

O B A N



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

President - Major General P V R Besgrove CBE, BSc(Eng), CEng, MIEE

Vice Presidents - Past Commandants

COMMITTEE

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Lt Colonel Jim Mitchell RE

Vice Chairman

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Editor OBAN

Mr Brian Hornsey (54A)

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

Staff Sergeant C D Holmes (85C)

Mr Peter D Gripton (56B)

Mr 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.

**GENERAL AND REUNION
INFORMATION**

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(To be designated.)

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Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter

Table of Contents

OBAN - Issue 16

Arborfield Old Boys' Association	(i)
From the Editor	
<i>Brian Hornsey (54A)</i>	1
Chairman's Message	
<i>Lt Col Jim Mitchell RE</i>	2
From the Vice Chairman	
<i>Col Brian Hutchins (61B)</i>	3
From the Honorary Secretary	
<i>Major Bob Hambly REME (64A)</i>	4
From the Membership Secretary	
<i>Col (Retd) Peter Gibson</i>	4
Those Early Days & More . . .	
<i>By Gerald Johnson (39A)</i>	5
The Experiences of a Young Rifleman	
- Part 2 The Things We Did For Our Country	
<i>By John Maddox (44B)</i>	9
A Biographical Sketch of 50 Years	
<i>By Charles Ashdown (42A)</i>	11
3 Years in the Mid Fifties	
<i>By 'Brian Hornsey (54A)</i>	12
RCM J T Sallis, Royal Horse Guards	
<i>Introduction By Peter Gripton (56B)</i>	16
Letters to the Editor	17
Calling REME Airborne Veterans	26
Korean War Reunion	26
Notices	27
The Forgotten Corps of the Forgotten War	
<i>An appeal from John Dutton (43A)</i>	28
Where Are They Now?	28
For Sale	29

From the Editor

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Issue 16. I still have a number of articles in my 'bank' to fill those hungry pages of future OBANs - all will be published in the fullness of time.

Please continue to write about the past, not necessarily all about the School, but some adult service experiences as well. The 'forties' boys have kept our heads well above water; the fifties and sixties are beginning to contribute, but what about some contributions from the seventies, eighties and even the nineties?

As you will see, I continue to take extracts from **The Craftsman** and **The Army Apprentice** (the current magazine of the School) to try to make OBAN a little less 'enclosed'. We also have an article from our Vice Chairman, Brian Hitchins (61B).

Contributions received for anonymous publication must be supplied with the writer's name and address for reference purposes, otherwise its no go. I repeat from the last issue, if the gentleman would like to put his name to the poem submitted a while ago, namely 'Happy Days', I will gladly publish it as by 'Anon' as requested, but I need your name for the records.

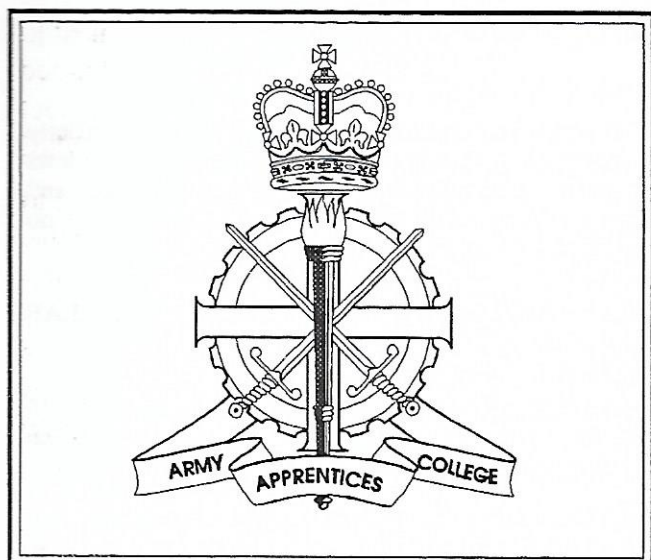
If possible, it would be a great help if contributors would send their contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows version).

If you don't have access to a computer, then of course I will accept clear, 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!

As I repeat over and over again, all contributions that I receive will (eventually) be published, subject to editing - it all depends on how the final layout of a particular issue turns out as to which article or letter I select. So please keep 'em coming!

