

ISSUE 12

AUTUMN - WINTER 1997

O B A N



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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Vice Presidents - Past Commandants

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Warrant Officer 1(ASM) Dave W Merrick REME (77C)

Staff Sergeant Mick M Cuthbert REME (84C)

Peter D Gripton (56B)

Bill E N Pusey (46A)

Committee meetings are held 3-4 times per year. Any member wishing to put forward a motion or item to the Committee for consideration may do so by writing directly to the Honorary Secretary. Additionally, an ad hoc administration committee is convened, usually under the Chairmanship of the College Adjutant and attended by all interested parties, to deal with the details of the reunion weekend.

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Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter

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From the Editor

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Issue 12. Again we have had a sizeable amount of letters in response to others and some on new subjects, and some interesting articles on a wide range of subjects, so many that I am continuing to compile OBANs 13 and 14! The following articles are to appear in future issues of OBAN:

An extract from **Arborfield Apprentice**, July 1956
- an appreciation of RSM McNally on leaving the AAS, - *courtesy of Pete Gripton (56B)*,

Who Are They & What Are They - *your assistance is required to identify 8 photos, circa 1943*,

Those Local Inns - Part II, Other Village Pubs
- *By Brian Hornsey (54A)*,

The Experiences of a Young Rifleman, Parts I & II -
By John Maddox (44B),

The Arborfield Experience - *By Dick Wade (39A)*,
Personality Slot - *Ken Burren (42A)*

The REME to Civvy Street Experience
- *By Dick Wade (39A)*,

My Resonant Theory of Love
- *By Frank Fendrick (45A)*

...and more Letters to the Editor!

If possible, it would be a great help (and reduce the likelihood of so many typos appearing) if contributors could send their contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows version).

If you don't have access to a computer, then of course I will accept clearly written hand written contributions. If your contribution doesn't appear in the next expected issue of OBAN, it will certainly appear in a later issue - don't be disheartened! All contributions that I receive will eventually be published - it all depends on how the final layout of a particular issue turns out as to which article or letter I select.

Reunion 97. Letters received reporting on the weekend will have to wait until OBAN 13 owing to a backlog of letters already received and demanding prior attention.

Last date for Issue 13 contributions: 28 February 1998.

Brian Hornsey (54A)

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As I settle down to write this message and try to put my thoughts into some sort of order it seems to me that the only constant thing about life here in the College is its unpredictability. Whilst the threat of closure has now disappeared the ever-changing nature of service life continues to affect everything we do and if anything it complicates rather than simplifies matters.

To simple men like myself this is not unnaturally unsettling and frustrating but at least it does lead to an interesting and exciting time which is really a pretty good description of the past 7 or 8 months in the College.

Our Pay and QM staff have been centralised at Garrison level and although this has been a bit of a culture shock for all of us they have remained incredibly loyal to the College and I must say that in general they have gone out of their way to make life easy for the apprentices.

This landmark was followed by another with the April POP at which the first intake of R SIGNALS apprentices passed out of the College and moved on to Blandford to start their trade training.

The Reviewing Officer was SOinC and I'm pleased to say that the whole day went exceedingly well in front of an enormous crowd of friends and relatives.

Also in April we came under command of the Initial Training Group, the organisation responsible for all basic recruit training. Whilst it was sad to move away from REME I am absolutely certain that it is a step in the right direction.

The Summer term passed relatively quietly and once again the highlight was the POP. This time the Reviewing officer was an ex-apprentice Major General Stokoe, an ex-Harrogate boy, who with the temperature in the high 80s made the day a memorable one for the 220 apprentices passing out and the 1600+ spectators.

Needless to say we have continued to progress towards our new structure and course and whilst there has been little tangible output we have achieved much more than I ever expected, thanks to the dedication and commitment of all the Col-

lege staff, military, civil service and contractor alike.

The physical changes will begin in the near future with the construction of a new fifty man accommodation block which will be complete by Christmas.

Additionally I have also had the first meeting with the architects and engineers designing our new gymnasium and work on that project is now some five months ahead of schedule.

Finally, as I write this on the eve of the AOBA Reunion looking out of my office window watching the first Old Boys arriving in the College I can only hope that the apprentices of today will be as loyal, dedicated and successful as their predecessors. From what I have seen in my 18 months in command I have every confidence that this is a wish which has every chance of being fulfilled.

Lt Col Nigel Moore

THE NORMAN FURSDEN AWARD

**Intake 97A
AT Millson**

At the Summer '97 POP AT Millson was presented with the Norman Fursden Award in recognition of his overall contribution to raising the prestige and reputation of the College.

He was considered worthy of this award for his contribution to numerous charity events and in particular his efforts in raising money for Guide Dogs for the Blind, the MS Society and for a Baby Care Unit at Frimley Park Hospital.

**From the Retiring Honorary Secretary
Larry Le Var (47A)**

I have enjoyed being 'Secretary of the AOBA', a position which has brought me into contact with old boys of all ages and from all walks of life.

When I watched the 1996 reunion parade I felt proud to belong to such an elite group who had served their country so loyally in peace and war and who continue to contribute so much to society in their later years.

As retiring Secretary of the AOBA I believe that it is incumbent upon me to thank the staff of both the College and Museum for their magnificent support in arranging reunion weekends. I now look forward to attending many a reunion weekend in the years to come.

Larry Le Var (47A)

**From the Incoming Honorary Secretary
Major Bob Hambly (64A)**

I was born in 1947 so it is good to know that Larry and I are of equal vintage albeit for alternate start points. Having done just thirty-three and a half years and thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent in the Colours I am now firmly esconced as the Army Careers Officer, based in Reading, for Berks, Bucks, Oxon and Herts.

I look forward very much to a close alliance with the Apprentice College and being able to contribute to the future of the Arborfield Old Boys' Association. I think that it is very important for us to build upon the efforts of Larry and John and to take the Association forward into the next millennium.

I have been looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible at Reunion '97 and by the time this OBAN is distributed will have had that pleasure. From the jeep,

Bob Hambly (64A)

**From the Retiring Membership Secretary
John Northam (47A)**

As this is my last contribution to OBAN as Membership Secretary I'd just like to say thanks to all those who, for whatever reason, have phoned or written over the past eight years. It was this contact with members that made the job worthwhile and enjoyable. As the editor of the first seven OBANs it has been heartening to see how the Association has developed since the launch of Issue 1 in May 1992 and the significant part it has played in steadily increasing membership numbers and in renewing contact between members, both at home and abroad, which was one of its original aims.

Our Chairman at that time was Colonel Peter Gibson. He couldn't have imagined at that committee meeting in 1991 when I suggested resurrecting the OBAN and he, in typical military fashion, suggested that I get on with it, that he would in 1997 be taking over from me as Membership Secretary. It's not his fault he isn't an ex-Arborfield apprentice but his enthusiasm for, and commitment to the Association, as it was then, is 100%. I wish him well.

John Northam (47A)

**From the Incoming Membership Secretary
Col (Retd) Peter Gibson**

I am delighted to have taken over the post of Membership Secretary from John Northam although I recognise that he will be a hard act to follow. John has been an outstandingly successful Membership Secretary although even he would admit that his task would have been much harder without June's support.

The Chairman has set me the target of 1,000 active members in time for the millennium and I will need help from all of you if I am to be successful. You may find a letter from me dropping onto your doormat, asking for assistance!

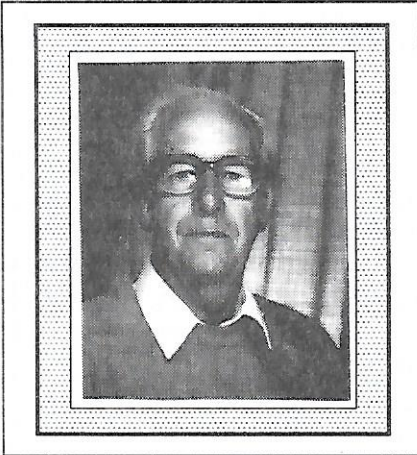
In the meantime, there are two things that you can do for me. Firstly, don't move house without giving me your new address. Secondly, if you are a younger member, and perhaps still serving, find some ex-boy friends who haven't yet (re)joined and badger them until they do so. I look forward to hearing from any of you who care to make contact.

Peter Gibson

PERSONALITY SLOT

By
Michael Dickinson (42A)

As soon as I saw Charles Ashdown's name, it brought back many memories, so much so that it has prompted me to write my personality slot!



Michael Dickinson as he is today

Charlie and I were in the same intake 42A, both in C Company and both in the same barrack room, G6. I cannot remember the names of all the boys in G6, those I can remember were:

Sgt Curley Hellier (in the bunk),
Jock Craig,
Jock Agnew,
Les Tweedy,
Tommy Tomlinson,
Dunlop,
Cliff Nock,
John Shaw (now in New Zealand),
Dago Cell,
Willie Williams,
Roy Kershaw,
Kellog,
Charlie and myself.

In 1944 I went with many others to Aldershot and worked long and hard hours in the Tank Shop.

I can remember on one occasion one of the boys, Eric Clark, was at a grinding machine when a Sherman

tank backing into a bay, ran into him and chopped his leg off, like a hot knife through butter. I wonder where Eric is now.

November 1944 saw me posted to Warley Barracks, Brentwood for 6 weeks primary training. I was then posted to Catterick Camp, North Yorkshire.

In 1947 I was posted to Farnley Park camp, Otley for transit to Jamaica, where I spent 3 very happy years.

From April 1951 to October 1952 I was on 56 Art. Veh. Course and on completion went to 23 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery at Tidworth. My first job as an artificer in the winter of 52/53 was to go with the Regiment to Canvey Island on the Essex coast and spend six weeks filling sand bags to stem the floods which were the worst in living memory - the Thames barriers were eventually built to stop this flooding.

In June 1953 I was with the Regiment at the Coronation Parade. Then in December of that year, I was posted to the Canal Zone, 2 Base Workshop, Tel-El-Kebir. I remained there until June 1956 when I moved on to 1 Base Workshop, Tripoli, Libya.

In 1958 I returned to 6 Training Battalion at Bordon.

I retired from the Army on pension and in 1966 was appointed as lecturer in the Engineering Science Dept at SEME. Those Old Boys on tiffy courses between 1966 and 1991 may remember me.

I finally retired on my 65th birthday and am now living in Hindford, Hampshire and do my best to be as good a husband, father, grandfather and golfer as I can be!

It's that Gilbert again!

For those who don't know (*and there are not many of those - Ed*) Gilbert was a grey shire horse, the pride and joy of Captain Ben Cook, the Quartermaster. Gilbert provided motive power for various agricultural implements which were used in Ben's efforts to provide more food for hungry apprentices.

On one very cold winters morning, about twelve of us were working as 'agriculturists' and were engaged on lifting carrots from the frozen field to the rear of the Company Offices.

The ground was frozen hard and progress was slow. There was one perk for the lads on this type of duty and it was a slice of fruit cake in addition to the cocoa at break time. On this particular morning Ben decided to visit us just as the refreshments arrived. However, he decided we had not worked hard enough so he gave all the cake to Gilbert! You should have seen our faces and heard our comments after he departed.

Another occasion was one Sunday evening when we were all anticipating going to the Sunday cinema show. Our lives were rudely upset by a distressed Ben storming into our barrack room and ordering us to go to Gilbert's assistance.

Gilbert had been allowed out of his stable to graze and had tried to have a drink from one of the static water tanks near the road to the sports fields. The problem was that he had fallen in and could not get out!

We, the boys of D Company, were the nearest so we were lumbered with the task of supporting Gilbert with a tarpaulin under his belly held by ropes with about forty boys pulling on the ropes. To get him out, the water had to be pumped out and the wall of the Braithwaite tank was cut away using oxyacetylene torches. This took at least two hours, so we missed the cinema show!!

P.S. Changing the subject: The late Dave Ratter was the first Boy RSM. He was with D Company and I occupied the bunk at the side of his room. I think Gordon Lakes was the second appointee to that exalted position, because I can remember both of them.

George W Ulyet (43A)

REMINISCENCES - Part IV
Final Thoughts from an Oct 43
Ex Boy
by

Walter Jobber (Oct43)

When one reflects on the social side of life that was experienced while on boy's service, it must be stated that it was singularly lacking in most things, especially at Arborfield.

Arborfield had two strikes against it: one, it was, to all intents, a garrison only and amenities as such were non-existent, and two, was its location - miles from anywhere - four to Wokingham, seven to Reading.

Transport (buses) were of limited frequency and required precious funds to use same. Remember, this was back in the days when shops closed early on a Saturday afternoon for the weekend and even 'the pictures' did not open until the evening on a Sunday. Also, that we were required to be back in barracks before 2130 hrs to attend evening roll call ('Stand by your beds!').

No such thing as a late night pass unless you had attained the age of eighteen when it was deemed that your man's service had started, though you were still classified as an apprentice tradesman by rank. Overnight passes were a rarity, though if one had a valid reason or excuse they could be wangled. Because of this, while at Arborfield, the majority of boys elected to stay in the camp.

Leave was granted on four occasions a week, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from approximately 1730 hrs to 2130 hrs, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 1200 hrs to 2130 hrs. Of course, as the starting times for leaves was at the same time as the evening meal or dinner, we tended to go out a bit later if we

ever took advantage of the occasions.

To help pass the time there was a fairly comprehensive amount of events laid on to keep us occupied. Cinema shows were laid on three nights a week for our benefit. These were held in the gymnasium (camp hall) on Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday evenings and indeed were a great counter attraction to going out. Paradoxically, the cinema was also a place where discipline regards smoking was relaxed to a certain extent.

The hall was arranged so that approximately half the floor was sloping. The seating arrangement was such that permanent staff and those apprentices old enough to draw a cigarette ration occupied the upper or sloping area. Incidentally, the slope also gave one a better view of the screen.

The lower or flat area was for those of us who, irrespective of intake, were not old enough to have a cigarette ration and therefore not old enough to partake of the habit. Needless to say, when the lights were dimmed for the start of the film show, those in the rear half of the hall were completely dazzled by the simultaneous lighting of cigarettes from the front, and for the remainder of the show had to peer through a thickening smoke haze as those below continued to light up.

