. He offers some humerus memoirs of driving military VIP's during this period of his service. He shares recollections of driving the former Admiral of the fleet, Lord Mountbatten. It was 1971 and the Earl permitted him to drive the staff car home, a Daimler 4.2 limousine.

Another humerus story Roger tells is borrowing one of Her Majesties baggage cars when he moved home.

He tells the viewer of the importance of performing his duties to a high standard. This meant learning the roads and streets around London. He explains how he developed his knowledge of the geography and road network. He also shares a clever trick he employed, which ensured he delivered especially important VIPs to their destination.

This was to be his final posting and having begun his career in 1952, Roger ended his Army career in 1971 as a Sergeant at Regents Park barracks, London.

## VIP driver duties

During the interview, at various points, Roger recalls undertaking VIP driver duties, which entailed driving senior military personnel to appointments, functions and meetings. During these duties he was attached to a "Staff company" and was known as a Staff driver. He had to undertake specialist driver training, reach high standards and continually develop his VIP driving skills.

He remembers serving particular officers. Some senior military officers he remembers driving are recounted below.

Field Marshall Sir Claude Auchinleck, GCB, GCIE, CSI, DSO, OBE, a distinguished WW2 Veteran and former commander of the British Indian Army and commander of the British Eight Army. Roger met the Field Marshall whilst serving in Jordan.

General Bourne, who had lost an arm. This is believed to be General Geoffrey Kemp Bourne, the Lord Bourne of Atherstone, GCB, KBE, CMG, who was awarded a silver star by the US Government for action supporting airborne forces in Germany in WW2.

General Sir Kenneth Darling, KCB, DSO, CBE, MBE, a distinguished WW2 Veteran. He won acclaim for parachuting with his troops into Normandy and Arnhem. He was later to become Director of Military operations in Cyprus in the late 1950s, which is when Roger first met him. When he drove for this officer, Roger was a Sergeant and the General became accustomed to " his Sergeant driver ". In fact, he wished to take Roger with him on a posting to Norway. However,



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Roger was not keen and General Darling helped him on to a somewhat warmer climate, Hong Kong.

General Sir Antony Jervis Read, GCB, CBE, DSO, MC another distinguished WW2 Veteran, awarded the MC for action in Italy and the DSO for leading his regiment in Burma. He served a CQG from 1969 to 1973 and was also Colonel commandant of the Light division.

General (Retired) Bernard Law Montgomery, first Viscount Montgomery of El Alamein, KC, GCB, GSO, DC, DL, the famous WW2 British Army officer, famous for defeating the German General Rommel and commanding a leading role during the invasion of Normandy.

Earl Mountbatten of Burma, former Admiral of the fleet and Viceroy of India. Roger was first tasked to drive Lord Mountbatten by the VIP driver office at the Ministry of Defence. He was aware of the Earl's status, but this didn't phase him. In fact, Roger gives an account of him maintaining professional driving standards, despite the Earl encouraging him to ignore road traffic law. Clearly the Earl was impressed, as he later wrote a personal letter to Roger thanking him for his service.

- Roger still has this letter, dated 28<sup>th</sup> June 1971, which can be viewed online in the Roger Trenfield collection at the West Wales Veterans Archive.

## Vehicles

Roger remembers driving the Leyland Hippo heavy haulage lorry in Jordan and tells a funny story of trying to change a tyre on the Hippo, but it coming to grief.

Whilst attached to the staff car company at headquarters in Cyprus he drove a Rover 3.8 litre and a Humber Pullman. He also drove multiple Land Rovers.

\* A footnote to Roger's driving in London. He was in London when the 1966 football world cup was won by England.

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en.wikipedia.org

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Museum

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