In my role as Pictorial Archivist in the REME Museum, I would like to appeal to any member who has photographs of his apprentice or REME service. Would you consider allowing the Museum to copy them (make duplicate photos) for our archives. They would be returned to you after copying. At the moment I am particularly searching for photos of 8 JSTU - Australia, 16 JSTU - Australia, and 12 LAA & 35 LAA Regiment Wksps BAOR, circa late 1950s, but all theatres of service are needed.

Brian Hornsey (54A)



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Leutenant Colonel Jim Mitchell RE

Although it only seems a short while ago since I last contributed to the OBAN, much has already happened in the life of the College. The apprentices of the May 98 intake left in December full of enthusiasm to move on to the next stage of their training: for the Royal Engineers, to Minley; for the Royal Signals, to Blandford; for the Royal Logistics Corps, to Aldershot; and for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, to either Arborfield or Bordon.

The December Passing Out Parade was the first upon which Sapper Apprentices were represented since the College reformed in order to train apprentices from all four technical Corps. Appropriately, the Engineer-in-Chief, Brigadier Albert Whitley CBE, took the salute on a parade blessed with good weather. Barely had the dust settled during the Christmas leave, than it was time to begin the cycle all over again with a new January intake of some 300 young men and women, joining the 320 already under training since the previous September.

In the meantime, the College has received visits from the Adjutant General, General Sir Alex Harley, and from the Director General of Army Training and Recruiting, Major General Christopher Elliott. Both are keen to see the College develop further with a longer apprentice course. Work is now well underway to develop a new course syllabus for a year-long course to replace the current

seven-month long course in September 2000. The detailed course design will begin soon, following debate between the Corps about the various enhancements they would wish included. Suffice to say, none of this will be new to many of the Old Boys: the evolution of junior technical and apprentice training is, after all, a continuous process.

Throughout the winter months the construction of our new gymnasium - nowadays, for some reason, called a Physical and Recreational Training Centre - has continued apace. It has gladdened my sapper heart to see mud, concrete, steel girders and cranes everywhere from my office window as the structure takes shape. The new gym should be complete, on schedule, by the end of May this year.

Additionally, the College's adventurous training staff have now successfully moved from Crickhowell to Sennybridge, (Cwrt-y-gollen Camp at Crickhowell is to be sold by the Ministry of Defence), where they will be better placed to provide climbing, caving, canoeing and mountain walking training to the apprentices.

Overall, morale is high. The Army Apprentices College has started the year well and will gain further from a significant number of improvements to our training facilities and estate as the year progresses. I look forward to showing off to you the new gymnasium (and its refurbished predecessor) during the 1999 Reunion in October.

On a final note, Major (Retired) Bob Hambly has resigned as the Honorary Secretary of the Association due to the pressures of his work as an Army recruiter. Bob has served the Association outstandingly well during his tenure and I have written to him on behalf of all of us within the Association to express our thanks for his tremendous efforts. Major (Retired) Mick Harold has kindly agreed to stand-in as the Honorary Secretary for an interim period.

Jim Mitchell

FROM THE VICE CHAIRMAN

Colonel Brian Hutchins (61B)

This is the first time that I have written to the OBAN, and might have got away with it for a little longer except that the Chairman suggested that perhaps the Senior Serving Old Boy might wish to contribute an article. Having agreed, I came to consider just what I could write that might be of interest to members - tricky!

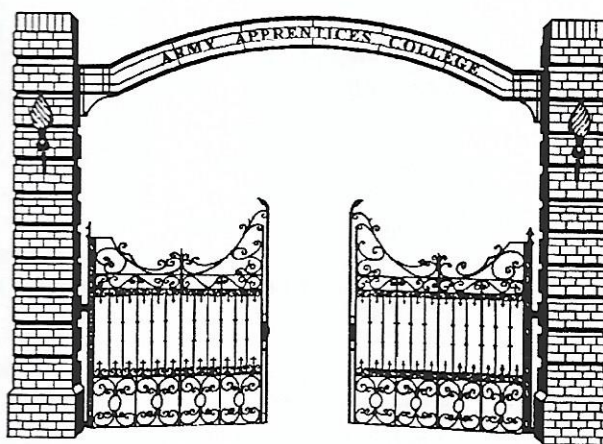
Idly, I picked up a copy of the OBAN to see if there was some inspiration (remembering the days when, as a corporal, I had been asked to contribute to **The Craftsman!**). As I flicked through its pages, I realised what articles I liked to see, it was the reminiscences. It occurred to me, that what might be of interest was my first AOBA weekend, as it is an experience that we have all shared.