Never once, to my knowledge, was any attempt made to find the culprits among the offenders in the lower half of the hall. This anomaly only happened in the camp hall when it was used on social occasions - woe betide any under age smoker caught doing so outside its 'protection'. Dances were held on the Thursday evening for those so inclined, again in the camp hall. These were great opportunities to have close contact

with the opposite sex as they were not only frequented by the ATS (female) element of the School, but also attracted those females stationed or living in the immediate area. I myself did not attend the dances, though I can still remember paying 'Nobby' Hall (a civilian instructor) and his wife five shillings for them to attempt to teach me and other hopefuls of my intake the rudiments of dancing. In my case they did not succeed too well, even to this day I can just about manage a waltz.

Others, though, took to it like ducks to water and in no time at all had successfully mastered the different steps, were guiding partners around the dance floor at the same time avoiding other couples who appeared in their path.

Concerts were also arranged. Indeed I can remember one that was put on for our benefit by the staff and inmates of Broadmoor Asylum as it was known to us in them days. As can be imagined 'us' and 'them' were strictly segregated at the time. Again, in case it has been forgotten the members of the cast in the majority of cases were inmates of the Asylum, considered criminally insane and had been found guilty of murder.

Then there was always the snooker hall, available if that was your forte. The fact that there were only four (?) tables for the whole of the School ensured that there was never a time when they were not occupied. The method of booking the tables was on the first come first served principle. This entailed a mad dash to finish one's meal, leave the table and cookhouse (provided the table NCO so allowed), an equally hectic run to the snooker hall to join the queue of eager ATs outside the door and rapidly counting the number of bodies in front to ascertain if there was a chance of getting a table for a

session. The hall itself was only open for playing from 1800 hrs to 2100 hrs as each table was booked for a half hour period, no matter how many had elected to play the frame. If the game was not finished in the allotted time span, as we used to say, 'hard cheese!' The next people allocated the table cleared the balls, set them up and commenced their game as fast as possible. Because of this limitation, Billiards was as likely to be played as at least one had the full thirty minutes of play.

Chalk was almost unheard of, cues were all shapes and sizes, and as one rarely got the same one twice, cue control could be a bit of a 'hit or miss' affair. Other activities were also catered for. I can remember attending model making and photography classes, though on the whole, outside of sport I cannot remember too many other activities.

The social side was a bit different while we were at Bury during the school break up period. The camp in question had been hastily erected to cater for the needs of an ever expanding Army and sporting/social activities were given a low priority in the building programme. Furthermore, as we were situated in an old mill, space was at a premium.

Unlike Arborfield, Bury had two distinct advantages, it was a thriving town and it was within walking distance. This meant that we could get to it more frequently and also take part in those activities that we pursued while on leave, namely chasing the girls and visiting the pubs. Not that the latter could be involved in too frequently as funds were very limited. Remember, we were still only getting around three to four shillings in our hands at the pay table and that had to pay for all the items that we required, not just for our amusements. It did seem to us lads that there was an extraordinary

number of public houses along the High Street at Bury.

One amenity that Bury had that was not available to us at Arborfield was an indoor swimming pool. This was a great place for social gatherings and many a friendship was formed with members of the opposite sex under its roof. The pool was also used by the School (as it was still called) for physical training and we would be marched into Bury to have swimming practise. Needless to say, the lessons were male orientated, females being strictly taboo. On returning to Arborfield, the routine that had been established before quickly became the 'norm' and Bury was like it had never existed.

Each intake of boys (and indeed within the intakes), had other activities in which they engaged. The cinema and the dances remain mostly in my memory as for a period of time I was employed in the projection room of the cinema. In this capacity as well as ensuring that the films were made up properly so that the reels ran in the correct sequence and did not break down too many times, I also helped to play the records for the music prior to the films starting and also during the dances.

The memory is now starting to dim a little and further thoughts are more difficult to recall. Names and places keep appearing fleetingly while I am putting my thoughts down on paper. Some of my contemporaries are becoming harder to recall as I have only seen them once or twice since leaving the School. Others have been forgotten altogether as no trace of them has been found since the final disbandment of the October 43 intake. Some have been recalled to mind during the recollections made by colleagues at the reunions. Hopefully, some will remember me when reading these 'Reminiscences' and may them-

selves put pen to paper and write a small article for OBAN. After all, Jess Pye has resurfaced after all these years, why not others?

Finally, in spite of the bad times that happened during my three years spell at the Army Technical School at Arborfield, for myself I must admit that I liked it there. Of course, there were hardships to start with, after all we were under military discipline, subject to the Army Act, for the first time.

Also, while the war lasted, we were designated as on active service. Washing and shaving in cold water all year round, sometimes if everything was frozen up having very limited washing facilities. Showers that were of three heating ranges, tepid, cold and freezing - no mollycoddling in those days. Food was usually reasonably plentiful, although at times monotonous.

Unlike some who have never mentioned that there was never enough, I cannot remember ever being really hungry. Mind you, I did have to eat some things that I would not think of eating now - NAAFI 'slab' springs so easily to mind and the curries dished out - well, they at least looked green and were mostly edible.

One was introduced to a varied lifestyle, met people from all over the globe and generally learned to take the hard knocks along with the good things, in one's stride.

The life was good, friendships formed that last to this day, albeit that contact is limited as we have all settled in the various parts of the world. Yes, I must say that I am glad I enlisted when I did, that generally speaking my Army life was good throughout my career and, yes, I would do it all again.

(The Wade 'Family Saga' continues with Part II - Part I was in Issue 11 - Ed)

THE WADE FAMILY AT WAR

By

James R (Dick) Wade (39A)

Part II

My Army Career, Father's Post Army Life & My Post Army Life

My Army Career

I enlisted into the Army with the Suffolks, at Mhow, Central India on 8 April as a boy soldier to serve eight years with the colours and four years on the reserve, following the completion of boys service.

I was posted to the Army Apprentice School at Arborfield, near Reading, Berkshire in May 1939 RAOC, (later to become REME in 1942).

After completing my apprenticeship, I was posted as a qualified Vehicle Mechanic and after being stationed at various places in the UK, I was put on a draft to a destination somewhere overseas, out east.

Our convoy was attacked from the air twice, first just off Algiers in the Mediterranean and again later off Crete. Finally, arriving at Port Said, we disembarked and travelled by train to Port Suez. We then spent six months in a transit camp near Port Suez and subsequently set sail for Bombay, India.

On disembarkation, we travelled by train to Secunderabad and were stationed just outside with a REME pool workshop.

When we arrived there I was to find my sleeping quarters were located a mere 150 yards from the married quarters. I had lived in with my family from 1929 onwards. When my bearer heard about this, the news soon got around the local bazaar and two days later an old man came to see me, saying that he used to be our family's bearer and cook. (I was

a bit sceptical.) He then mentioned my sister's name' and my Christian name and produced a photograph of both of us plus a written reference from my father, which was the custom when regiments moved from one station to another.

Not long after arriving here I suffered a hernia and following an operation was told I would be going away for six weeks convalescence. The choice was mine, Simla, Darjeeling or Wellington.

While in Wellington I went to visit my old school at Lovedale and there met some of my old schoolmasters. At the Schoolmasters' clubhouse, Mr Richardson invited me to his house for tea, where I met his wife, Maude, an old friend of the family. She too schooled at Lovedale at the same time as my mother and two aunts. After leaving them to get back to Wellington, the last train passed under me while I was crossing the bridge near Lovedale Station. Having missed the train, I still remembered my old tracks and walked through the drizzling rain to the main road - Wellington Road (Lovedale was off the beaten track roadwise).

On the main road I stopped at an Indian tea house to dry off and warm up a bit and eventually secured a lift with an Army officer and his lady friend, who were quite interested in my experiences. They drove right up to Wellington Barracks where I was staying.

While at Wellington, I saw again the married quarters where we had lived for a while after I was born.

On returning to Secunderabad, I got two weeks leave in Darjeeling, where I met my Auntie Louie who was also on leave. She, at that time, was stationed in Assam and was a matron in the Red Cross.

After leaving Lovedale, Auntie Louie had taken up nursing and was to remain in that profession until her retirement.

Auntie Louie also finished up in Burma in a base hospital. I never met her again until she came back to Clifton, Bristol, following India's home rule, and the

blood bath that ensued. She was Matron at the Lady Dufferin Hospital, Karachi during that turmoil.

My other Aunt, Dolly, who was at one time a Governess to a Maharajah Princess, took a job in an American Service Library in Karachi during the War. She also came back to Clifton after the War and retired.

Returning from leave, I was posted to Ranchi, attached to the 136 Field Artillery Regiment (25 pounders or 1000 yard snipers as they so affectionately called themselves).

From Ranchi we moved with 7 Indian Division through Assam into Burma, through Kohima, Imphal and down the Ganghaw Valley. We dug-in on the west bank of the Irrawaddy River and after a short while crossed the river, establishing a bridgehead.

This allowed a motorised division behind us to cross over the Irrawaddy and move swiftly into Central Burma, taking an airfield in its stride, thereby splitting the Japanese Army in half in Burma. Meanwhile, our division moved south along the Irrawaddy, taking Pagan City (City of a thousand pagodas), the oilfields of Yenanyung and Prome.

By now, Rangoon had fallen. Our 7th Division then moved to Waw, east of the Pegu Yomas on the Sittang River, where we were destined to go into Thailand through the three Pagodas Pass to free the POW camps.

August 6 and 9 Hiroshima and Nagasaki were atom bombed and the War ends. As a regular soldier, I did not get back home from Burma until 1947.

Father's Post Army Life

In 1947, after spending his back-dated leave in married quarters in Blackdown and trying to find somewhere to live, father got three weeks notice to quit his married quarters, regardless of the consequence. To us all, it like a kick in the teeth, considering all he had been through.

Fortunately (in spite of his age) he was able to secure a mortgage (that was because of his back-dated pay and Army pension). This enabled him to buy his own house in Lightwater, Surrey.

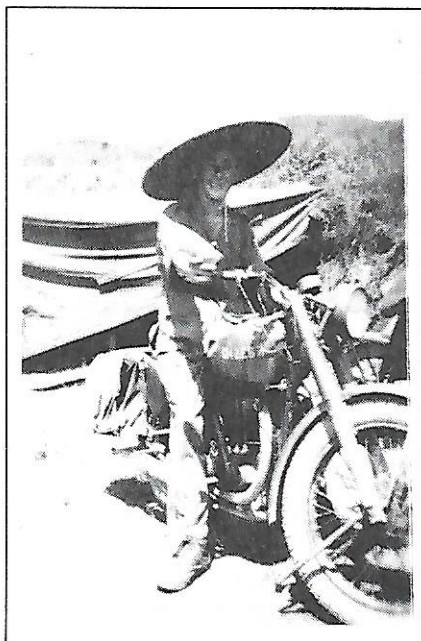
He joined the Civil Service with the Ministry of Labour with whom he worked as a storekeeper for ten years, then retired.

He followed this up working part time as a postman at the local post office, intermingled with a bit of freelance gardening, until my mother died.

He then decided he would like to become an in-pensioner at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and went there in November 1981, where he stayed until he passed peacefully away in February 1993.

My Post Army Life

Back home in 1947, I was stationed in various places and then posted to Colchester, attached to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. We were sent out to Hong Kong to defend the Colony during the Chinese Nationalist/Communist conflict. All passed off without incident apart from a severe typhoon.



Me & a motorcycle, the day after the typhoon.

The two small photos were taken when

I was with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in the New Territories, Hong Kong.

In 1949, I was sent home, having now completed my regular engagement.

I received a telegram from the War Office on the last of my twenty-eight day release leave, stating that as a reservist I was called up and was to



'Karrier', our winch wagon bogged in the ditch.

ways said one has to move on for a change, hopefully for the better.



Korea 1952 - complete with White Stripes!

report to the REME Depot at Arborfield, this being due to the Korean War.

Once again, I was aboard a troopship, this time bound for Korea.

During my reserve service, I was lucky enough to get two weeks leave in Tokyo, Japan. Compared with Korea, Tokyo was a paradise; everything spotlessly clean and the scenery in the countryside out of this world. On reflection, I talked to my father about this and he agreed with my sentiments.

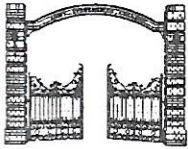
Events good or bad are history. He al-

Finally, all reservists were repatriated back home and then demobbed. At last I got a demob suit and my Army career was over.

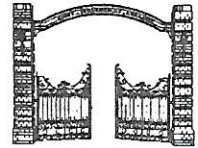
During my career, medals won were,

1939 - 1945: Star, Burma Star, Defence Medal, War Medal,

1951 - 1952: United Kingdom Medal Korea, United Nations Medal Korea.



