

CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON BEAL (S53-57)

The following is a personal profile written by Chris himself.

Christopher Beal was born in Cardiff where his father was serving as an officer in The Welch Regiment, and was educated at Framlingham College in Suffolk. In 1960 he joined the British Army as an officer in which he served for 18 years attaining the rank of Major before resigning in 1978 to move into to civilian life in order to return to the Middle or Far East. He had by then served as a soldier in Germany, Libya, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sabah, Sarawak, Hong Kong and at sea in landing craft. He specialised in field logistic operations, vehicle and animal transport and at sea in port and beach systems, landing craft and inland waterways operations.

After leaving the British Army he took part in a hot air balloon expedition flying through the Sudan, before moving on to the Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf. He joined the Royal Army of Oman as an Officer and was predominant in setting up the first Oman Army operational transport and field logistics system during its main phase of mechanisational development. He then moved to command and re-organise the tri-service School of Transport. During this period he developed a specialisation in desert and savannah land transport operations that included 14 years of equipment trials and design. He worked on land and coastal logistic operations, combining land, sea and air transport systems within the Gulf. He produced the original design and concept of operations for the Ampliroll fuel system in service with the Oman Army today.

A keen sportsman, having played squash and field hockey to a competitive standard, he treks to keep fit. With a love of horses and dogs, and trained in horsemanship, he has a deep-rooted interest in animals and the outdoors making him a keen environmentalist. He has been an active leader of outward bound activities, especially for young people, and has worked as an expeditioner, setting up successful youth projects in Northern England and the Gulf and has taken part in expeditions in the Middle and Far East, Africa and Europe. A lifelong fascination and hobby of history overlays his travels and geographical interests and influences much of what he does.

His experience in civilian and business life is more than what appears at first glance to be a predominantly military background. In much of his non active services phases he worked with civilian staff, companies and training establishments. He attended a Police Emergency Operations Planning Course covering industrial, airport and port co-ordination in safety and disaster management. He has sat as an official government representative on a Whitney Council Trade Union Committee.

After leaving military service in the Gulf, Chris Beal owned and managed a family established specialised travel and projects company in Muscat in the Sultanate of Oman, until closing it down in 2003 due to the developing political situation in the upper Gulf Region. Operations covered field trips, expeditioning, youth projects ,as well as advice and logistic support to a range of international film and press projects. These included a major crossing of the Empty Quarter Desert of Saudi Arabia.



In 2003 he joined the United Nations World Food Programme in Iraq and managed a logistic fuel project for their re-entry into the country immediately after the war, and the UNWFP 's distribution of some 500, 000 metric tons of food supplies monthly.

In 2008 he move to Switzerland, married, and where he and his wife Esther shared life with their Lagotto dog. He collated a much travelled life into some state of order, as well as writing articles covering stories collected along the way and his experiences to date. He also developed his long term hobby and fascination with the coastal regions of the Western Indian Ocean into a more detailed historical research project.

He was :-

A Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London.

A Member of the Honourable Artillery Company of London. A Member of the RCT Association.

A Member of the Royal United Services Institute in London. A Member of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. A Member of The British Mule Society.

Outline expeditions outside general work related military, safari or business projects:-

1968 Coastal Surveys of East Borneo Coast.

1976-78 Adventure Training Projects UK.

1978-79 Sudan Hot Air Balloon Expedition.

1984-86 Advisor to Royal Geographical Society's Oman Wahiba Sands Research Project.

1997 Fulcrum Challenge Youth Project Oman.

1998-99 NEC Camel Crossing of the Empty Quarter Desert (Oman-Saudi Arabia-UAE).

1998 Fulcrum Challenge Youth Project Oman.

1999 British Field Studies Council Course Project Oman.

2001 Brathay Trust Expedition Group — Mountains Oman (DOE).

2003 Planning staff Saracen Sands. British Camel Expedition Qatar to Oman (last minute cancelled due to security).

General research project covering:-

1. Zanzibar/Kilwa (Tanzania). Study of the maritime history of the East African Coast and its association with the Oman and the Gulf States.
2. The maritime history of the Western Indian Ocean.
3. The Sultanate of Oman, it's geography, history and present development.

He died on 6 May 2020 from a heart attack in Switzerland and his ashes will be given to the sea.

The following is an obituary written by an Army friend and published by the Sultan's Armed Forces Association

May 06, 2020

RAAID CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON (Chris) BEAL died in hospital in Switzerland on 6 May 2020, from a heart attack.

Chris was born on 12 July 1939 in Cardiff, Wales. His father was mobilised as a Territorial officer in the Welch Regt shortly after his birth and would eventually land in Normandy in 1944. He would end the war

as a decorated major in the Reconnaissance Corps. Chris was educated at Framlingham College, in Suffolk. He was commissioned from Mons Officer Cadet School into the Royal Army Service Corps in 1960, having been a National Serviceman since 1959. During his time in the British Army, he saw overseas service in Libya, Germany, Cyprus, Sabah, Sarawak, Hong Kong and Northern Ireland. He retired from the British Army as a major in the Royal Corps of Transport in 1978.

Following his service in the British Army and after a short time in Sudan acting as the logistics team leader for a documentary film crew, he joined SAF on 8 October 1979. Having arrived in the Sultanate he undertook a short attachment in Dhofar attached to A Company Southern Regiment (KJ), before joining Muqaddam Paul Benton as his operations and training officer in the rapidly developing Force Transport Regiment (FTR). They were both instrumental in taking the jaysh's operational logistics from 'back of a Bedford' ad hoc resupply arrangements, to a modern and integrated force-support capability in the early 1980s.

Chris was also a great enthusiast for rigorously testing every resupply element and he was only happy when an FTR capability had been desert-proven. He was a great mentor to Omani, Baluchi and Brit alike. He was a natural adventurer and from 1984 to 1986 he played a key role in supporting the Royal Geographical Society's expedition and detailed analysis of the Wahibah Sands. He had a depth of skill and experience that was put to great use and Chris played a huge part in preparing the Omani logistical contribution to the Peninsula Shield force that deployed to Kuwait. He was an enthusiast for Omanisation and always committed time to developing junior Omani officer capabilities in terms of bringing on their command and planning skills. He ended his time in SAF as the Commandant of the Force's School of Transport.

Chris and his wife Heide ran an exclusive tourist operation in Oman after he left the army. He was deeply loyal to his dear wife Heide during her battle with cancer, which she sadly lost in Oman in 2002, as well as being a great father to their daughter Natasha. In 2003 he returned to London and took on a logistics fuel project for the UN in Iraq just after the war. Later he met a fellow spirit in a Swiss Lady, Esther, so they married and he moved to Switzerland where they lived peacefully for 13 years in a small farming village outside Bern. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a member of the Honourable Artillery Company as well as holding memberships of a number of other associations and institutes. He joked that his time on horses in Hong Kong may have helped him get into the HAC.

Chris was immensely positive and would always lift the spirits of others under strain. As a friend, he was witty, warm and always patient. He was very popular with his Omani friends and when on his frequent trips into the interior he was never short of places to stop for qahwa and dates. He was a wonderful guide who loved to share his knowledge of the Sultanate (a country he adored), a real raconteur who was never short of a story. As a host, he was always generous and when paying a visit to Chris it really was a case of 'baytee baytak'. He will be sorely missed by all that knew him.

Once the travel restrictions due to COVID-19 are lifted, Chris' ashes will be given to the sea in the smallest circle according to Chris' wishes.

(Chris Tomlinson)