One day, as Alan Morton jipped me in the canteen at Electronics Branch Malvern (yes, it still happens!), he enquired as to when I was going to join the Association and come to the Old Boys' Weekend. I'd known of the AOBA for some time, but as with many of us I'd not got 'a round tuit'! Even with this gentle dig, it was 3 tours later (London, Paris and Andover) before I finally joined and put my name down for the Old Boys' Weekend - Arborfield's answer to the Oktober Fest! I was all set to turn up and find an anonymous space in the centre rank of the parade, when I received a call from Larry Le Var, asking if I could fill in as the Reviewing Officer. So, no hiding place!

After lunch, in the WOs and Sgts Mess in Bailleul, I had some time to myself. I walked out of the Mess, down Biggs Lane and past the Globe Cinema - that wasn't there, continued past the Dental Centre - that wasn't there (my tongue reminiscing with some of my teeth that weren't there either!) and turned into, what is now, Princess Marina's

Drive. On my way into Rowcroft, the barn next to the stables wasn't there either, but that had burned down one Saturday afternoon when the fire piquet had been turned out in the middle of Doctor Who!

I am sure that those of you who have returned to Rowcroft Barracks after many years, as I had done, and found only the square and Jeep Block remaining, suffered similar waves of nostalgia, perhaps remembering how we had paraded on the roads outside of the blocks, waiting for the inspections that might decide whether we would be on show parade, or whether we would qualify for the Saturday afternoon rodeo drill!



The rest of the weekend was a bit of a blur (not uncommon as I have since discovered!), a blur of meeting old friends (and making new ones), of drinks and stories in the bar, of tea in the cookhouse, of the AGM, of more drinks and stories in the bar, of the dinner, and of course yet more drinks and stories in the bar!

Sunday morning church didn't feel right. At first, I thought that it was because we were actually in a church (although I did remember it as the garrison theatre at one time) or perhaps it was not being able to find a ha'penny to put in the collection - then I knew what it was! I hadn't been marched down there!

Back to the present. I must now complete the search for my replacement, as by the next Oktober Fest- I mean AOBA Weekend, I would have passed my 'sell by date' and changed out of khaki for the last time. However, I have enjoyed my time as Senior Serving Old Boy and look forward to seeing you at future dinners and, of course, for drinks and stories in the bar!

You may wish to note that I retire from the Army on 22 August 1999 after 38 ¹/₂ years service.

Brian Hutchins (61B)

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

This will be, I am afraid, the last report from me as Honorary Secretary as I have had to resign very much due to the pressure of work in the recruiting world. I have very much enjoyed being the Sec' - it has enabled me to meet and speak to many more of you than I have been able to hitherto.

I am pleased to report that the recruiting world is booming. Unfortunately, we still have difficulty in filling the Apprentice intake in May each year, but that's life - it has always been the same!!

It is mainly that success that has led me to this decision - something had to give. My Armed Forces Careers Office Group is some 35% up on last years figures; this reflects the hard work and long hours that have gone into meeting people, talking sometimes at length to potential recruits and their parents.

Not too hypocritically I hope, but I would like to leave you all with one last thought - it is your Association managed by a dedicated team of people and to them I offer my sincerest thanks, but please remember - ask not what your Association can do for you, but what you can do for your Association.

Bob Hambly (64A)

Lt Col Jim Mitchell writes

Dear Bob,

On behalf of the whole Association, I should like to offer my thanks for a job exceedingly well done. It is not a trivial undertaking and I know the job demands a great deal of time and energy. That you have been able to devote that time and energy so generously and willingly, given your other duties, has been quite remarkable.