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ATTENDEES

ADAMS BRYAN 42Oc	DODDS RUSSELL 56B	HORWOOD JOHN 43Oct
ADAMS DENNIS 45A	DONNITHORNE NORMAN 43Apr	HORWOOD PETER 46A
ADEY KENNETH 42Jan	DOUGALL BOB 39May	HOUGHTON JOHN 56B
ALLCOCK MIKE 42C	DOUGHTY RAY 61B	HOWLET DAVID 56B
ATKINS TOMMY 42B	DREW JOSEPH J 47B	HOWORTH RAY 55B
AUSTEN BERT 42A	DUTTON JOHN 43A	HUDSON PAUL 58A
BAILEY BOB 54A	EDGECK LEN 46A	HUGHES ROY 45B
BAKER BILL 44B	EDWARDS EDDIE 46B	HUGHES TONY 50A
BAKER JIM 46B	EGLETON EGGY 52B	HUNT CURLY Perm Staff
BARRETT ALAN 45B	EVANS KEITH 45A	JAMES GEOFF 61B
BATES STAN 43A	FENDICK FRANK 45A	JEFFERY TONY 63C
BAX ALEX 44A	FERNS DAVID 44B	JENNER KEN 44A
BENDALL BEN 47B	FITZPATRICK JOHN 55B	JOBBER WALTER 43Oct
BENDALL JEFF 64A	FOOTNER WALLY 39Oct B	JOHNSON STEVEN 46A
BENFIELD 43Oct	FRAZER FRANK 42C	JORDON RAYMOND 61B
BIRCH ALAN 44Sep	FUNNELL MIKE 42Oct	KAY NEVILLE 46B
BLACKMAN RAY 39May	GARDNER BERNARD 48A	KEEN ERIC 47A
BONE DAVID 44B	GARDNER CLIVE 63B	KELLY BERT 39A
BOWRING GEOFFREY 62B	GARDNER JAMES 57A	KELSEY JOHN 58A
BURT GORDON 47A	GIBBY PETER 55B	KERR STEPHEN 62C
BYRNE GEORGE 48A	GIBSON PETER Perm Staff	KINSON JOE Perm Staff
CAINE PETER 44Feb	GILBERT BERNARD 42Jan	KNOX GEOFF 55B
CAREW ROGER 47B	GILPIN KAYE 52B	LARBY MICHAEL 42Oct
CASTELL BOB 64A	GOODWIN GRAHAM 51B	LAWSON PETER 46A
CHATTEN GERRY	GORDON ANDREW 60A	LE VAR LARRY 47A
CHITTY BARRY 68B	GRINT DAVID 64A	LEE JOHN 55A
CLARK KEN 42A	GRIPTON PETE 56B	LENNOX TOM 50B
CLEASBY BILL 61C	GUEST TREVOR 60A	LIDDELL HARVEY 46B
CLEMENTS CLEM 50B	GUSCIN STANISLAW 48B	LLOYD RONALD 39B
COOK ERIC 42Jan	GUY TONY 43A	LOFTUS ALAN 42Jan
CORDEUX GUY 47A	HAMBLY BOB 64A	LUDFORD ARCHIE 38Jersey
COTSFORD LOFTY 46B	HAROLD GEORGE 46A	MACDONALD JAMES 43Apr
COX JEFFREY 65A	HAROLD MICK 53B	MADDOX JOHN 44B
CRESSWELL DOUGY 42Jan	HARRIS ALAN 59C	MALONE GERRY 47A
CROWDER ROD 44A	HARRISON ROBERT (Bod) 50B	MAMMATT RONALD 42C
CURRIE GEOFF 62B	HARVEY CHARLES 43Oct	MARSHALL GEORGE 46B
CUTHBERT MIKE 84C	HAYTER DAVID 43B	MARSHALL PETER 62B
DANGERFIELD LES 39Oct	HEAD DONALD 48A	MARTIN DUDLEY 38Hilsea
DAVIDSON BOB 43Oct	HEAD TONY 46A	MATHEWS ROY Perm Staff
DAVIS MIKE 60B	HENRY PETE 49B	MATYEAR DAVE 49B
DAVIS PETER 38C	HINCKS GERRY 56B	MAUGHAN RAY 39Oct
de BARRY BARNETT BARRY 52B	HIND EDDIE 52A	McCUTCHEON HUGH Perm Staff
DERRICK RAYMOND J 48B	HODGKINS ARTHUR 53B	McGRILLEN BOB 46B
DEWDNEY NORMAN 56B	HODSON FRANK 46B	McGUIRE MICHAEL 42C
DICKINSON LEW 45B	HOOPER JOCK 39B	McHARDY ALASTAIR 53B
	HORNSEY BRIAN 54A	MIDDLETON GARRY 60A



REUNION 97



MILLARD ROGER 46A
 MILLER ROY 41A
 MOIR JOHN 39A
 MOORE Lt Col NIGEL
 MORETON COLIN 76C
 MORETON MALCOLM 47B
 MORTON ALAN 51B
 MUSSELL RICHARD 63C
 NIXON LAWRENCE 42Apr
 NORMAN BRYAN 42Apr
 NORTHAM JOHN 47A
 O'BRIAN PATRICK 39A
 O'CALLAGHAN TREVOR 42C
 O'SULLIVAN TERRY 62C
 OLIVER GEORGE 45A
 PACKMAN JOHN 39May
 PAGE WILLIAM 43A
 PANTER DAVID 46A
 PARKER TONY Apr42
 PARNELL PHIL 46B
 PARSONS MIKE 46B
 PATTERSON DENNIS 44Feb
 PEERS GEORGE 44A
 PEWSEY JOHN 45A
 POTTER KENNETH 50B
 POULTON LEONARD 44A
 PRICE HARRY 42A
 PRITCHARD ALAN 42C
 PRITCHARD MIKE 51B
 PURSGLOVE GERRY 39May
 PUSEY BILL 46A
 PYE LAWRENCE 43Oct
 RAINEY JOHN 54A
 READ DAVID 65A
 REYNOLDS JOHN 55B
 RICHARDS DAVE 45A
 ROBERTS MIKE 54B
 ROBERTS SPANKY 39Hilsea
 ROBSON ROY 63B
 ROGERS GERRY 51A
 SAINSBURY ARTHUR 39B
 SANDS FRANK 45B
 SCHOFIELD KEN 62C
 SCHOFIELD DAVID 65A
 SHINN PETER 44A
 SHRUBSOLE BERNARD 49A

SILBY JIM 38Bramley
 SMITH DONALD 42A
 SMITH KEN 55B
 SMITH PETER 51B
 SMITH WILLIAM 39A
 SMITHSON JOHN 46B
 SMITHSON TIM 79C
 SOBOLEWSKI JOE 48A
 SPARGO PETER 39A
 SPEARMAN IVAN 42B
 STEPHENSON WILLIAM 39A
 STONE BRIAN 54A
 STREETER GEORGE 39A
 STYLES PETER 39B
 SULLIVAN BRIAN 36H
 SULLIVAN WILLIAM JOHN 39OCT
 SURTEES JOE PERM STAFF
 SURTEES TIM 76C
 SURTEES WILLIAM 65C
 SWATTON CLIVE 54B
 TATE WILLIAM 44B
 THOMPSON GERALD 45B
 TIVY VIC 44B
 TODD JOHN 52A
 TOWNSEND FRANK 52B
 TOZER ALF 47B
 TOZER ERNIE 48A
 TRAVES ROGER 57A
 TRILL HOWARD 54A
 TUCKER TUCK 39B
 VAUGHAN DAVID 68A
 VINCE GEORGE 57A
 WADE JAMES 39A
 WALKER DON 45A
 WALKER TREVOR 46A
 WARD BILL 47A
 WARD RON 42C
 WAYLAND DAVE 58A
 WELLS MIKE 49A
 WHEATLAND DEREK 57B
 WIGGINS PAUL 58A
 WILLIAMS COLIN 44A
 WILSON PAUL 42JAN
 WINCHESTER ALAN 42JAN
 WORBOYS KEITH 39B
 WRIGHT NORMAN 46A

WRIGHT RICHARD 49B
 YATES ALAN C63

GUESTS

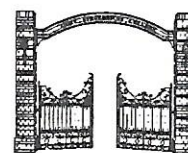
ALANBROOKE VISCOUNT
 APPERLEY Captain(Retd) GA
 CADDICK Major CAROLYN
 FLETCHER Captain GRAHAM
 PEWSEY MOLLY
 ROONEY WO1 (RSM) PB
 THOMPSON REV P

APOLOGIES

ANDRUSIAK J 70B
 AYRE CHARLEY 50B
 BALDWIN PETER Jan42
 BENTLEY LW 42C
 BOUCHER DOUG 43A
 BROOMFIELD EDDIE 45A
 CHANCE COLIN 58B
 COOMBS ERIC 42B
 CULLEY J 44A
 DALHOUSIE NORMAN 43A
 DAVIS PETER 38C
 GARDNER AUBREY 53A
 GLOSSOP BRIAN 57A
 GRANTHAM T 42A
 GREEN KD 37B
 HOLLAND RF 39B
 HOWES JOHN 55B
 IVENS TONY 54A
 KEHOE BILL 42B
 LONG TE 36Hilsea
 MASON DUNCAN 65A
 McCABE CSM
 McCORMICK WALTER 38B
 METCALF TANTO AG 39
 PEACOCK JOHN Perm Staff
 PENFOLD FRANK 42C
 PIGGOTT CSM
 SMALLMAN RD 39C
 TILT DAVID 45B
 WEBB FRANK 63C
 WEBB-MORRIS MA 50B
 WELLS WILLIAM 42B



REUNION 97
Impressions of the 1997 Reunion
by John Northam (47A)
for Tony Andrews (47A)



Getting ready to come to this year's reunion Tony, I couldn't help recalling the 1978 reunion when we met up again some 28 years after Arborfield and that first posting together to Burscough.

In those days reunions were held in the old school gym and we were all accommodated in the old spider blocks. They were occasions to be remembered - engraved I've no doubt on the memory of dear Harry Shaw who, as Hon Sec, suffered acute embarrassment when the cabaret artistes he had organised turned out to be a striptease who did amazing things with a bottle of baby oil and another who waltzed along the dining tables inviting the occasional Old Boy to remove an item of her clothing finally stopping directly in front of the VIP guest to give him a personal display of her talent. Then there was the year of the lady snake dancer when it soon became apparent that the snake had more talent than she and only a little less enthusiasm. Needless to say, cabarets ceased to form a part of the reunion weekend after that, Harry Shaw probably feeling relieved to have kept his job as a lecturer in the School. Although for the rank and file they were great occasions - the bar open until dawn if there was anyone still standing and we were usually among the last to leave. I looked forward to your company, your fund of stories delivered in that unmistakable Brummie accent (Sutton Coldfield to be exact) and your singing talent on one occasion I remember (and I've photos to prove it) keeping the Mess entertained for an hour. Thus for many years, with only the occasional break, did we continue to meet every year vowing that we would really have something to celebrate at our 50th anniversary reunion in 1997. Sadly that was not to be - 1995 was to be your last. I knew when I heard of your sudden death in March 1996 that I had lost a good mate and that future reunions would never be quite the same. This year's reunion was, for me, tinged with sadness but in the company of many friends old and new it was a weekend much like many others and very enjoyable.

On arrival we were directed to the car park which was guarded by the OBA registration tent occupied by a very efficient female staff sergeant and a few obliging apprentices ready to show us to our respective accommodation. Due to the large numbers attending this year

this was rather scattered and, having drawn the short straw, my bed was located in the Alcatraz building fronting the top of the square. A good job the weather was warm and dry for the weekend otherwise I could have been marooned there for the duration!

The usual gathering for coffee had the Sgts' Mess bursting at the seams but as the time for parade came and went a restlessness took over. The College RSM had not been briefed that the Old Boys needed a collective verbal kick-start to get them moving particularly when the direction in which they were supposed to move was AWAY from the bar! However, The Hon Sec, Larry Le Var, once alerted to the situation, provided vocal encouragement and slowly they progressed and formed up for parade. For those of us assembled at the Memorial Garden the first sounds of the approaching band down the hill brought a slight buzz of anticipation and then they appeared through the old School gates, a truly wonderful sight. How privileged we were to have the superbly professional Corps Band to lead the parade of about 100 Old Boys under the command of Col Brian Hutchins (61B) who in another life must have been an RSM, straining at every sinew his words of command ringing out loud and clear.

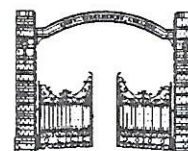
This was followed by the Drumhead Service conducted by College Padres Paul Thompson and Tony Coslett which would have been better appreciated with the benefit of a PA system (maybe next year?) before the band led the parade to the square.

The inspecting officer for the occasion was Maj Gen P J G Corp CB, Colonel Commandant REME who was also the chief guest at the Reunion Dinner.

The parade itself was of the same high standard we have come to expect and appreciate from all the participants - oh that I could say the same for the spectators! No apologies for reminding those concerned that being a parade spectator involves a certain self-discipline which includes standing when the inspecting officer arrives and remaining so until after the General Salute, keeping as quiet as possible whilst the parade is in progress, reserving most of the chatter until the



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inspection and, most importantly, NOT leaving the stand in an unseemly and noisy rush to the bar BEFORE the inspecting officer leaves the dias. For me at least it was the low point of the weekend. I know there were many others who felt the same.

Buffet lunch in the Sgts' Mess when the real reunions began. During the general hubbub John Smithson (46B) endeavouring to get individuals to relate anecdotes for the camera to form part of the professional video he is compiling - bound to be worth waiting for!

How about this then Tony? Old Boy goes to the bar. "Two G&Ts please with ice and lemon". "Sorry sir, no lemon". "OK, thanks". Later that evening same Old Boy goes to the bar. "Two G&Ts please with ice and lemon". "Sorry sir, we've run out of gin". This exchange taking place over a bowl of lemon slices!!

The rest of the day followed the usual pattern - some staying in the bar preferring to use every available minute to chat to old chums, others wandering up to the NEW Corp Museum. Congratulations to all involved in the rebuild and interior design and layout. Excellent!

The AGM was a very relaxed, even humorous affair, a copy of which is enclosed separately with this newsletter.

Two hundred sat down to dinner in the evening during which we were entertained by the REME TA Band and College musicians. Those of us sitting nearest the band were fascinated to learn that the very young, slight girl clarinet player was an apprentice whilst the lady sitting directly behind her playing the cornet (I think!) was her mum, a member of the TA!

In a thoughtful and much appreciated tribute to the memory of Ben Cook, the first College RSM, RSM Philip Rooney WG arranged for a presentation bouquet to be made to Ben's daughter, Mrs Molly Pewsey, who was attending with her husband John of 45A.

A short lull in the proceedings gave an opportunity to chat to the apprentice serving our corner of the table and one couldn't fail to be impressed by his confident and ambitious manner, he seemingly equally im-

pressed by the occasion and declaring that he would very much like to be part of a similar gathering one day. And me without an application form on my person! I know I speak for many when I say how impressed we were with the manner and bearing of all those apprentices (boys and girls) with whom we had the opportunity to speak.

Less impressive was the sight of the two young girls puffing away whilst waiting outside the church on Sunday morning.

The church service at which the College padres were joined by the Garrison Padre Bob Mitchell was a very special event during which the AOBA Standard was laid up and the new Standard was dedicated. I found this to be quite a moving ceremony particularly as I had had the honour and privilege of receiving the original Standard on behalf of the AOBA and trooping it in front of the apprentices on parade during the October 1984 reunion weekend, a full report of which appeared in March 1985 Craftsman which also used the Standard to illustrate its front cover.

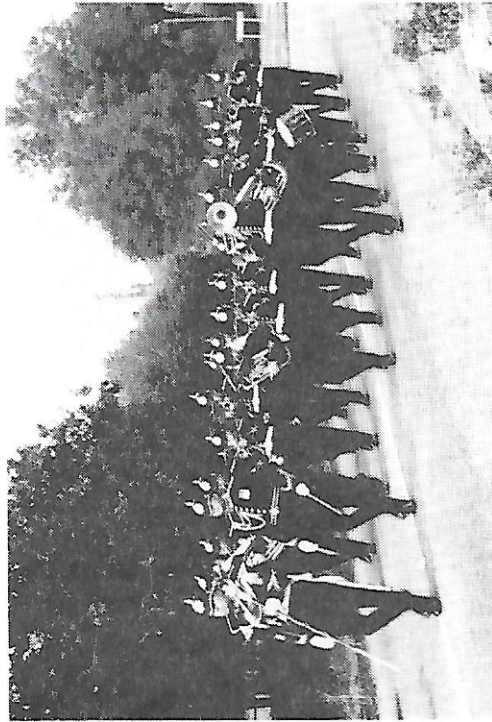
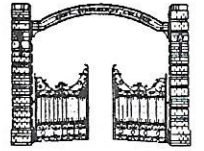
No regimental colour could have been treated with more ceremony, reverence and respect. The Standard Party, Lt T Gillies REME and two sergeants, were immaculate. A section of the Corps Band provided the music throughout. The AOBA has indeed come a long way in 50 years.

