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Memoirs

BRIGADIER A B CLOUGH CBE MC SGM

Born 30 August 1888, died 5 January 1989



THE death of Brigadier 'Arch' Clough in his 101st year brought to an end a life of remarkable activity and achievement. Few survive to reach such a great age; fewer still are able to enjoy life to the last, as Arch most emphatically did. ARTHUR BUTLER CLOUGH was born in Hamilton, Lanarkshire, to the son of Colonel A H B Clough CB MVO, R Munster Fusiliers. He was educated at Clifton and then at the 'Shop', from which he was commissioned into the Corps in the Summer of 1909. His first posting was to 38 Field Company in Cork, a mounted unit in which he spent three very happy years learning soldiering and taking full advantage of the many sporting pursuits which in those days were matched to the slender purse of a subaltern.

Early in 1914 he was offered a survey job in Northern Nigeria, involving triangulation and detail survey in the tin mining area. The independence in very primitive conditions, not to mention the considerable extra pay, were attractive to a young man. However, the outbreak of the First World War brought it all to an untimely end and Clough soon found himself with the Anglo-French Expeditionary Force to the Cameroons, then forming in Lagos.

The Sapper contingent of the Force was not an established unit but, in his own words, 'an odd assortment of bodies who had some pretence of having engineering qualifications — railway engineers, public works specialists, surveyors, etc.' Initiative and improvisation were their principal

resources. For example, map supply was virtually non-existent, so that the future D Survey SHAEF cut his teeth by making multiple hand tracings of a rough sketch map which was urgently needed for operations.

The capital of the Cameroons, Duala, fell early in the campaign, but clearing the Germans out of their colony completely was a slow and tedious process. The railway was the key to all progress, and the repair of its disabled locos and track were priority tasks. Since the railway served the retreating Germans as well as the advancing expeditionary force, Clough was on several occasions sent off to blow up bridges behind German positions along the line, these forays involving night movement up river or creek, first by motor-boat and then by canoe, and finally an approach march along bush trails to the target area which would usually be guarded by an ambush party. His GOC commended him as 'a most energetic and capable young man, ever ready to undertake difficult tasks, who on more than one occasion displayed conspicuous gallantry thereby rendering most valuable services'. Hardly surprising then, was his exploit as one of the crew of a small boat which saved the lives of the Senior Naval Officer and four others whose own boat had capsized offshore in dangerous surf. This earned him the award of the Sea Gallantry Medal, a highly unusual distinction for an Army officer.

After two years in the unhealthy West African climate, Clough was sent home to the even less healthy Western Front. He got to France during the Battle of the Somme and spent much of the next two years in the line North of Arras, in command of 210 Field Company. In 1917 he won the Military Cross.

Early in January 1918 he became the RE Instructor at the Senior Officers' School in Aldershot, with the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Shortly afterwards, in March, he married Doris Canning whom he had first met twelve years previously. At his centenary birthday party he told his guests a most amusing story of how he had become engaged to Dot while she was still at school; her headmistress, under the impression that he was a relative, allowed him to visit her and failed to notice the engagement ring which she wore round the neck under her school uniform!

After the end of the War, Clough's survey experience in Nigeria led him to ask for another Survey appointment, and he was posted to Chatham as Assistant Instructor of Survey at the SME. He remained in this post for four years, during which time a very large number of officers passed through his hands. He found the work most rewarding, his enjoyment being considerably enhanced by the practical survey tours which in those days, were spent in delectable parts of Wales or Devonshire.

In 1925 he was appointed British Commissioner on the International Commission set up to delineate the boundaries between Albania, Yugoslavia and Greece. The topographical problems were that one might expect in such rugged terrain, and the task was complicated by political problems, by religious differences, and by such mundane considerations as the need to divert the boundary so as not to separate villagers from the grazing grounds of their flocks. There was also a considerable amount of banditry, so that the work was not without hazard — the entire Italian delegation had been ambushed and shot up in 1924. On his return to Britain, Clough received the Order of Skanderbe together with an illuminated address of thanks from King Zog; regrettably, Government policy required him to return these marks of esteem, which to him 'seemed a bit of an insult to the King'.

A short Works appointment in Colchester was followed by a similar one in Malta, this latter being rescinded in favour of a War Office posting just as he was embarking. With a true Nelsonian touch, he decided that it was by then too late to do anything about it and so he proceeded to Malta where he was able to enjoy a few restful weeks before returning home to serve his time with the Geographical Section General Staff. He found the work in London interesting, but was less enthusiastic about the daily office life in dark rooms which did not suit his open-air spirit. After less than a year GSGS he was delighted to be offered the appointment of Senior British Commissioner on the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission charged with determining the boundary between Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo. This involved a triangulation framework astride the watershed between the Zambezi and Congo Rivers; the water-shed defined the boundary and therefore had to be precisely located by lines of levels and marked by pillars. After two very happy years, Clough's party

was relieved and he came home to write his reports and sign the agreements in Brussels with his Belgian opposite number. For his services to the Commission he was awarded the OBE.