In addition, I owe you a personal debt of gratitude. Your support to me as a new chairman has been nothing short of outstanding. Your briefs have always been excellent and the advice you have given me has been faultless. In consequence, what seemed to me, at first, a daunting job has been both pleasurable and relatively effortless.

I am delighted you already have a plan in place to identify a replacement. Bill Cleasby (61C) has agreed to consider taking up the post in about 6 months time, subject to his new commitments at the REME Museum. Equally, I am very pleased that Mick Harold (53B) has agreed to stand-in for the interim. Thank you again for all your efforts for the Association. Good luck with your expanded responsibilities and we all look forward to seeing you, if possible, at Reunion 99.

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

I want to start my notes on this occasion by thanking all you who have paid your 1999 Administrative Subs so promptly. 450 of you now pay by Standing Order, so I suppose the thanks should really go to your bank managers, but 124 have already sent me a cheque, postal order or cash with (as I write) still a month to go until the deadline. By the end of 1998, we had 620 active members so I am still awaiting another 40 or so cheques. If you have not paid yet - get out your cheque book or, preferably, fill in a Standing Order form without further delay. Donations to the fund are gratefully accepted as well. You will find a list of those who have made recent donations, elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Work on the Membership Directory continues and I hope to be able to publish the first trial edition very shortly. I printed out the first draft the other day and I was amazed at how large the Directory is going to be. I plan to publish the trial edition in A5 format (half the size of OBAN) with a large print version available for those who need it. The trial edition will include a insert for you to return to tell me of errors that have crept in and for your comments on the format and contents.

The Committee has decided to look for a Recruiting and Publicity member. An announcement, describing the job and asking for volunteers, is included elsewhere in this issue. There is no salary but expenses will be refunded. If you are interested in putting your name forward, give me (or anyone else on the Committee) a telephone call.

On behalf of the Commanding Officer (and the Editor), I distribute complimentary copies of the OBAN to senior officers of the cap-badges now represented at Arborfield, to the editors of selected service magazines (Craftsman, Sapper and the like) and to all ex-Commandants. In the future I shall try to extend this list to include commanding officers of the major units of the Corps represented at the College. If you have any further suggestions, please let me know.

Finally, do not forget: I need Standing Orders, Cheques, Postal Orders, Cash and, of course, Changes of Address.

Peter Gibson

Essay Competition Update. Owing to Bob Hambly's other commitments, the Management Committee have decided to change the panel of judges to be: Senior Membership Representative - Bill Pusey (46A), Vice Chairman Col Brian Hutchins (61B), and your editor Brian Hornsey (54A). As before, the judges' decision is final. Those essays already received are now held by Mick Harold (53B). Please send all other entries to the Editor.

THOSE EARLY DAYS & MORE...

By Gerald Johnson (39A)
- writing from Puyallup, USA

At last the day had arrived that I had waited impatiently for a long time. It was May 3rd, 1939. I took the oath at Nottingham recruiting office at 10 A.M. and received the 'Kings shilling', a days rations allowance, and a railway warrant to Wokingham. As has been reported many times before, Sgt. 'Taffy' Evans (SWB) relieved all of us of our cigarettes with some muted threats of what would happen to anyone caught with 'fags on 'em'. We were trucked to Arborfield and after being checked in we were escorted to our assigned barrack rooms after what seemed an eternity. I was located in B3. After a few days, the daily routine orders carried our names and regimental numbers, which we had to learn backwards and forwards. My number was 7594976.

The barrack square was incomplete and we could only use the South end (nearest the cook house). The first few days we drilled in civies until the QM stores could kit us out and have all the necessary changes made. Any minor infringement of discipline not serious enough to be charged with such as 'idle on parade' or 'unshaven' (I used the same razor blade for 18 months due to having only two hairs to shave) resulted in evening 'Wet shirt parades'. This was self-explanatory, drilling and double time marching until one really sweated. Other training consisted of how to make up your bed in the morning using the three horsehair biscuits and bolster (beds could not be made down until 1700 hrs), how to polish the floors, how to fold your clothing to fit into (and in correct sequence) your overhead locker. Our PT classes were held in the field between the guardroom and the Sgts' mess, as the gymnasium was not completed at that time.