And there you have it, Tony, more or less. A weekend I know you would have enjoyed. You were, as they say, conspicuous by your absence and, as a consequence, the fact that it was the 50th anniversary of our joining the School in that bleak winter of February 1947 didn't seem quite so important after all. When all is said and done, you are only in the advance party so as we used to say "save me a bedspace".

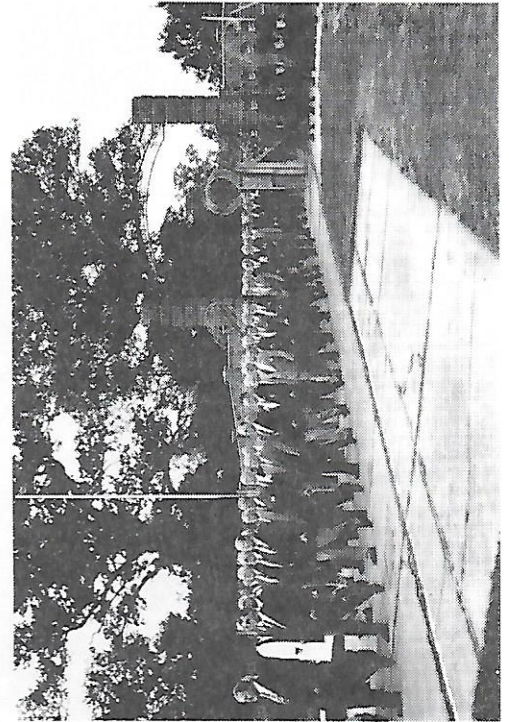
On behalf of all AOBA members attending, my sincere thanks to: the CO and AOBA Chairman Lt Col Nigel Moore MBE REME, RSM Philip Rooney WG, all members of the College staff and apprentices who gave time and effort to ensure we enjoyed a successful weekend.



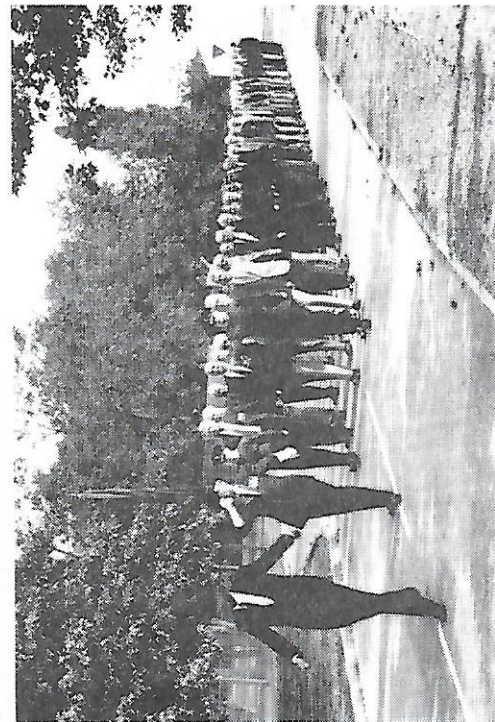
REUNION 97



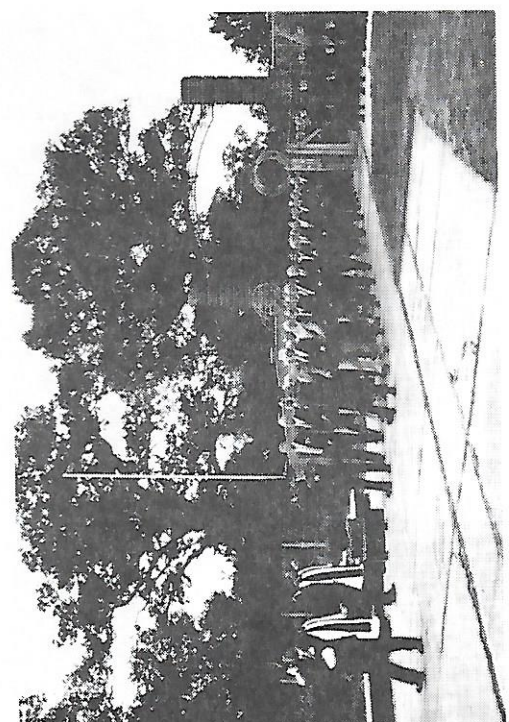
The first sounds of the approaching REME band.....



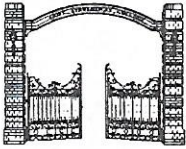
.....as they appeared through the old School gates.....



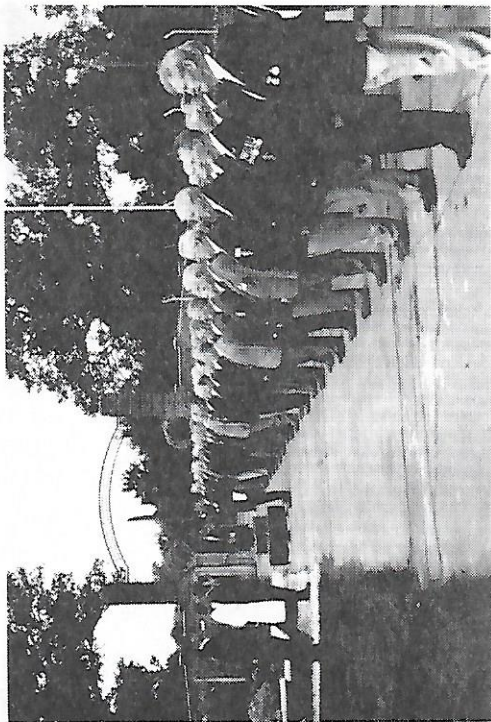
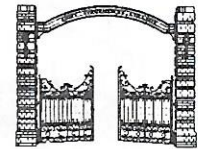
By the Left.... Quick March!



.....brought a slight buzz of anticipation.....



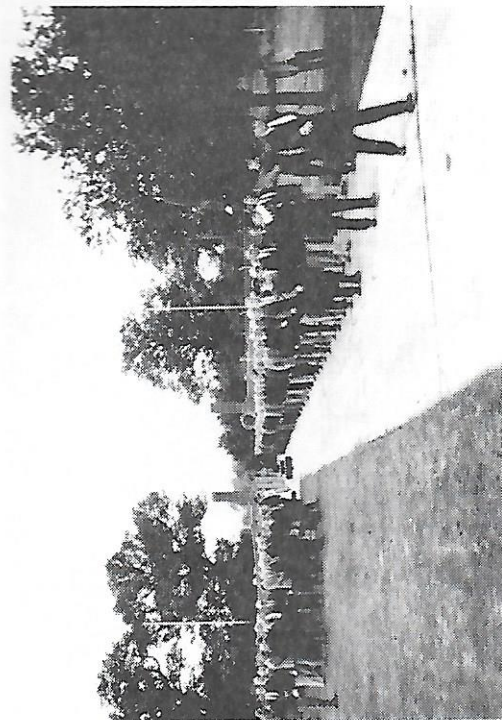
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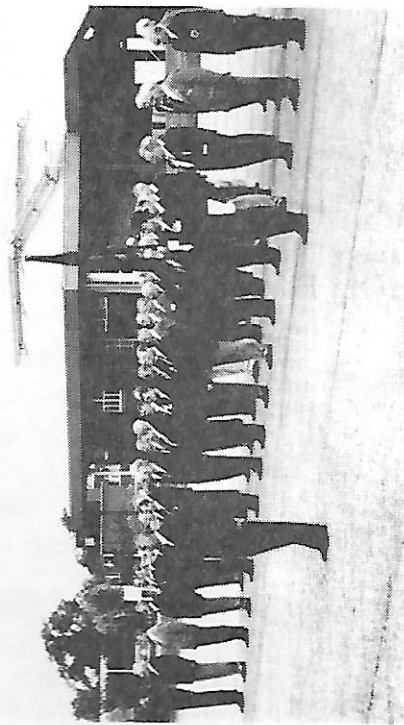
.....a truly wonderful sight.



The Drumhead Service - Padres Paul Thompson & Tony Coslett



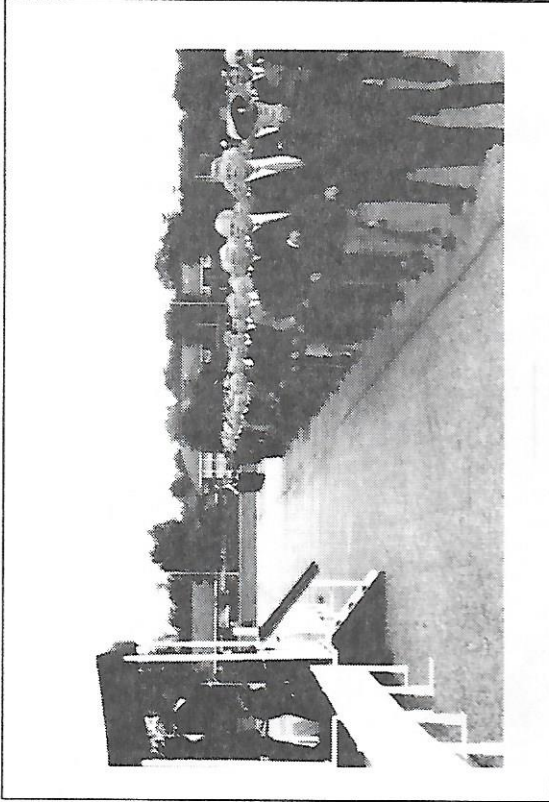
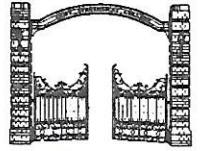
The Drumhead Service over, we march off to the square.



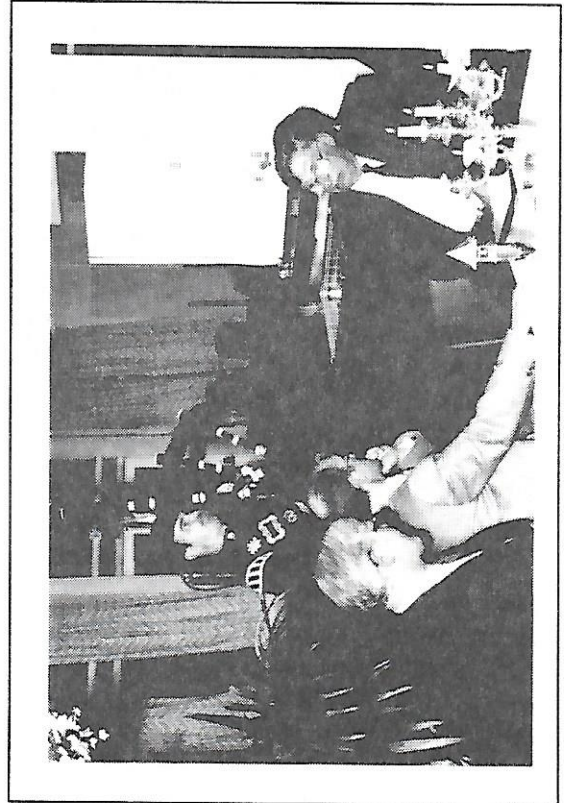
The Parade was of the usual high standard.



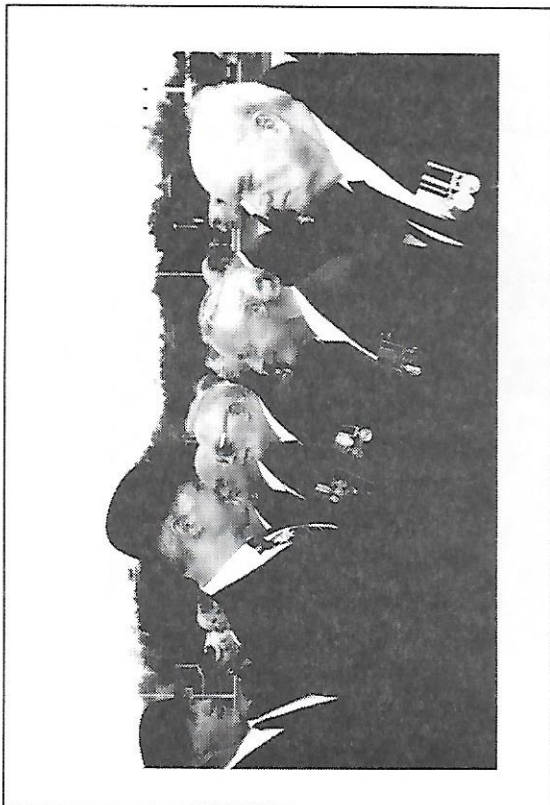
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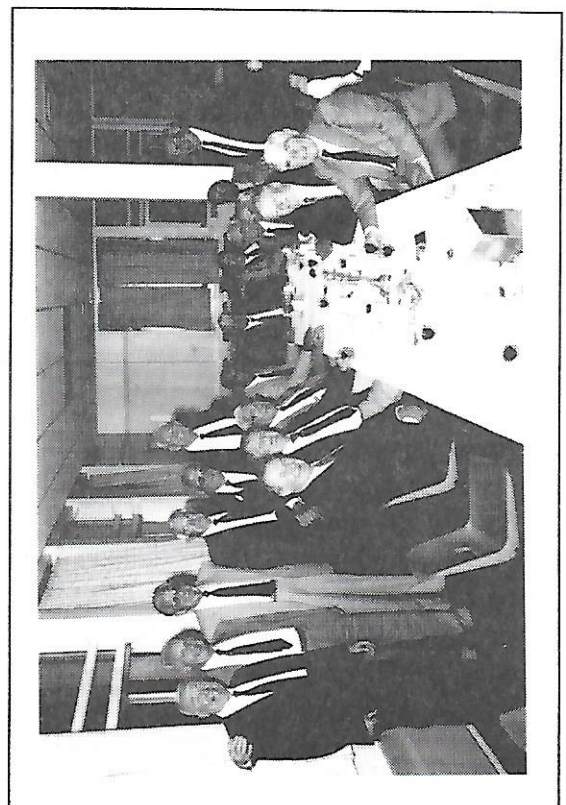
The March Past



