

## IN MEMORIAM R. LL. BROWN



It is with the deepest regret that we record the death of Major-General R. Llewellyn Brown. He died after a short illness on 17th July, 1983, within a week of his 88th birthday. Thus the Photogrammetric Society has lost one of its founder members, if not its father figure and we feel the loss deeply.

Reginald Llewellyn Brown, CB, CBE, MA, FRICS, FRGS (but universally known as "Bruno") was the son of Colonel F. D. M. Brown, VC, and was educated at Wellington and the Royal Military Academy. He was due to enter the Corps of Royal Engineers in August 1914 but had the misfortune to be 'on a walking tour in the Harz Mountains at the outbreak of war. As a military cadet, he was imprisoned and spent the whole war in a civilian internment camp. However, this gave him the opportunity to develop wide interests including philosophy, art, music, literature and acting, subjects not usually associated with military officers.

After the First World War, Brown entered enthusiastically into his Army career, specialising in surveying. When off duty, he was a keen sportsman, playing rugby for the Army and Kent, captaining both teams in 1921, and he also fenced for the Army in that year. From 1921 to 1926 he was seconded to the Colonial Office to carry out topographical surveys in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and, while far up country, lost his right arm in a shooting accident which nearly cost him his life due to the primitive conditions and difficulties of travel. This injury caused him considerable pain for the

rest of his life and it is a measure of his strength of character that he never allowed his disability to restrict his activities or independence, as anyone who offered to help him on with his coat found out to their cost.

Subsequently he played golf to a handicap of eight, aided by a special grip which he designed to prevent the shaft from turning in his hand. He drove his car with urgency and flair, operating the crash gears and all other controls with great dexterity but presenting any passenger with a nerve racking experience.

From 1929 to 1939, he was involved in the early application of photogrammetry to surveying, firstly while on a survey of the proposed Haifa-Baghdad railway and, later, as Officer in charge of Air Survey and Revision in the Ordnance Survey. Typically, while in Palestine, he took the opportunity of learning to fly, being taught by Squadron-Leader (later Air Marshal) Atcherley of Schneider Trophy fame.

The Second World War gave him the opportunity of displaying both his professional skills and powers of leadership. He spent the whole war overseas in France, the Middle East, North Africa and Italy. In a remarkable career, this period in the Mediterranean must rank as one of the highlights. Under his direction, the use of air photography for survey purposes was greatly developed both in scope and in technique. It was due to his foresight that the region of the Alamein battlefield was thoroughly mapped at a time when many thought that such maps would never be wanted. Ultimately his Directorate controlled about 3500 technicians, employed on the maps of an area of nearly one million square miles. This large survey organisation depended almost entirely on air photographs of one kind or another for the making of new maps and the revision of existing maps. Those who remember him in the Mediterranean will not forget his zeal, energy and optimism, particularly when things were going badly.

Of this period and on the occasion of the award of our President's Medal in 1963, Colonel Louis B. (Gus) Wirak sent the following note from the United States: "From July 1943 to October 1944, I was privileged to serve as Deputy Director of Survey at Allied Force Headquarters in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. I use the word privileged because the then Director of Surveys was Brigadier R. Ll. Brown, a person of rare talents, possessed of great charm and unusual perception.

"It is difficult to visualise any individual other than Bruno Brown who could direct so effectively such a diverse and headstrong collection of staff members as constituted the Survey Directorate in 1943-4. There were brains and brawn from the United Kingdom, the Union of South Africa, New Zealand and the United States (including a one-time member of the Irish Republican Army). This group dealt with all manner of allies and encountered all sorts of temperaments. The group gathered daily with Bruno to seek his counsel in surmounting crises, super crises and near disasters. From these counsels there invariably came hard work, specifically directed to some goal, and more than enough for everyone. Yet always the work was accomplished, co-operatively and with camaraderie. All who participated in this hectic period recognised that it was due to Bruno's splendid leadership that the Survey needs of the theater were met, and met well considering the astronomic demands versus the

resources available to the Survey Directorate. It was a privilege and an education to serve with Bruno Brown. I cherish his friendship." He was awarded the CBE in 1941 and the US Legion of Merit in 1945, which justly indicate the massive contribution he made in the allied war effort.

He occupied key positions in the government survey organisations in the immediate post-war period, being Director of Military Survey from 1946 to 1949 and Director General of Ordnance Survey from 1949 to 1953. These were difficult years when Europe was devastated and the application of survey and photogrammetric techniques was hampered by the lack of equipment. Nevertheless, he guided the Military Survey Service from its wartime status to its peacetime organisation and role and, in the Ordnance Survey, he codified the policies which were to guide its work thereafter through a series of policy statements. These statements set out precisely and unambiguously policies to govern the difficult task of resurveying Britain after some decades of neglect of mapping while simultaneously maintaining the new mapping by continuous revision as the postwar reconstruction proceeded apace. Brown's far sighted vision, coupled with a meticulous exactitude in the use of English, ensured that these policy statements laid the foundation for the work of the Ordnance Survey to the present time. In his farewell address to the staff of the Ordnance Survey he said that, if ever they should abandon his policy of continuous revision, he would return to haunt them, a threat that present and future staff of the Ordnance Survey will do well to remember.

