



### Lt Col Robin "Robbie" Laing

Robin was born in Fulham in 1922. He attended Wallingbrook Boarding School, until at age 14 he joined Army Boy Service. He became a R Signals Apprentice Tradesman, and was trained as a Despatch Rider and Signals Fitter. He went into Man's Service at 18, and in 1941 was posted to the Plymouth Signal Section at Crownhill. He was nicknamed "Robbie", and remained so for the rest of his life.

In 1942, he attended an NCOs' training course at Harrogate, was retained as an instructor, and promoted Cpl. In 1943, he volunteered for Airborne Forces, and trained as a Parachutist. He joined 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Div Sigs, serving with them in Normandy, and at the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes, where he was promoted Sgt. On the day of his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday in 1944, Robbie flew by glider and fought in Op Varsity, the Battle of the Rhine Crossing. He later took part in the advance across Germany to the Baltic, where the Allies met up with the Russians, and the war in Europe ended.

Robbie returned to England with 6<sup>th</sup> AB Div Sigs in 1945 and prepared for war in the Far East. However, when that war also came to an end after the Japanese surrender, 6 AB Div was shipped instead to Palestine. Late that year, he commanded an Independent Signals Troop, attached to The King's Own Hussars. On completion of this attachment, Robbie was Mentioned in Despatches.

In November 1946, he went on leave in UK and married Doreen. 6 AB Div returned to UK in 1948 and was disbanded. Amidst the reformation of British Airborne units, Robbie was posted to 16 (Indep) Para Bde Sig Sqn, which formed at Schleswig-Holstein in W Germany. He came back to the UK with them in 1950.

In 1951, 16 (Indep) Para Bde was sent to Cyprus on board the aircraft carriers HMS Triumph and HMS Warrior. The Bde was to prepare for operations against Persia, which was threatening to seize the oil fields. However, the situation was resolved diplomatically, and the Bde went instead to the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt. During this time, Robbie was promoted WO2 (SSM) of 16 (Indep) Para Bde Sig Sqn. When the Bde eventually returned to England in 1955, Robbie was sent as an instructor to RMA Sandhurst.

In 1967, he was promoted WO1 (RSM), and posted to the Officers' Training Wing, Catterick. In 1959, he moved to the School of Signals, Catterick. This was followed by postings to 10 Sig Regt in Krefeld in 1960 and to 1 Div Sig Regt in Verden in 1962. From the latter tour, Robbie was commissioned Lt (QM), and sent to 49 Sig Regt TA in York. In 1965, he was promoted Capt, and joined 216 Para Sig Sqn in Aldershot, as AO, and then Adjt. In 1970, he finally left the Paras on promotion to Major, when he was posted as QM (T) SWS for 18 Sig Regt in Singapore.

In 1972, he joined the Project Engineering and Planning Staff in London, and subsequently moved to Blandford. There, in 1974, he was promoted Lt Col, as QM (T), School of Signals. In 1978, having completed 42 years in R Signals, man and boy, Robbie retired to live firstly in Farnborough, Hants, then ultimately in Chudleigh, Devon.

Doreen died in March 1993. Robbie passed away peacefully in his sleep on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2008, aged 86. He is survived by their children, Douglas, Gail, and Robert, to whom are extended our deepest sympathy.

(Compiled by RAH from the contributions of Douglas Laing, and son-in-law, David Harris, in 2008)  
(Edited by RAH in 2012)