The Pipe Major entertains



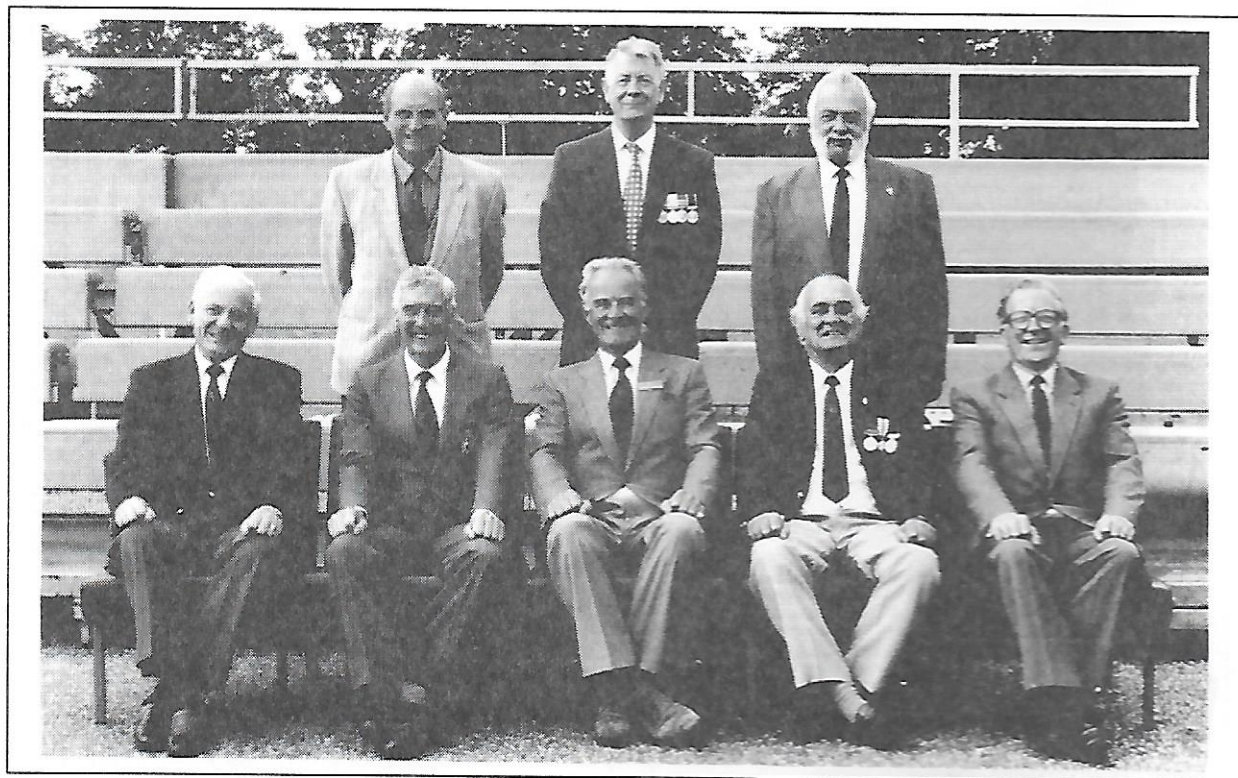
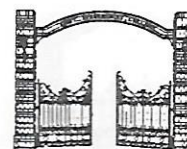
The inspecting officer was Maj Gen PJG Corps CB REME



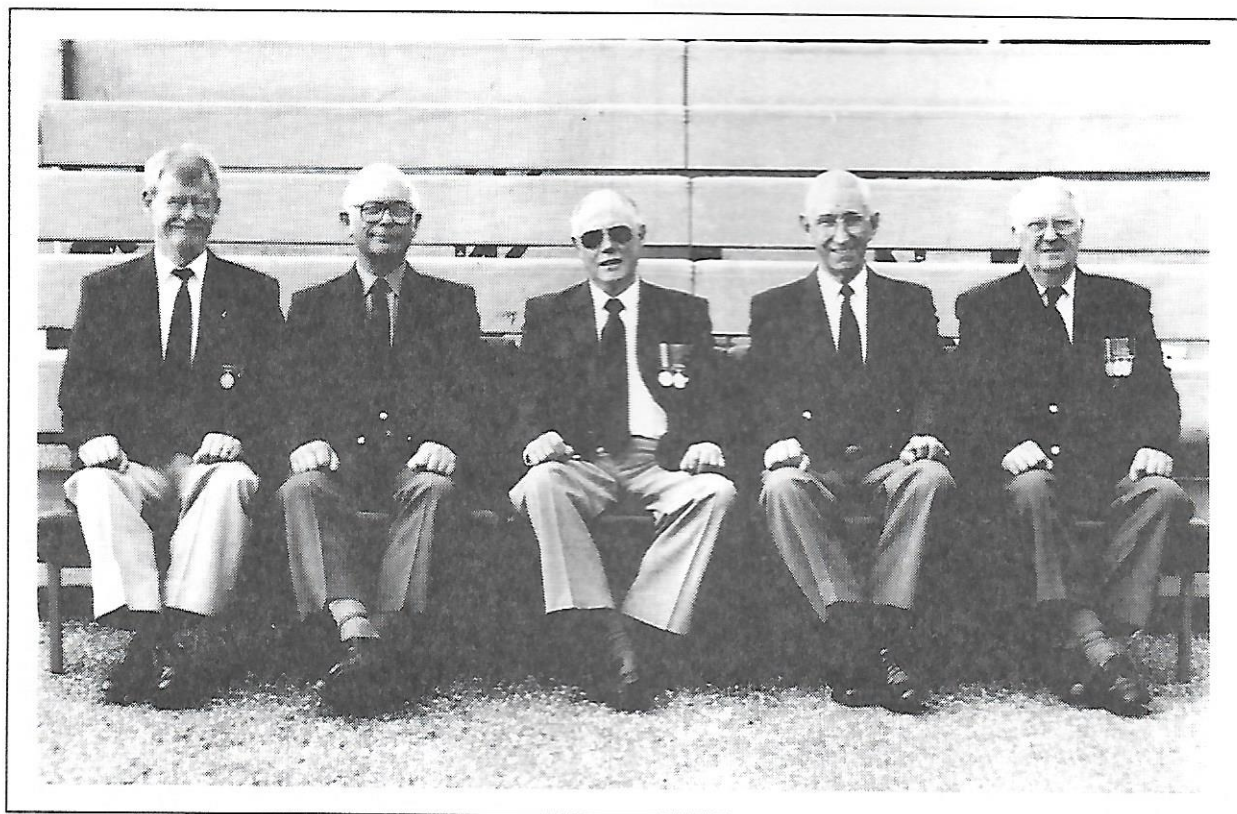
The Dinner - Members of the Oldest Intakes?



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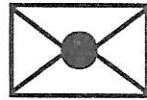


Intakes 47A & 47B - 50th Anniversary Group Photograph



The Royal Engineers Contingent

LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR



✍ Bert Austin (42A) writes

As the result of reading, several times over, a number of the Association's excellent Newsletters, kindly lent to me by Gerry Chatten, I am writing to say that I have taken the first steps towards a return to Arborfield after more than 50 years. I've joined the Arborfield Old Boys Association and at the time of writing (February 97), hope to attend the next reunion. What a host of memories those newsletters stirred up and the 16/17 year old faces I have put to the names I remember from those far off days. To receive 7 Newsletters 'out of the blue' has left me brain-washed with memories. It seems whatever I recall has already been written about in earlier editions. Mention of Dennis Compton, however, did remind me of a trip to Aldershot with a few friends to see Aldershot Town play Arsenal in the wartime football league. We saw the game alright, but because of fog, all buses were cancelled at night. Luckily, the Military Police gave us all a lift to Camberley, from where we had to walk to Arborfield.

I joined the School in January 1942 from the Duke of Yorks Royal Military School, then at Saunton Sands in North Devon. To my shame, I cannot remember one boy who travelled with me to Arborfield. I do remember, however, going to see the film 'The 49th Parallel' in Barnstable, on the day before joining up. On dispersal in 1944 I went with a number of A/Ts to 8 Central Workshops at Chillwell in Nottinghamshire. With D Day only weeks away, little or no time could be spared on our training or supervision. My work consisted, mainly, of assembling mag-dynos for motor cycles or checking the electrical equipment and batteries on Sherman Duplex Drive Amphibious Tanks. Is there a reader who remembers changing those 4 massive 6 volt batteries located at the bottom of a Sherman's turret? Eventually, some further education was arranged and most of the boys still at Chillwell sat English and Maths for the Army Special Examination. Who remembers the trip to the theatre in Nottingham to see Macbeth?

From Chillwell I went to Chichester for 6 weeks Primary Training, then commenced my 8 years with REME at the Command Workshops in Colchester. After a few months I was posted to BAOR and served with the following units: 151 Infantry Brigade Workshops, Bramsche; Central Vehicle Depot, Oldenburg; REME School, Paderborn; College of the Rhine Army, Gottingen; Berlin Workshops. I left the Army in July 1953 and retired from the Civil Service in July 1992. With my wife, Sheila, I live in Drayton near Norwich. I have 2 sons and 2 granddaughters. My phone number is 01603 867869, if anyone would like to have a chat. Finally, may I say thank you to John Northam and Brian Hornsey and all concerned with the work of the Association and the Newsletter.

✍ Brian Conway (42A) writes

One or two typos appeared in parts of my letter (OBAN10 - Pages 17-19) which ought to be corrected if they are to make any sense, (i) the mock-castle backdrop made from painted black-out SHELTERS (mentioned in connection with 'The Changing of the Guard Ceremony' on the Camp Hall field - Page 18 - should have read 'shutters'. These were plywood boards which completely covered the barrack room windows during the hours of darkness to obscure potential targets from enemy bombers. They also afforded some protection from shattering glass during an air-raid, (ii) Bandmaster 'SHINCO' Knell (Page 18, caption under the photo) should have read 'SHINY-O' Nel. This was a reference to his ever-immaculate turnout, shining like a new pin, from his highly polished shoes and Sam-Browne belt to his slicked down shiny black hair.

(Brian, Vol 53, No 10 of The Craftsman has a feature on the 50th Anniversary of the REME band, which mentions a WO1 Bandmaster Cyril Nel as forming a band at the School circa 1943 - same man? - Ed)

As with Walter Jobber (Oct43) writing on Page 7, Issue 10, I also had 'regular contact' (?) with Corporal Alf Danahar (not Dana~~har~~), the ABA

Welterweight Champion (his brother Arthur, APTC, being a contender for the Professional Welterweight Championship), by way of his notorious and devastating left-hook to the body, which was his way of telling you that his sparring session with you was at an end!

Bernard Gilbert (42A) writing to me recently, remembers Alf Danahar 'belting' me, because I had dared to retaliate. Ironically, I met up with Corporal Alf Danahar, Royal Sussex Regiment in 1946 in India, when he was touring with the All India Command Boxing Championship Team! I'm not sure whether I made him 'get his heels together and call me Sergeant', at the time.

Ah! What memories of Pilkington (page 8). I met him several times in the ring, both at the Dukies and at Arborfield and never did get beyond his beautiful straight left-hand or the second round, before he had calculated that my defence had not improved since the last time he had 'laid me out'! Not for nothing I earned the nickname 'Canvas-back Conway, the Horizontal Champ'!!

Since Issue 9 went to print, I have received letters from Paul Wilson, David Cross, Dennis Dumper and Bernard Gilbert (all of 42) and Geoffrey James (61B), with my wife Pam and I welcoming Paul and David and their respective ladies, to Paphos during May of last year, with Paul presenting me with a photograph of E Company, circa 1943, in which several kilted members of the Pipe band are shown.

My apologies therefore to Pete Jones (42B) for doubting that members of the Pipes and Drums wore 'kilt order' during the war years, a factor doubly authenticated by a photograph of the Pipe Band, circa 1943, sent to me by the Editor, originating from Arthur Tomlinson (42A) for possible identification of the individual bandmen. (*This is getting complicated - Ed*).

In this regard, Dudley Martin (H38) writing on Page 16, Issue 9, asks for information as to the background of the college's Scottish connections. I can only guess that this can only be due to the interest and enthusiasm shown by RSM McNally, Scots Guards, who instigated the formation of both

Pipes & Drums and the Corps of Drums shortly after his arrival at the School to take over from Ben Cook, Grenadier guards, as RSM. Towards the end of 1941, the Pipe Band comprised almost entirely boys from The Queen Victoria School, Dunblane (The QV School) and the Corps of Drums from boys of the Duke of Yorks Royal Military School, Dover (DYRMS - the Dukies), with boys from both Schools' Military Bands being amalgamated with the bandmen of the 4/7 Dragoon Guards Band, under the direction of Bandmaster Nel, with some 150 experienced musicians on parade.

I enclose copies of some extracts of letters I have received from Geoffrey James (61B), dated 4 June, 11 September and 14 December respectively for possible publication if necessary. (*q.v.*)

I particularly wanted these extracts to be published, firstly in response to 'Eggy' Eggleton's letter published in OBAN 10 and secondly, in answer to the editorial footnote on Page 21 of the same issue, 'Do you intend to continue with your search?' (for the film, 'Ten Feet Tall').

I'm not at all sure what 'Eggy' means when he writes, 'I think it was a retrograde step when REME took over the School. We lost various traditions, such as having a silver bugle awarded to the Champion Bugler, the Pipers wearing the Royal Scots Tartan, and our learning all about these other regiments from the individually proud members of the permanent staff'. What era is 'Eggy' writing about? When did REME take this retrospective step?

From the formation of REME in October 1942, up to my retirement from the Army at the School in September 1967, which included a total of 13 years service, boy and man at the School, there had always been a strong technical training connection with REME, complemented by an efficient regimental training programme provided by The Brigade of Guards, The Household Cavalry and most Infantry Regiments of the Line.