After retiring from the Ordnance Survey and the Army in 1953, Brown applied himself energetically to furthering the progress of the newly created professional and learned societies related to the survey profession. He played a leading part in the formation of the Photogrammetric Society, served on its Council for 21 years and was President from 1957 to 1959. He was the President's Medallist in 1963 and became an Honorary Member in 1965. On his retirement from Council in 1975, the Society presented him with a silver salver, inscribed:

"To Major-General R. Ll. Brown from his friends and colleagues of The Photogrammetric Society in appreciation of his work on their behalf over many years."

He was instrumental in creating the British National Committee for Photogrammetry to provide the national adhering link to the International Society for Photogrammetry (ISP). He was a member of Council of the ISP (now the ISPRS) from 1952 to 1964 and President from 1956 to 1960. He managed the affairs of this international organisation forcefully but with great tact and diplomacy and photogrammetrists throughout the world still recall with great pleasure his handling of the IXth International Congress in London in 1960, culminating in the spectacular banquet in the Guildhall. He was made an Honorary Member of ISP in 1960, a rare but thoroughly deserved honour.

Brown was a founder member of the Land Surveyors' Division of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in 1949 and served on the Divisional Council for over 30 years. He was Chairman of the Divisional Council during the critical period

when the Division was clarifying its role within the Institution and his clear and far-sighted judgement was largely responsible for creating the present relationship at a time when other influential persons resigned from the Institution. He was an active fellow of the Royal Geographical Society being a Councillor, then Vice-President and Foreign Secretary. One of his most treasured honours was the Founder's Gold Medal, awarded to him in 1978.

Nor were his activities after retirement limited to professional and learned societies; he acted as a consultant to Spartan Air Services of Canada for their work in Europe and the Middle East and when, in 1963, Spartan bought an interest in Meridian Airmaps Ltd., Brown was appointed Chairman. In 1973, Meridian repurchased the Spartan interests and under normal circumstances, he should have retired as Chairman, but the arrangement had worked so well that he was asked to continue as Chairman of the company, which he continued to do until his death. While he was less involved with technical details in recent years, his interest in and care for the staff was maintained as strongly as ever.

In his later years, Brown maintained his earlier interests in golf and rugby and he was always to be seen at Twickenham during the Inter-Services games. He developed a keen interest in philately and built up a fine collection of Dutch stamps. At his home in Yateley, he was active in local affairs. Together with his sister, he founded a workshop for the disabled to make and sell goods and he keenly supported St. Peter's Church where he was a churchwarden for many years.

Brown possessed a fortunate combination of qualities, having the sharpness of mind to see solutions and the necessary energy and determination to implement them; at the same time, he always showed a genuine concern for others and, above all, allowed his strong sense of humour to soften the outwardly stern appearance which had led his subordinates during his Army days to stand in awe of him. After leaving the Army, he might have been expected to support the official line, but he often argued against the establishment, concentrating his efforts to furthering the well being of, and those serving in, the survey profession. Indeed, it was his interest in and concern for people that endeared him to all who knew him. As a result, he was able to offer such wise counsel to the many organisations which he served and he did so with humility and good humour. Who else, when writing to *The Times* in 1973 to castigate the Government for concealing their intentions over the Ordnance Survey, would have added such an amusing afterthought as "And another thing, Sir, you have not yet put my birthday in your columns."? *The Times* did so thereafter.

Looking back over Brown's distinguished career, it is a matter of some regret that he did not write his memoirs, since he was the centre of action at a number of critical periods. However, the following quotation illustrates his farsightedness. Writing in the 50th issue of this journal, to congratulate the Society, he said: "How many earnest photogrammetrists of 25 years ago would have predicted so long a life for *The Photogrammetric Record* or so high an esteem, not only in this country but abroad also? Not many I suspect. To what can we attribute its success? This is anybody's guess. Mine is the presence amongst us at the time of a few intelligent and perceptive persons, who saw the value (in a fast developing scientific world) of a Society for

photogrammetry based on the principles on which ours has been founded, and a large number of persons (amongst whom I number myself) who had the faith in their vision and actively supported them."

In Bruno Brown, the Photogrammetric Society has lost a revered colleague, who led us skilfully and purposefully in our early years and guided us wisely in recent times (the Frontispiece photograph dates from 1982). We shall miss him greatly. We share his loss with his wife, son and three grandchildren to whom we offer our deepest sympathy.

**Anonymous (1984), *In Memoriam R. Ll. Brown*, The Photogrammetric Record, Vol.11, No.63, April 1984, pp.241-244.**