On completion of basic training we started our technical training in the workshops and for about the next nine months filing, chipping, sawing, and scraping were the order of the day. For the next two years we were busy training in black-smithing, tin-smithing, and all elements of vehicle assemblies, theoretical and practical. This, along with further education, PT, religious instruction, Saturday morning room and/or kit inspection and drill parades until noon, then Sunday morning church parades and march past filled our time to its maximum. We also had driver training and tests on motor cycles, trucks,

and even at one period the one and only tank with the Meadows engine alongside the driver and a *peashooter for a gun. What a racket that thing made. But it all added to comprehensive training, which paid off in the final analysis.

We were allowed out of barracks (only after being inspected at the guardroom) on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 1800 hrs to 2000 hrs. Failure to pass the inspection of badges, buttons, belt, and boots meant either no pass out or, return for re-inspection after cleaning the offending article. Monday and Wednesday evenings were spent fairly lax. Bulling of boots and green blancoing of web equipment and white blancoing of buff belts were required and polishing of brasses was usual between trips to the NAAFI if one had the finances. Friday night was as above plus polishing of floors, cleaning windows, scrubbing table tops and benches, broom and bumper handles, black polishing of table legs and shovel, polishing of bucket in preparation for the Saturday morning inspection by the Company Commander or, occasionally, by the Commandant. Bed checks were made at 2100 hrs and lights out was at 2200 hrs every night for the next three plus years I spent there, even when I became a private.

During the course of the next three years I was caught smoking quite a few times and as well as serving my time on jankers, I had a pay reduction of 6^d. If I remember correctly I did have one pay day of 1/-. I was quite the criminal. To supplement our pay we came up with various schemes to make money from buying a kit bag of apples from the local farms and orchards and selling them in the barracks for 1d for a big one to ^d for a small one. I got a job in a local chicken farm cleaning out the hencoops on Saturdays for 6^d a week. We used to hide our cigarettes (generally Woodbines, five for 2^d) by climbing up into the rafters and using a razor blade to cut a small door into the wall. This was hinged by a small leather strap, which held the door in place.

During a visit in 1981 I went into by old barracks room (F3) and found the door still in place. On one occasion three of us 'janker wallahs' were sent up the hill to cut the grass at Ben Cook's house. The tools at our disposal was a pair of scissors each. Whilst there, we lightened the load of the apple tree and stuffed them into our denim blouses but unfortunately for us, Ben caught us out and prior to leaving he 'requested' us to leave the fruit and thanked us for saving him the task of picking them. He then doubled us back to the guardroom where we were re-assigned to the task of

polishing the pans in the cookhouse.

In 1940/41 (?) I reported sick one Saturday morning and had to pack my small kit (holdall, mess tins, cleaning kit etc.) for the sick parade. I was diagnosed as having appendicitis and ordered to report to the hospital, but prior to this I had to return to my barracks room, pack all my kit and turn it in to the company stores. I was marched to the hospital by the orderly Sgt. who rode his bicycle along side me.

Sunday turned out to be a very active day, all I wanted to do was sleep but the duty nursing sister and orderly kept waking me up and finally I was back loaded to a surgical hospital in Aldershot where they performed immediate surgery, the doctors fearing peritonitis. The only good things that came out of this were that my father had been sent for and was at my bedside when I came to on the Monday morning, and I used this surgery to skive off PT but that didn't last long. Bombardier Jackson/Peacock (?) took me to do wall bar exercises to strengthen my stomach muscles. Needless to say, I didn't try to pull that one again.

After passing the standard trade test in June '42 a number of us were waiting postings to active units, so, to fill in the time someone had the bright idea that we should assist the civilian workers who were replacing the wooden floor in the north dining room with concrete. Obviously they took advantage of the situation by having us push the concrete filled wheelbarrows from the mixer to the layers.

One day we decided that enough was enough and we were taking the afternoon off and told the civilian foreman that we had been selected to play football against the apprentices. We took off after lunch and hid in various places until teatime (1700 hrs). While we were sitting at our different tables having tea, Lt. Cook and Sgt Hodgekiss came along and asked us (in turn) where we had been that afternoon. "Playing football, sir," we lied. After checking what the score was supposed to have been and having one game but three or four different final scores, we finished up in the guard room private accommodation for a short time.