As a member of REME for 25 years and proud of it, fulfilling the duties of both technical and regimental instructor simultaneously (Vehicle Mechanic and Corps of Drums) at the school, I

continued with the tradition of the Best Bugler Competition throughout the 60s (see letter from Geoffrey James, dated 4 June 1996), with my apprentices not only playing flute, drum and bugle, but also cavalry trumpets, so that when appropriate, complementary trumpet Last Post and Reveille could be played for the deceased of The Household Cavalry, The Royal Artillery and The Royal Air Force at Armistice Day Memorial Services and Military Funerals - a musical feat unmatched by the drummers of the Brigade of Guards or Regiments of the Line, I think.

(Brian, do you know of any LP or CD in existence of the old bugle calls? - Ed)

The Editor (living in Basingstoke as he does) may be interested to know that one of my last external band engagements, before leaving the Service, was performed at Basingstoke on Battle of Britain Sunday, 1966, when I and my trumpeters played the Last Post and Reveille in the church during the service, before marching The Royal Air Force through the streets of the town. I led the band and drums that day, because our ranks were augmented by bandsmen of the REME Staff Band, where a Boy Drum Major would not have been appropriate. I can remember that, as the band approached the Saluting Dais and His Worship The Mayor, I and Band Sergeant Major 'Toby' Parker, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, 'slung up' a salute for His Worship, which took him completely by surprise, not knowing whether to return the compliment or take off his mayoral headdress, or give us the victory sign.

From Geoffrey James' other two letters it can be seen that he has already obtained a copy of the film, 'Ten Feet Tall', from The Imperial War Museum Archive, sending a copy to me. I was not particularly thrilled with the film, but Geoffrey was reasonably pleased with his copy, because it was of a time when both he and I were at the school. I do not believe that the film would be of much interest to any of our members other than those who were at the school at the time, so I would not recommend anyone buying it.

The copy that I have I would be happy to send it to the AOBA archive or the Corps Museum, with

Geoffrey James' compliments, if they would be interested.

Before attempting to identify some of those appearing in the photographs sent in by Arthur Tomlinson (42A), I should like to correct one error in the letter from B C Atkins (43A) before Victor Waller has sight of it and that is, that although the Royal West Kent Regiment do have their Depot at Maidstone, The Buffs (3rd Foot) are the EAST Kent Regiment, with their Depot at Canterbury!

(Just to complete this saga, there now follows potted versions of Geoffrey James' letters to Brian as mentioned above - ED)

Dear Brian - 4 June

I hope you won't mind me writing to you as you have not heard from me for about 32 years. I was one of Intake 61B at Arborfield and a member of the Corps of Drums who, under your expert tutelage became the 'Best Bugler Winner 1962' - I still have the plaque! If you still have your copy of the Corps of Drums 1963, you will see me there.

Needless to say, I was astounded to see a letter from you in OBAN 9 as I have often wondered what became of you, so I just had to write.

My Army career continued surprisingly after Arborfield and I converted from Electrician to Aircraft Technician in 1965 and completed my 22 man's service in 1986. Since then I have gained my civil qualifications and am now a licenced aircraft engineer at Bournemouth airport.

I hope you are enjoying your retirement in the sunshine - I did manage 6 months in Nicosia with the UN, so I know what it is like!

From one of your 'orrible crows',

Geoff James (61B).

Dear Brian - 11 September

The main thing I want to tell you is that I have spoken to Jane Fisher at the Imperial War Museum Film Archive and that they have got the film Ten Feet Tall. I am now in the throes of obtaining a copy and shall keep you posted as to progress.

Geoff James (61B)

Dear Brian - 14 December

I am glad to see that the video reached you and that the quality of the copy was adequate. As for 'most Junior Leaders looking and sounding like a bunch of yobbos', I thought we ALL were in those days!

I have received my Issue 10 of OBAN and have read your write-up with great interest. You've certainly had a long and varied career, I am quite green with envy. The photograph of you as a young Drum Major is very good indeed and gave me good cause to chuckle, because as I was talking about you to my son (and I showed him the photo), he said, "Who is that talking to Brian?" Ah, the innocence of youth! (*Reference to Field Marshal Montgomery - Ed*).

As to your wife's comment on your 'Brian Conway As He is Today' photo, you only need a Fedora, a Thompson machine gun and a cigar and you'd be a dead ringer for 'Big Al'! (Al Capone).

While I agree that the Arborfield content of Ten Feet Tall wasn't particularly spectacular, what I really liked about it was the fact that I could see the old place again as it was when I was there. When I went back to look at the School at the end of my service in 1986 it had all gone and I was really disappointed, but I suppose it's worth warning any prospective purchasers not to expect too much.

Geoff James (61B)

(I would think that any views of the School as it was 'in motion' would be of great interest to other members, whatever their intake - Ed.)

✍ *Michael Dickinson (42A) writes*

In OBAN 10 there was a photo of General Montgomery talking to Boy Drum Major Brian Conway. This brought back memories of that day.

I have a photograph in my scrapbook of C Company marching down the square with 'Monty' taking the salute. I was in the centre of the front rank.

I have included in my letter another photograph of the Fife and Drum Band marching down the main street of Reading with Brian at the front doing his stuff with the mace - I am the second drummer, right-hand rank, closely followed by a lot of little boys and girls.(q.v.) I cannot remember the actual

date (*No doubt Brian will tell us - Ed*) but it was in 1943 and considering the parade of soldiers following, it may well have been Armistice Day.

Also on Page 31 of OBAN 10, Charles Ashdown (always known as 'Charlie') asked for information about a friend, but unfortunately I cannot help. Charlie was the base drummer in the Fife & Drum Band. In the photo, you can just see his cap above the base drum. As soon as I saw Charlie's name, it brought back many memories, so much so that it has prompted me to write my personality Slot! (q.v.) Charlie and I were in the same intake (42A), both in C Company and both in the same barrack room, G6.

✍ *Charles Ashdown (42A) writes*

In reading through OBAN 10 I realized how much I miss opportunities to meet my fellow old boys.

There were several names mentioned which brought back memories of those exciting times. Most particularly was the article by and about Brian Conway, of his days in the Army, of interest to me.

I was base Drummer of the School Fife & Drum Band from its inception in early 1942 to the break-up of the School in early 1944. I have several photos of the Band taken on different occasions, but the most impressive is the one I am enclosing, of which I am sending two copies. If Brian has not got a copy, please pass one on to him.

I had hoped to make a trip to England this year, but unfortunately I cannot make it. Perhaps next year.....the Lord willing.

(Charles, John Northam passed your letter to OBAN and as you will have seen Michael Dickinson (42A) has beaten you to it.

Note that the photo is of the Band marching through Reading, not Basingstoke, as I am given to understand you so believed! - Ed).



The Fife & Drum Band marching through Reading in 1943

Jim Baker (46B) writes

I recall reading in a recent edition of OBAN that most of the material submitted for publication came from those who had been at the school during the forties. This is quite possibly true, and if so, there are several very good reasons why it should be so.

The forties were interesting years - a decade of two contrasting halves - one half at war and the other at peace. The wartime intakes, it must be said, had a jolly fine old time of it, on graduation they could look forward to joining their regular Army units and enjoy the prospect of being shot at in anger.

Even while they were still apprentices the Germans would obligingly drop the odd bomb on Berkshire just to brighten their day, *and*, to keep matters jogging nicely along, the fireworks factory would explode at regular intervals. Exhilarating days indeed!

There was no such *divertissement* for the peacetime lads. They had to make their own entertainment. After all, with the cessation of hostilities, the Luftwaffe could no longer be relied upon to drop bombs purely to amuse apprentices and it was unrealistic to expect the owner of the fireworks factory to go on blowing it up!

Self help was the thing, and when they were not fantasizing about the young ladies who attended church on Sunday mornings the apprentices came up with some promising schemes. Ferry trips across the static-water tanks were popular for a while, (a toilet door crewed by a jeep). Indoor sports included putting a jeep in the utensil cupboard and lighting a fire underneath it. Immense fun and very character building.

Of course, these can only be regarded as minor acts of barbarism, some of the events which took place were serious in the extreme and I'm surprised that no one has mentioned them. Recent correspondence has been dominated by four main topics:

Who was the first boy RSM? Who was/is the youngest/oldest/cleverest/ugliest etc. tiffy? The great escape of '44, and what a nice man Fred Silver was!

(Actually, the last time I saw Fred was in ward seven of Cambridge Military Hospital in the summer of 1950, being treated for multiple stab-wounds, so someone didn't think a lot of him!)

Now, who remembers the day Cyril the barber got thumped? It must be pointed out that hair, or rather the length of it, was extremely important to the apprentice. Today a grade two all over and square the neck off please seems to satisfy most young-

sters, but not so with the apprentice lads. We are talking about post-pubescent blokes whose hormones were running riot. It was bad enough having to cope with volcanic eruptions of acne without having to walk around Wokingham looking like a displaced Buddhist monk!

I'm sure everyone recalls there were two camp barbers, Jack and Cyril. Jack was an ex-navy type and not a bad chap. He had a degree of sympathy for his victim and usually took just enough hair off to keep them both out of trouble. Cyril, (ex-RAF), on the other hand knew the precise specification of an AAS haircut, and that, quite simply, was that. This was a fact of life and accepted as such, you just hoped that it was Jack's chair that was empty when *your* turn came.

(In my era, we were shorn by Jack the barber - he was a judo instructor in his spare time. Could this be the same Jack? - Ed.)

On the day in question, when AT/CSM Peter Green presented himself for a haircut it was to Cyril's chair that he was beckoned and, true to form, Cyril scalped him. Peter was not without a sense of humour, but he certainly failed to see the funny side of *this* tonsorial effort! He couldn't do much about the haircut, so he did the next best thing - he punched Cyril, hard.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? Well, actually, nothing. It turned to be the anti-climax of the year. Of course, whilst everyone was delighted that Peter Green had done what they themselves hadn't the nerve to do, his future seemed less than rosy! In the event. I think an apology was demanded and given, and that, as they say, was that. An uncharacteristically lenient outcome to a potentially tricky situation.

Not all apprentice doings had such a satisfactory conclusion. During the forties it was not unusual for apprentices, on the completion of their three years at the school, to join an arm of the service other than REME. Some, of course, by dint of their chosen trade, went to the Sappers or the RASC. Others, however, went on to become artillerymen or infanters. (*q.v. John Maddox's letter, later in this OBAN - Ed.*) There were a myriad of complex

reasons why this should happen, but happen it did! It usually meant that the apprentice had managed to convince the Army that he was much more valuable to the artillery/infantry than to the Army's premier technical corps. Or, it had become patently *obvious* to the REME that he would be of very little use to them! (The PSO had been known to make the odd mistake). Whatever the reason, a pre-requisite to a life at the sharp end was to fail the final trade-test.

Now, intake 46B, D Company, had the good fortune to have among their ranks three first class chaps, Andrew Chicken, Ted Judson and Tom Hanley. They had made above average progress through the school - trade, education, regimental training and sport, (one of them having been considered for a Woolwich cadetship). Hanley and Judson became AT/Sgts and Chicken AT/CSM. Without doubt, they were boys held in high regard by the school and seen to be setting an example to which lesser mortals could aspire!

It must have been during six intake that the rumours started! Tom, Chick and Jud didn't really want to be tradesmen after all! In fact, what they *really* wanted to be was infantrymen! The snag was, of course, they were going to have a difficult job convincing the authorities that this was where their considerable talents could best be utilised. Their technical acumen was beyond doubt. No matter, all they had to do was to fail their final trade-test, because *everyone* knew that to do so was to march out of the gate to an infantry depot of one's choice.

Now, there is an ocean of difference between, on the one hand, choosing a trade, becoming proficient at it and then sitting the relevant trade-test and failing it and, on the other, drifting into some sort of hazy understanding with the school authorities which eventually led to a failed trade-test and a ticket to the infantry. (And anyway, it had just occurred to the people with the money that it wasn't very clever spending thousands of pounds teaching a lad a skill only to have him go off stamping around on some barrack square!)

However, being convinced that they had right on their side, on the allotted day, they sat, and duly

failed, their trade-tests! With the wisdom of hindsight, it seems obvious that their cunning plan was not so cunning after all. Not only for the reasons already given, but because the school staff had got wind of it.

The Commandant, the Chief Instructor and everyone else connected with trade training had an immediate sense of humour failure. No apologies this time, no re-sit and no infantry. They were stripped of their rank and posted as not fully qualified.

Ted Judson became a clerk, eventually becoming a chief. I don't know what happened to Andy Chicken and Tom Hanley, I would imagine that they left the army at the first opportunity.

Speaking of Ted Judson, who can remember the day he was shot? (Not, I hasten to add, for failing his trade test!). Actually, it was the day Ghandi was assassinated.

The senior lads in the next room to Ted's room had been on the range, and one of their number who shall be nameless - actually it was Prof Salt - had brought a live round back with him. Being at a loss as what to do with it, he stuck it up the spout and fired it through the wall of his barrack room. From there it went through the wall of the adjacent billet, glanced off the radiator pipe, through Ted's finger and on through his thigh!

Prof was posted to his unit where he was court martialled and given a spot of detention. Ted had a couple of sticking plasters put on the sore bits and sent back to duty, he'd had his fifteen minutes of glory!

I could go on forever! However, I'll finish by mentioning one or two names and the odd happening that may jog the memory:

Dranny Dransfield - Provo Sgt - anyone who had polished his tunic buttons to the point where they had holes in them couldn't be *all* bad; Sgt Jock Crossan - poor old Jock, bore the scars of an earlier, more troubled life; Cpl 'Bullshit Bertie' - FORESTERS, real name not known, dwelt within the guardroom; L/Cpl Geordie Camus,

DLI, (no relation to the philosopher), also dwelt within the guardroom; WO1 'Tojo' Ravenscroft, REME, Fitters 1, had some sort of fetish about iron filings; Leonard Stagg, civilian instructor - machine drawing - renowned for his sensitive feet, (gout possibly - he *did* own a pub); The Lovat Scouts who served for a time as GD men in the cook-house; Sgt George Eardley VC, MM, KSLI - quite a hero!

California in England - dirt track racing; acres of bread pudding; duty company in the camp hall on picture night; handing your kit in - *all of it* - prior to reporting sick; the filthy water provided for washing your plate, mug and irons and last but not least, the absolute joy of passing out of the b----y place!

That's about it. Oh, by the way, whatever *did* happen to Eric Keen?

(Jim also included several copies of a photo showing the 'Toy Soldiers' on stage. Bill Pusey (46A) was able to identify several boys and has written-in below - Ed.)

