

OBITUARY

The whole membership will be saddened at the loss of our Vice-President and Founder Member. **G2EC**, Eric, to his many contacts, **Major- General Eric Stuart Cole, CB., CBE.**, was born on 10th February 1906 and died on 19th December 1993. Educated at Dover Grammar School, he was the son of a Bandmaster in the Royal Sussex Regiment. He was a widower, his wife Doris Hartley, the renowned artist whom he married in 1941 having died in 1986. There were no children, he was a very modest man but somewhat shy and with a very dry sense of humour.

Major-General Cole was Director of Telecommunications in the War Office 1958-1961 and planned the Signals aspects of the Normandy invasion. He had been commissioned into the Corps from Sandhurst in 1925 and was a well-known desert expert following his early service in Egypt and Palestine, acquiring skills which were later to be used by the Long Range Desert Group to advantage over the less experienced German and Italian forces. Maj-Gen. Cole built a transmitter/receiver which was used throughout a 2-car expedition over the Western Desert and the Libyan Sand Sea in the early 1930's, thus maintaining contact with his Abbassia HQ on a daily basis, something at the time thought not possible. He served under the then Major-General Montgomery in 1938 as Commander of the 88th Division Signals in Palestine.

At the outbreak of the Second World War he was Adjutant to 1st Division Signals in France with the BEF and as the German offensive began became 2 i/c to General Sir Alan Brooke's 1st Corps Signals. He was acting CSO of 1st Corps at Dunkirk.

In 1941 he became Chief Signals Officer of Force 110 and designed some of the specialist equipment used by the amphibious and airborne forces and in 1942 became Chief Signals Officer under Mountbatten at Combined Ops HQ and reverted to CSO 1st Corps at the Normandy landings, then, when their CO was killed in action, he took over 6th Airborne Division Signals until transferring to the Italian theatre in late 1944 as Deputy Signals Chief to Alexander's Allied Force HQ.

In 1946 he became Chairman of the British Joint Communications Board,

served 2 years in Washington, and remained so until his Directorship of Telecommunications at the War Office.

He retired from the Army in 1961 and became Manager of the Telecommunications Division of Ultra Electronics and in 1964 took over the management of Granger Associates the well-known aerial manufacturers and remained a Consultant Director with them.

In 1954 he put forward the idea of forming an Army Amateur Radio Society, but unfortunately his overseas posting prevented him from supervising the same but subsequently the Army Wireless Reserve Amateur Radio Society was formed of which Eric became Honorary Vice-President. In 1960 Eric asked Major General Whistler the Signals Officer in Chief to carry out the survey within the Corps which resulted in the formation of RSARS in 1961 at a meeting under Eric's chairmanship in the War Office.

He was an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society and a specialist coin collector of English bronze items. A keen sportsman he became the Army's light heavyweight boxing champion in the late 1920's and a county standard cricketer and a member of the combined services team. He was a golfer and President of the Army Golfing Society in the 1970's, winning the General's Cup on more than one occasion.

He was twice winner of BERU Contest and it will be remembered that he was President of the RSGB in 1961. His Presidential Address, given at a Meeting of the Radio Society of Great Britain held on 20th January 1961 at the Institution of Electrical Engineers, London WC2 was entitled "Military Telecommunications of the Past, Present and Future", and, as he said in his opening remarks "*a very wide field, with limited time and perforce compressed*". It does however contain two quotable and very pertinent remarks which are both classics in themselves, hold good to today and are very revealing of his character. In speaking of the A Set, in use in the years soon after the 1914-19 war and which had a nominal range of 6,000 yards he said:

"Its true range depended on the wireless operators, for they were, as they still are, divided into two classes, those who could make a set sit up and beg and those who could not, and those who could pick out and copy an S1 signal from a background of mush and static, and those to whom the same signal was

inaudible".

With equal relevance to the continuing scene some 32 years later, he included in his address:

"Having, as a military communicator, lived with this radio discipline for the greater part of my life", (he was speaking of military nets consisting sometimes of 200 stations and the extremely strict discipline needing 100% obedience by operators) "it has resulted in a personal antipathy to the use of voice on Amateur Radio nets. I suppose it is true to say that on the average amateur voice net the maximum number of words and the maximum amount of time are used to convey the very minimum of essential intelligence!" He commented that this strictness warranted *"no, repeat no, latitude given to any operator"* in nets of that type and calibre. It is felt by many that the same parameters obtain on ANY net, however large or small and whether military or amateur even though the latter is the oft-quoted *"only a hobby"*. We can learn much from our mentors.

He quoted the first Army Signalling Manual (1882) in its (as he called it) cryptic remark:

"The most accurate way of transmitting intelligence is by means of an orderly carrying a written message".

His address, albeit compressed as to the topic, contained areas dealing with the reliability of communications, the use of radio, the development of communications between the Wars, long distance communications, communications security, post-War equipment, radio procedures, frequency assignment, and his forecast for the future including a comment on electronic warfare, in all a most interesting and erudite address. He reserved his humour for such items as a much-admired article in the RSGB Bulletin of 1950 and a historical story in *"MERCURY"*. His 1950 article dealt with his difficulties after being ordered to remove his aerials from the roof of a block of flats in London including the subsequent design of a quickly-erected system for use during the hours of darkness which necessitated his groping around a roof 80-feet high in the dark, sometimes in wind and snow. His aerial "farm" comprised a 132-foot wire, a half-wave 3-wire dipole for 20m and a 3-element beam for 10m.!!! Erection time was, with practice, 11 minutes!! His endeavours and prowess as an

operator enabled him to take the leading G position in the 1949 ARRL DX Contest with this arrangement.

He received the award of CBE and a Mention in Despatches in 1945 and CB in 1960 and was Colonel Commandant Royal Signals 1962-1967. He is already sadly missed in military and amateur circles, a first-class Officer and a popular and dedicated Radio Amateur.