In the Spring of 1930 he was posted to the Ordnance Survey in Southampton and took charge of the Publication Division. At this time he set up his home in Romsey, where he lived for the next 35 years. In 1934 he was appointed, in the rank of Colonel, as Deputy Director and Executive Officer in the OS, where the years immediately before the Second World War saw a big increase in map production for the War Office. In 1939 he was told that he would be Director of Survey of the British Expeditionary Force if and when it mobilized, and so it was that on 4 September 1939 he opened his secret orders and left immediately for France, being one of the first members of the BEF to land there†. During the so-called phoney war period a structure of field survey units, map depots and controlling staffs was built up under Clough's direction, there having been nothing comparable in the peace-time Regular Army. Virtually all the men involved, Clough included, survived Dunkirk; but of course much valuable equipment was lost there.

In the post-Dunkirk phase there was a move to disband all D Survey units and staffs entirely. Some forceful persuasion by the then Director General of the Ordnance Survey, supported by other senior officers including Clough who saw clearly the folly of such a move, resulted in a proper establishment structure being authorized. Early in 1941 he was appointed Survey GHQ Home Forces with an office in St Paul's School. Once the threat of invasion had passed, thoughts began to turn towards an Allied return to the Continent. Among the early preparations was a huge project to re-map the Northern coastal region of France at a scale of 1:25000, for which purpose an RAF Spitfire Squadron was tasked with obtaining the thousands of air photographs required. In due course, GHQ Home Forces became 21 Army Group, with Clough still the D Survey. When COSSAC was set up, he was appointed to be its Director of D Survey, and eventually he became Survey SHAEF in which, of course, he was in very close collaboration with the Americans on all technical matters to do with maps and survey. Not surprisingly, Clough's personality enabled him to form an extremely cordial and effective working

†See also 1939 Letters by Martin Hotine page 136.

relationship with the Corps of Engineers officer who directed the US survey effort at SHAEF. The break-out from Normandy posed huge problems of map supply and there were many other technical difficulties of an unusual nature to be resolved before the War finally ended. Clough's able direction of these major survey operations was recognized by the award of the CBE, the US Legion of Merit, and the French Legion d'Honneur and Croix de Guerre with Palm.

Arch Clough retired in 1945 and returned to live in Romsey. Never one to do nothing, he started work for a British company mining pyrites in Portugal. He learned the ins and outs of commercial life, and made a number of visits to the mine itself until, in 1960 the company was taken over and he resigned.

Shortly after the end of the War he was asked to write an Historical War Monograph covering the history of mapping and survey during the War years. Entitled "Maps and Survey: the Second World War" and running to some 330,000 words, this work took three years to complete and is accepted as the definitive work of reference on the subject.

Arch moved from Romsey to nearby Michelmersh in 1965, where he remained until his death. Living in the area for nearly sixty years, he naturally formed very close links with it. He was for a time the Chairman of the Romsey Conservative Association, for some twenty years he served the local branch of SSAFA, first as its Secretary and then as President; and until the early 1970s he was a Voluntary Visitor to war-disabled pensioners in the Romsey area. There are few people living in the Test Valley who have never heard of him, and he stood high in the regard and affection of all who knew him. Until recently, when advancing years finally reduced his mobility somewhat, his upright and unmistakably military figure was very much a part of the local scene.

He carried with him to the grave the dignity, courtesy and good manners of the age in which he was born. Kind and gentle, especially with children of whom he was very fond, he was forthright when the occasion demanded it, and at such times there was no mistaking the authority in his voice.

His interest in the Corps never flagged. In his ninetieth year he accepted an invitation to a Guest Night in the Headquarters Mess, and was delighted to find that the high standards were little changed from those of 1909 when he had last attended such a function — on his Batch Night! In recent years he went several times to the Colonel Commandants' 'At Home' at Minley Manor, the last occasion being just two months before his 100th birthday.

On the morning of 30 August 1988, the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire called upon him in person to deliver a telegram of congratulations and good wishes from Her Majesty The Queen. He also received a telegram from The Queen Mother, who had remembered that he had been an usher at her wedding. Later in the day, an official Sapper delegation called on him and presented a gift from the Corps to mark the occasion.

The family celebration of the centenary was attended by nearly 200 relatives and friends, and was a very happy occasion. Arch's speech at the end of lunch was a tour de force, spoken firmly and clearly with the aid only of his astounding memory, and covering with much gentle humour the span of his long and eventful life. He was clearly a very contented man and had every reason to be so.

His family has been his great pride and joy, and an immense support to him. This was especially true in the dark days following the very sudden death, in 1976, of his beloved wife Dot. He is survived by his daughters Angela and Patricia, by six grandchildren and by eight great-grandchildren.

BSrGI, UHK