The following morning Lt. Cook then had us play 'sports' from the guard room to the hospital and back (approximately 1 to 1 miles if my memory serves me correct) playing leap frog. He rode his bicycle behind us and as we stooped, he used his Sam Browne belt to give us a swat on the behind. After one such swat the pace increased, distances between stops picked up

dramatically and the lapsed time must of set up some record. Humiliation at its highest level! There are a lot of such stories that many of us could tell, but I guess after more than 55 years and to save a lot of embarrassing memories, these are better left untold.

Our final day at the school arrived, we turned in our bedding and old type equipment then paraded at the guard room where we were given railway warrants to our new active unit stations and ration allowances for the day. On boarding the truck to go to Reading station, Lt. Cook suddenly appeared and as the truck pulled out of the gate he came to attention, saluted and shouted in that well recognized voice, "Goodbye boys, it was a pleasure!". Phase I of our military career had ended but had formed a style of life that stayed with me in many ways to this day. Who can ever forget!

Songs we used to sing while 'bulling up':

Parody to 'Let the rest of the world go by.'

Verse:

To a dance I did go
Where the gowns were so low
Held up only by a strap
There a girl wore a dress
It looked odd I confess
'Twas made out like a map

Chorus:

On her back was old Brazil
Her chest was Bunker's Hill
And just a little bit below
Was Mexico
Her shoulder blades were Japanese
On her bosom these was Greece
Her hips they were Siam
Her lap was Hindustan
I'm not quite certain of her thighs
For just then I saw my wife
And so to save my life
I let the rest of the world go by.

Ode to Sgt. Hodgekiss

Oh Hodgekiss great and glorious man
And leader of the Janker clan
May you live to be 101
And may big crabs crawl up your bum
And when you're dead we'll bury thee
In a wooden box on the lone prairie
And there you may rot forever more
The perfect end to a rotten whore.

Composer and name of melody unknown.

A man came home from work one night
And found his house without a light
So he went upstairs to go to bed
When a sudden thought came into his head
He went into his daughter's room
And found her hanging from a beam
So he took his knife and cut her down
And on her breast these words her found

How I wish my baby had been born
Then all my troubles would be gone
So dig my grave both wide and deep
Please lay white lilies at my feet
And at my head please place dove
To show the world I died for love.

Souvla bay

Why does she weep, why does she cry?
Her loves asleep so far away
He played his part one August day
And left his heart in Souvla Bay.
So she joined a band of nurse
And beneath that cross of red
She went to do her duty
To her sweetheart who lay dead.

Many came her way to woo her
But they slowly turned away
When she told them that story
Of that grave in Souvla Bay.

Why does she weep, why does she cry?
Her loves asleep so far away
He played his part one August day
And left his heart in Souvla Bay.

Three German Officers (some words edited)

Three German officers crossed the Rhine, taboo taboo
Three German officers crossed the Rhine, taboo taboo
Three German officers crossed the Rhine,
They kissed the women and drank the wine
Get in get out
Stop mucking about taboo taboo

They came upon a wayside inn taboo taboo
They came upon a wayside inn taboo taboo
They came upon a wayside inn taboo
They lifted the latch and walked right in
Get in get out
Stop mucking about taboo taboo

Oh landlord have you a daughter fair taboo taboo
Oh landlord have you a daughter fair taboo taboo
Oh landlord have you a daughter fair
With a lily white body and golden hair
Get in get out
Stop mucking about taboo taboo