✍ Bill Pusey (46A) writes

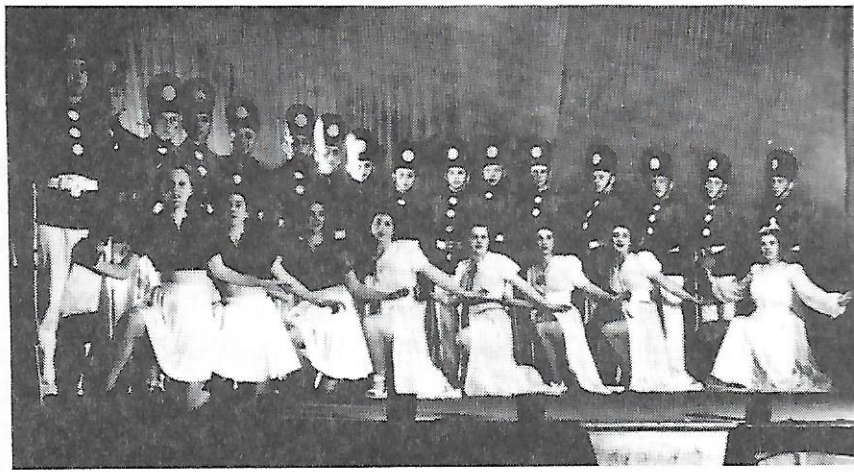
Reference to the aforementioned photo (q.v.) passed to me from Jim Baker (46A).

Numbering from left to right, I think we have; 1 - Pat Harrow (46A), 2 & 3 - unknown, 4 - Freddie Mills (46A), 5 - Dennis Marshall (46B), 6 - Alf Parker (46A), 7 & 8 - unknown, 9 - Bob Westgate (46?), 10 & 11 - unknown, 12 - George Rowe (46A), 13 - Bill Pusey (46A), 14 - Jim Baker (46B), 15 - George marshall (46B) and 16 - unknown.

I hope to be able to identify the remainder after showing it around at Reunion 97.

✍ John Maddox (44B) writes

I have been browsing through OBAN 10 once again and began idly wondering if I might be able to add a little to the saga of Fred Silvers. You see,



The Toy Soldiers on Stage

I met Fred long before he came to Arborfield, way back in 1949 in fact. Some readers may be aware that I spent the whole of my adult service with the King's Royal Rifle Corps, commencing in September 1947. After primary training etc., I joined the 1st Bn, 60th Rifles, firstly at Barton Stacey and then outside Winchester. Although only a couple of miles from the Regimental Depot in Winchester, I never actually visited the Depot until August 1948. As I approached the Depot gates, I heard a voice screaming, as if in agony. As I reached the gates, there before my eyes, was a seemingly demented little Corporal yelling at a couple of dejected riflemen. Yes, it was Fred - at the time Depot Provost Corporal. I carefully bypassed this little group and made my way to the Depot HQ as instructed. Later on I learned that Fred insisted that the front step of the guardroom should be blanched white and that nobody, but nobody, should ever alight on that step. On this occasion, the jankerwallahs had inadvertently spilled dirty water on Fred's pristine step, hence his bout of apoplexy. Incidentally, he was never known as Fred while serving with the Regiment. He had a brother, who at the time was Bugle Major in the band and they were both known as 'Solly' Silvers. Fred himself was probably the least liked person at the depot, everybody knew him and few had more to do with him than was absolutely necessary!

Strangely enough, although Fred looms large in my memory I cannot for the life of me remember the name of the Provost Sergeant. The guardroom

was 'Solly's Guardroom' and the jankerwallahs were always 'Solly's Boys'. One seldom found him far away from his domain, no matter what time of day or night. The general conclusion was that he was a complete 'nutter'. I believe that he was eventually posted away from the Regiment following an incident with an overseas draft. Apparently, the draft was assem-

bled outside the guardroom for some reason, when Fred took it into his head to inspect them. In a fit of utter madness, he then placed about 30 of the draft on charges; dirty boots, buttons missing, long hair etc. As they were due to go on draft leave the following day, this did not go down well, particularly as most of them were given 3 days CB and so lost part of their leave.

Fred was, to say the least, more unpopular than ever and I believe it was deemed a good idea if he was found a berth away from the Regiment for a while. He was posted at 12 hours notice. Until I saw his name mentioned in OBAN I had no idea that he had been Provost Sergeant at Arborfield, although the news that he had been stabbed didn't surprise me. He was attacked with a bayonet while at Winchester but that didn't make him tone down his conduct. Personally, he and I never crossed swords in any way. I was never at the Depot long enough to fall foul of him and during my later visits I out-ranked him anyway. In later years, as secretary to the Royal Greenjackets Association in the Cotswolds I met Fred again, who had retired to the Swindon area. A couple of years later he died and I attended his funeral. Even at Association meetings, Fred would always make his presence felt. He could not, and never did, settle down to life as a civilian. There will never be another Fred Silvers - the mould has been well and truly broken.

Readers may remember in OBAN 8, my memories of first days at Arborfield were published. I have

since returned to my past and jotted down some details of 'Life after Arborfield'. They are somewhat different to the sort of life encountered by most ex-boys and may provide some amusement. At least they show that the influence of my early mentors was not forgotten immediately.

The instinct to 'make a quick penny' was still strong in my breast, also my inherent instinct for tempting fate, which got me some 100 days jankers on Boy's Service.

Life in the 60th was made so much easier by my early training, neither discipline or bull---t came up to the standard so I really enjoyed my service. All in all, the hard 3 years were well worth it and I have no regrets.

(John has submitted an article on his experiences on transfer to the KRRC, which will appear in a future OBAN - Ed.)

✍ *Dick Wade (39A) writes*

Having read all the contributions in OBAN 11 and following a second letter from Ron Savage to me from Zimbabwe, I have to disillusion him. I was never in D Company (OBAN 11, page 25, para 2), so I doubt if I could be in the photo to which he refers. As I do not know of another Wade during my era, perhaps we were in the same section in the Fitters Shop and we were both in A Company at the start - the last 4 figures of our army numbers were only four digits apart.

Ron also mentioned that Lovedale was a Duke of Yorks School, which it was not. It was a Lawrence School as was the sister school at Sanawar, which according to him, was the school his sister attended. It seems that we also have other things in common. He tells of his parents coming from India and travelling overland through France, just before the collapse in 1940; my parents also came back to the UK this way during the same period, so it is on the cards that they were on the same boat! I am sure all will be revealed in further issues of OBAN. It was very interesting to read those other contributions which seem to tie up with my experiences of

Arborfield (the bomb and hearing the Declaration of War announced in the NAAFI etc.).

In reply to the Editor's query re: the pub song (my letter on page 22 of OBAN 11), I am no good as a musician, but the nearest I can get is that one could march to its beat in the same manner as the REME march, adapted from Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs. Perhaps someone at Reunion 97 will be able to render us a tune with the help of some Dutch courage from the Sergeants Mess!

✍ *Bill Tate (44B) writes*

With reference to OBAN 11, in the letter from Larry Le Var, I must point out that the OC of HQ Company was Major 'Charrington', not 'Carrington'. I remember him with gratitude since he was mainly responsible for my entry into the RMAS, having recommended me for a regular commission. I also remember that when I arrived there, I was met by two other old boys from Arborfield, Gordon 'Bing' Lakes and Tony Tracey. As far as I am aware, Bing was commissioned into the RA. Subsequently, he won an MC for his efforts as MFCO with the Gloucesters in the Imjin battle in Korea. When he left the Army he joined the Prison Service and rose to a very high position.

Tony Tracey joined the RASC (as I did) and just before he retired, was Commandant of the Army School of MT at Leconfield. Unfortunately, I did not rise to such heights myself, retiring as a Captain in 1966. However I did make A/Sgt in HQ Company!

✍ *David Ferns (44B) writes*

I have been conducting a sort of 'my memory is better than yours' contest with the late Tom Pearce (44A) over several issues of OBAN and also spent several hours nattering to him at Reunion 96, so I was particularly saddened to learn of his recent death. I think that we had reached general agreement on the points at issue, but I shall certainly miss the renewal of our association this October.

Let me start again then with two new contenders. Frank Fendrick (45A) says that most of the School were sent home during the terrible winter of 1947. 'I wish', as they say nowadays. My recollection is that, much to our annoyance as conditions were so bad, we just had to stick it out in camp. Warm-up runs and games were light hearted affairs. Far too many people were involved and there just wasn't the space to organise anything with the usual precision. So the less energetic among us (me) weren't overtaxed. Then hours in the barrack room, standing around cold radiators, singing over and over again our entire repertoire of ribald songs. It seemed to go on for ages, but was probably only for days rather than weeks. Then Alan Morton (51B) says that in his final AAS letter to his parents that his Passing Out Parade was to be taken by a cabinet minister, a first for the School. What about Capt Tom Bellinger, the War Minister (as he was called in those pre-MOD days), who took our parade in September 1947? I am sure that he was Cabinet rank as I remember also the fuss when he was required to resign soon afterwards because of some indiscretion. Nothing changes!

Thanks for another excellent Newsletter. I've already booked, so by the time this letter is published, I will have had the enjoyment of seeing you all again in October.

✍ *Peter Simmonds (45B) writes*

I note with interest that my namesake, Peter Simmonds (44A) has been corrected by B.C. Atkins, Australia, regarding his claim that the prototype or repro school badge was 'borrowed' by a member of the February '44 intake, whilst in point of fact, 'B.C.' points out that one, Craftsman Jones of 43A claims responsibility for this. Accordingly, it would seem that the Editor's remark at the end of the letter on Page 29 of OBAN 10 has been answered.

The passing out parade referred to by 'B.C.' was eventually attended by Field Marshall Montgomery and we junior intakes were required to line the main road prior to his arrival. We waited... and we waited... and it was almost two hours before

'Monty' drove past. Meanwhile, the sun blazed down and it got hotter..... and.... hotter.

With RSM McNally's usual efficiency, we 'jeeps' had been formed up for about two hours prior to lining the road. What with the excessive heat, tight belts and other problems too numerous to mention, about one in three went down and were either quickly revived or taken off to the MI room and those of us who were left filled the gaps.

Our Platoon Sergeant, 'Herbie' Payne (or should it be 'Pain') had told us to change our weight forwards and backwards and to wiggle our toes inside our boots, when required to stand properly at ease or to attention. It worked! Most of 45B survived to swing another lamp but many of us never forgot Herbie's advice during our later service.

Just a word about Sergeant Roberts MM, another of our instructors about whom many tales could be told. Sergeant Roberts was famed for his beer drinking capacity and would down up to twenty pints at a session. The problem was that the following morning, should he have taken a quantity of water, he would become most unsteady and would stand just half a pace to the front of the platoon, whilst behind him, two of us would hold him firmly in position! He once had occasion to visit the Company Office and inform the Chief Clerk, who had failed to include his decoration on the orders of the day, that MM did not stand for Mickey Mouse! Thank you for yet another outstanding edition of OBAN. 14469516 'Jeep' Peter Simmonds, H6, 45B, C Coy, signing off.

✍ *Donald Smith (Jan 42) writes*

Issue 11 of OBAN is, as ever, full of interest and I would like to respond to the letter (on page 20) from Arthur Tomlinson as a member of his 'small particular group' at Greenford.

Memory is a funny thing and in my case quite selective. I remember Hillier as 'Curly' and that Arthur was blessed with the nickname of 'Chippy' - something to do with a childhood connection with Canada and a predilection towards a snack of

some kind. Probably quite wrong but I do recall an attempt being made to tattoo him with the Cross of Lorraine and later, when we were being introduced to the delights of a game called 'softball', he received at short range a stunning blow on the ear from the aforementioned softball which seemed to have little effect. This was at Geenford where we went in April 1944 together with two 'man' NCOs, Taffy Evans (SWB) and Jock Hunter (KOSB- I think) and while still on Boys Service were pitched into the repair of radio sets, supported by a large number of ATS and civilian girls. It was here that our education took a great leap forward! (we also learned a bit about telecommunications.) Other names from that time include Sammy Shotton, PG Harrison, ?? Shaw, Harry Budd and ?? Bloxham. Two other Airborne Workshop telemechs were John Freeman (April 42), now sadly deceased, but we are still in touch with his widow in Sheffield, and Jim Riddel (Jan 42) who I last heard of in the Frimley area many years ago and who at one time was on the School's staff. Tony Wheatley is indeed receiving the cup as the best A/T of the year - he later became my brother in law and I believe that the cup is still somewhere in the family - Tony sadly died some years ago.

I sat next to Peter Baldwin at the last reunion and much enjoyed talking of these days with him. I am sure that Charles Ashdown is the one and only bass drummer. I recall travelling from the Brunswick area in Germany to a workshop in Bielefeld in 1948/9 (maybe the 7th Armoured Division Workshop) and meeting up with Chippy for the evening. I may have been one of the 'couple' to whom he refers.

Finally, may I put a plug in for the dinner which was held earlier this year in the Mess at Arborfield for all ex-senior ranks who had served in the Airborne REME. A large number of ex-Arborfield boys were present and I do hope that this event will be repeated in 1998.

✍ *Michael Barnard (61C) writes from
Geelong, Australia*

Well, with a new 1997 computer to do the printing

etc., in the household (and for school work), I will start with my apology for not attending the 1997 Reunion. With two children, one 15 soon and the other 8 at the end of the year, time off is a real problem. If all goes well, we may be able to visit in December 1998. The standard remark is 'the best laid plans of mice and Michael are', as there has been a move here towards a (domestic) civil action for the last two years and we move this month. What will happen is in God's hands at present.

Looking at what has been printed in the OBANs has reminded me that it is 36 years this September that I left London by steam train for Carlisle. Since then I have worked for the MOD's Ordnance Group on a diverse range of projects, including 'RARDEN', then on to FORD where I will notch up 25 years service this year. Unfortunately, because of moving around I will not get my presentation until January 1998.

It is intriguing - a lot of places I have been to are now shut - Carlisle, Enfield and a chunk of Dagenham! Here, whether military or industry, 'Management' is the endangered species. The Australian Defence Forces have just announced a major reorganisation, because they had too many Colonels up in HQs all over the place, but not much in the way of forces on the ground, air and sea. Mind you, we are launching new Frigates at \$A500 million a go - are assembling BAe Hawks for the RAAF and also seem interested in the Eurofighter at \$A50 million a plane! So now we will have less brass and more soldiers etc., as well as other organisations amalgamating. For instance, at Fort Queenscliffe we have the Army Staff College which will amalgamate with RMA Duntroon A.C.T. The Fort was originally a Crimean era structure, added to which was WW1 and WW2 buildings and is now a listed site and open to the public.