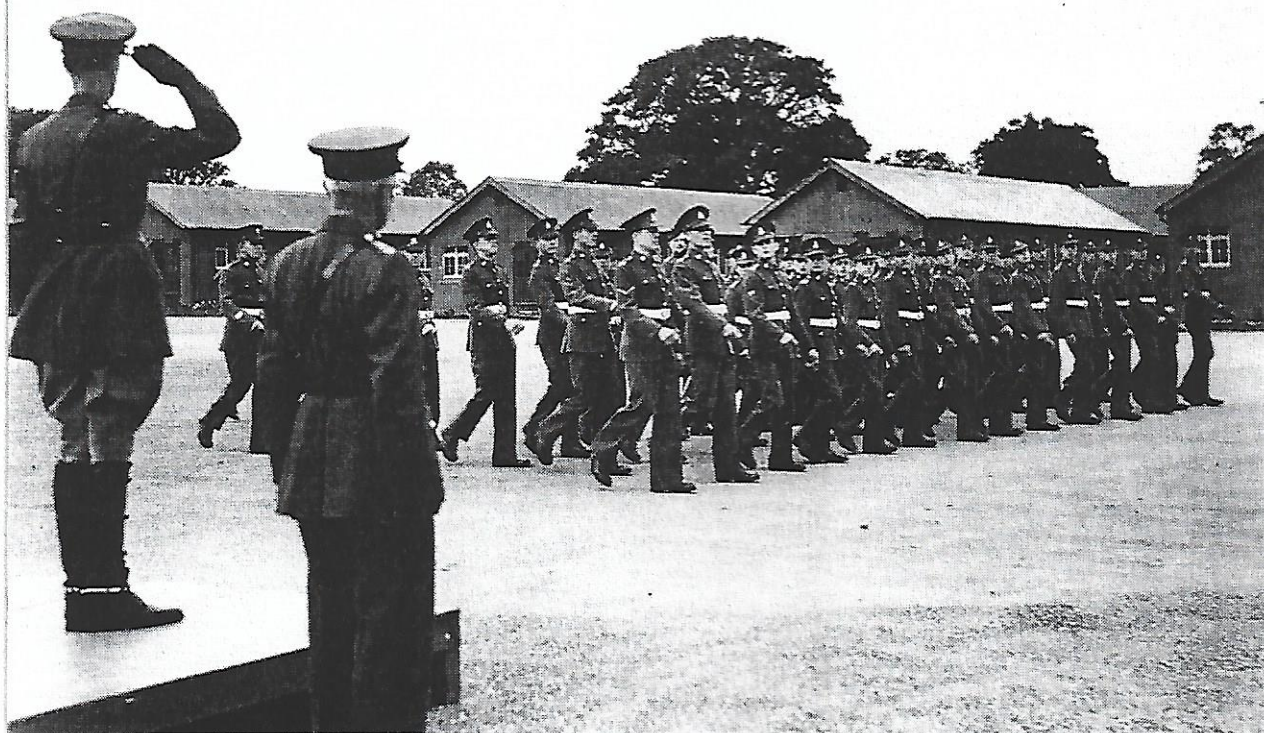
Oh sirs I have a daughter fair taboo taboo
....etc for some 10 or so verses



Barrack Room B3 - A Company - June 1939



March Past - 13 Platoon - Circa 1942



Lord Lt General, County of berkshire

March Past - Col F A Hilborn - CSM Lord - CQMS Fuller - 13 Pltn

THE EXPERIENCES OF A
YOUNG RIFLEMAN
Part 2:
The Things We Did For Our
Country

By
John Maddox (44B)

*(The continuing adventures of
a now rich rifleman!
- q.v. OBAN13 - Ed.)*

Immediately after the completion of my infantry training at Hollywood Barracks (outside Belfast) I was sent, as an officer cadet to a pre-OCTU at Helens Bay, situated between Hollywood and Bangor. It was a small unit, about 150 strong where, after undergoing War Office Selection Boards or regular Commission Boards, the cadets waited for vacancies at Mons, Eaton Hall or the RMA Sandhurst. One's length of stay could vary from a matter of days to several months, so we had a floating population.

The permanent staff consisted of several sergeants, mostly from the Brigade of Guards, one RSM, the usual admin staff and 4 officers.

Our OC was one, Major Uppington of the Royal Ulster Rifles. He had lost his left arm on active service and had the reputation of being completely 'bomb happy'. I prefer to remember him as one of nature's true eccentrics. He was a remarkable man, being able to fire in the prone position, using only his one arm. He could even produce better scores than any of the cadets. The officers were the Adjutant and two 2nd Lieutenants.

The camp itself was built on the very edge of Belfast Lough, only a few yards from a Royal Artillery Battery controlling a brace of the biggest coastal guns I have ever seen. They

didn't bother us and we seldom ever saw any sign of them. On one occasion, during my own short stay, we were informed that the guns were to be test-fired the next day. This involved removing all drinking glasses from the cadet's bar, securing everything loose in the camp and opening every window before the notified time of firing. The whole business took several hours and then there were two loud bangs and that was it - no breakages, the earth didn't move and in fact, the seals lazing on the rocks below didn't even turn a hair!