We have the older style apprentices here at the Army Technical & Further Education College (TAFE) - not like England where the move is to adult education. My Firm has done that - from 1990 to 1996 we had only adult apprentices because so many had previously dropped out.

Looking at tales of other apprentices, especially the pre-war period, it was pretty tame for me in 1961. I loved the train journey up to Carlisle as it was by steam (we now have a narrow gauge railway 30 kilometers from where I live) and the return later in December was even more interesting because when we made the first stop, sporting motorcycles were loaded into the guard's van by senior apprentices! One former apprentice CSM went on to Sandhurst in 1961/2 - Alan Brown passed out as a Lance Corporal as all AT Sgts and above did. I think that group, including an AT (RSM or CSM) Dunbar and an AT Sgt Ireland, was the last to have such rank on joining the adult Army.

Here at Ford, we have a new car, a better looking vehicle than the new Scorpio. The 'El Falcon' is a 5 seat, 16 valve OHC EFI etc., sedan (saloon). We are still RWD here. The new US Taurus is also on sale here and no doubt our car will look like it, but with our own special features added. This time its design is 90 % new - to date some parts, albeit extensively modified are of some 30 year old tooling.

We had an interesting scenario recently - we had an information meeting on an inspection tour of Ford's Bridgend & Swansea Operations. There, the managers were reduced by 'integrated manufacturing teams' from 34 to 13! Here, all redundancies were voluntary on my side. Staff turned up for work and in a lot of cases the first they knew that anything was wrong was when they found they couldn't log-on to their computers! An interesting aside - one, a D Hone, was an army apprentice in about 1972, possibly at Arborfield, whose father was my boss in 1963 at Enfield.

Also, a new Colonel at the workshops at Wareminster, Mervyn D Lemmon, was an apprentice from Enfield when I started there in 1963 - small world isn't it? I have a feeling also that a school friend of mine, Anthony Anderson, came to Arborfield in about 1963 - if anyone has any recollection of this, it would be much appreciated, as if all goes well we may be in the UK at about mid-December 1998. I am hoping to bring the family along to see something of 'what dad used to do' - all being well.

(Michael, I think I went thru Geelong back in 1959. We had a months leave from Woomera and hitch-hiked some 4300 miles up the eastern side, eventually as far as Rockhampton - Ed)

✍ B A (Eggy) Eggleton (52B) writes

Jack King (51B) in his letter on Page 23 of OBAN 11, refers to Friday night 'bull' nights. I can remember the floor polish issued being orange in colour, but when rubbed-in it became transparent. This meant that to blacken the floors, tins of 'Zebo' liquid grate polish was added (everybody paid a penny - old money - out of their six shillings spending money). In HQ Company, the radiators which were painted brown, had to be polished with black boot polish on the top. The floor at the base was also polished black, to the width of one Pay-book and one complete board in front. The hardest job was scrubbing the back of the scrubbing brush.

I collect cap badges and in my bunk in Room F3, I had them mounted on strips of webbing hanging on the wall. Recently, I have remounted them and found wedged at the back pieces of the old meal ticket cards. I remember these being issued monthly and marked off when you went up for your meal - this to prevent apprentices going around for a second time! Talking of the cookhouse, anyone remember 'G-Flog Jock'? He was a Lance Corporal in the Gordon Highlanders with 4 good conduct stripes. He would stand on guard by the tea urn and say, "Ye'll get nay tea with twa mugs!"

The only down-side of my collection of cap badges is that someone 'borrowed' my Iron Cross. I also have a request - I am after a badge of The King's African Rifle Corps. Is there anyone out there who served with them in possession of one and if so, consider parting with it?

✍ John Smithson (46b) writes

Further to my suggestion that we produce a video tape from selected reels of the film collection held by the REME museum (Page 26 of OBAN 11), I am happy to report that I made a presentation to

the Committee at the last Admin Meeting and the idea has been accepted. I have now been able to inspect the entire film collection.

There are about 200 titles, the majority of which belong to the Fording Branch Unit at Instow, North Devon. Some 30 titles are of more personal interest including several showing life at the various schools. We hope to include some of these titles in a video tape to be made available to members at Reunion 98. Two main reasons for this move are: to transfer the films to video masters because the films slowly deteriorate with age, and to enable members to see the films made in the schools previously unseen by the vast majority of us.

In the meantime, may I appeal once again to members for any film of anything REME which might be of use? They would be cleaned, restored and returned after transfer free of charge, of course!

(Please contact John on 01904 534971 - Ed)

✍ Peter Gripton (56B) writes

If all has gone to plan, I'll have had the pleasure of meeting up once again with Jim 'Jock' Gardner at Reunion 97. Jim was a 57A jeep at Arborfield while I was already a long-serving and experienced apprentice from 56B, so our paths didn't cross too often at the School, but over the next years the story develops.

Late January 1961 - lying on my pit at 5 Battalion on a Saturday morning I was contemplating the prospect of a duty that night at the local 'Gaff' (the AKC Globe cinema) as fire NCO. For the life of me, I cannot remember his name now, but anyway in came a bloke who wanted to swap duties - would I mind doing Sunday night instead? No problem! Then 5 minutes later Jim Rampling pops his head out from under the blankets. "Did I hear that you're free tonight, Scouse? Well, how about coming down town for a few beers?" Again - no problem!

So, a few hours later, 'Ramps' and I are sitting in the upstairs bar at the Oxford Ballroom in Reading - not that we were much into ballroom dancing, but

the bar stayed open later than the pubs. Up the stairs comes a familiar face, that of the aforementioned Jock Gardner. So as was our custom we invited him to sit down for a pint. "Sorry lads, but I've got the girl friend downstairs". Bring her up as well was the response. "Well, she's got her sister with her plus a mate of theirs". It wasn't too long before all three girls joined us and 36 years later I'm still married to the 'mate'!

Jim Gardner is still married to Doreen, they now live up in Falkirk, so we don't see a lot of each other. Doreen's sister Pam, the final member of the trio, also did the sensible thing and married John Teasdale, another 56B Old Boy - and they are still married too, living up near Rotherham. Mention of a trio above is not too wide of the mark either, as the three girls used to sing together as 'The Griff-tones' - definately the Spice Girls of their day!!

John left the Army in 1967 at the same 9 year point as myself and lived for many years on Basingstoke Road up in Reading and while our children were young we often used to meet up at weekends. Jim carried on serving and back in the '70s took his Tiffie course down at Bordon where I was by then an Instructional Officer in Electrics Section, so we saw quite a lot of each other for about 18 months. He eventually took a commission into the RAMC - rumours that he passed all his exams as a Gynaecologist are unfounded!

And so when I saw Larry Le Var's list of expected attendees for Reunion 97 I was delighted to see Jim's name there. The last time we met up with Jim and Doreen must have been about 10 years ago when we were invited to attend their silver wedding anniversary in Reading.

As for John & Pam, it was great to see them both last year at the 56B 40th anniversary bash which has already been reported in a previous OBAN. By the time this letter is published Reunion 97 will have joined all others in the memory bank and I'm sure it will have been enjoyed with just as much relish by everone.

DONATIONS

The Association acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations to the Museum Development Fund:

Andrusiak, J	£5.00
Ayr, C	£5.00
Baker, JE	£5.00
Balchin, AW	£5.00
Benfield, Reginald	£25.00
Burt, Gordon	£2.50
Dalhousie, Norman	£37.00
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Grantham, T	£30.00

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Hollingsworth, CCL	£3.00
Ivens, Tony	£20.00
Larby, Michael	£10.00
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Mason, Duncan	£37.00
McCluskey, J	£1.00
Panter, David	£5.00
Parkinson, FG	£5.00
Tilt, David	£20.00
Worboys, K	£5.00

OBITUARIES

Captain Michael Burns - Irish Guards

It is with much sadness I must inform you of the sudden and untimely death of Micky Burns in February 1997. Micky was the Regimental Sergeant Major of Princess Marina College from July 1990 to April 1992. During his time at the College, Micky made an outstanding contribution to college life, his vast knowledge and military experience made him an excellent example to the apprentices and a pleasure to work with. Apart from his military expertise, I think Micky will be remembered most by those who knew him for his sense of humour which could always be relied upon to turn a routine conversation or meeting into uproar. Those who were fortunate enough to hear any of his after dinner speeches were guaranteed to leave the table with their sides aching from laughter. On leaving the College, Micky was commissioned into the Irish Guards and went on to serve in Northern Ireland where his illness first manifested itself. He then went on to the Defence School of Transport. His sudden death will, I am sure, sadden many. We send our heart felt condolences to his wife Lynne, his daughters Jane, Deborah, Christine and son Ian.

Captain (Retd) G Applerly

Brigadier E L Percival DSO Late HLI

Old Boys of the College will be saddened to hear of the death of Brigadier Edward Percival DSO who commanded the College between September 1949 and June 1952. A relevant extract of his obituary from the *Sunday Telegraph* 21 October 1997 is included here as follows. 'In 1946 he attended Staff College, Camberley, and from 1947-49 was a Staff Officer at the Army Motor Transport School at Bordon Hants. From 1949-52 he was Commandant of the Army Apprentices School at Arborfield. He married in 1935, Evelyn 'Bunty' Watts; they had two sons, one of whom predeceased him, and a daughter'.

Lt Col Nigel Moore

DECEASED

It is with sadness and deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following:

During December 1996 Gutteridge, Joe - Hon. Sec. Jersey Ex-boys' Association

During January 1997 Luckhurst, Michael (47B)

During January 1997 Smith, John Hugh (44B)

During February 1997 Barratt, Bill (Oct42)

During March 1997 Eary, Richard (44B)

During May 1997 Stanton, Alan (54B)

During May 1997 Major (QM)(Retd) Kyle, George (53A)

During June 1997 Calvert, 'Geordie' (Intake unknown)

During September 1997 Chandler, Jeff (Permanent Staff)

During October 1997 Schofield, Ken (62C)

During 1997 Gough, John (42C)



ASSOCIATION ITEMS.

The following items may be ordered from the Membership Secretary:

Item 1. Princess Marina College - A Brief History 1939-1992.

This 24-page illustrated A5 booklet is offered FREE to members.

Item 2. Association Ties.

These terylene ties have a single motif incorporating the College Gates in gold with scroll and letters AOBA below.

They are available in royal blue, maroon and green (note that green ties are only available while stocks last).

Please state colour preference when ordering. Price £5.50 each incl P&P, UK only. Please note that postage on overseas orders will increase as appropriate.

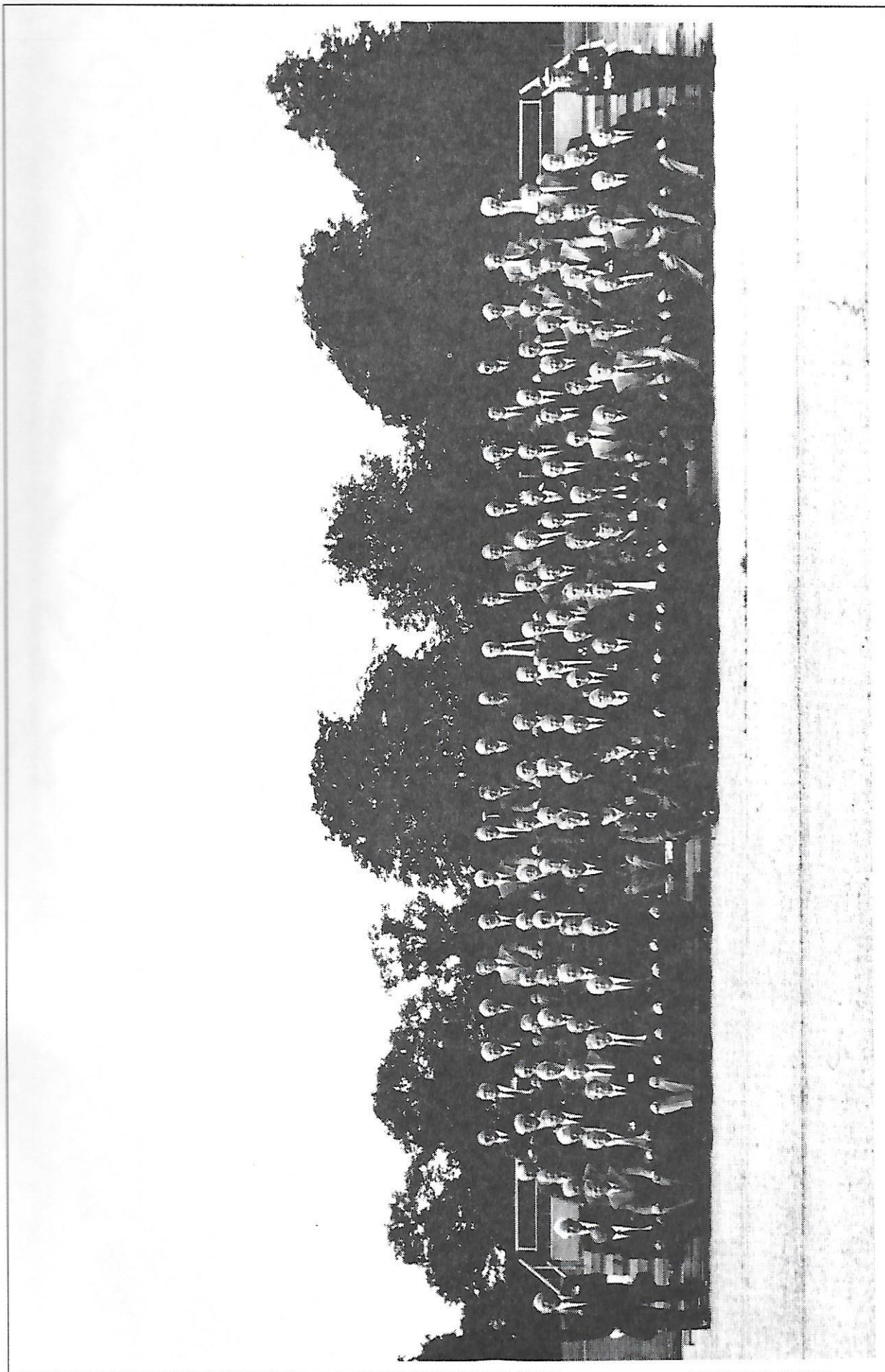
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REUNION '97 - GROUP PHOTOGRAPH