There were a number of huts occupied by cookhouse staff and clerks etc., and a separate block of huts occupied by the cadets, with one hut acting as Cadet's Mess and NAAFI. The Officer's Mess, complete with bar, dining room and sleeping quarters was situated at one end of our small barrack square, while at the other end was situated the dining hall.

Outside the Officer's mess was a large static water tank, about 30 feet square and Lord knows how deep. The side stood about 6 feet above ground level, but grassy banks had been built up around the tank, sloping up to the rim. These served two purposes; to hide the tank from the Officer's Mess and to provide access in the event of a fire. In common with every other static water tank on a military base, the water had not been replaced since its original filling.

With such a mixed complement of cadets, some regulars, more National Service, coming from almost every regiment in the Army and none knowing exactly how long they would be there, training was really a bit of a joke. We spent some of our days and nights wallowing around County Down, supposedly on 'Schemes', but there was no

sense of continuity as suddenly without notice half of the people taking part would be withdrawn for posting to an OCTU.

We did, however, spend a lot of time on the barrack square under the eagle eye of one or other of the drill sergeants, every one of which was a member of the Brigade of Guards. This really 'put the cat among the pigeons' as at that time about half of the cadets were from the Rifle Regiments; The King's Royal Rifle Corps, The Rifle Brigade and The Royal Ulster Rifles.

Now, Guards Sergeants, together with all other Guardsmen appeared to have a healthy hatred of the 'Black Mafia'. We Riflemen, on the other hand, merely confessed an equally healthy contempt for the 'clodhopping Woodentops'. It all made for fun and games and helped to pass the time. Occasionally, there was a little light relief. For instance, on the day we first made the acquaintance of Sergeant Riley, Irish Guards.

He was the personification of the caricatures of drill sergeants which occasionally appeared in popular magazines - big, red-faced, in fact all boots and Brasso. He took us for a drill parade and for over an hour proceeded to put us through a series of drill movements which none of the National Service cadets and very few of the Regulars had ever known existed.

Sergeant Riley, even more red-faced than before, continued to belay orders in an Irish accent which became increasingly unintelligible with every command. The combination of not understanding his orders and not knowing the drill movements did nothing to relieve the situation and eventually we were halted and advanced. Sergeant Riley then delivered the following oration:

"Gentlemen, I am fully aware that although you do not yet hold the King's Commission, it is customary to address you as 'Gentlemen'. Well, gentlemen, I can only tell you that your drill is not up to the standard I expect. I can say no more, BUT IF YOU WERE A SQUAD OF RECRUITS AT PIRBRIGHT I WOULD BE TELLING YOU THAT YOU ARE THE SCRUFFIEST, STUPIDEST AND MOST IDLE SHOWER OF S**** IT HAS EVER BEEN MY MISFORTUNE TO MEET!". All this was delivered at the top of his voice.

Then his voice fell to a more conversational level as a wide and very satisfied smile spread across his face. "However, Gentlemen, I would never dream of talking to Officer cadets like that. Gentlemen, a smart turn to the right and you are dismissed."

This episode was only one of many, some too scandalous to relate, but one other does come to mind. We had spent the day on Ballykinlar rifle range, a day of pouring rain, high winds and a near tragedy. Our party had been in the charge of one 2nd Lieutenant Evans, an officer who had himself only held a commission for about 6 months. He had no personality to speak of, but had a total belief in his own ability as a leader of men, in other words, a pompous, thoroughly obnoxious person.

The party was split into two, one to be the firing party and the other to run the butts, marking and repairing targets. Just after lunch, Mr Evans, in his wisdom, decided to change over. As the telephone had broken, our butt party had no direct communication with the firing point. As the targets were all down with nobody firing, he decided to lead the butts party back to the firing point. However, as we began to march

back, he told the last 3 cadets to raise each target as they passed. The inevitable happened. As we cleared the end of the butts, a burst of Bren gun fire commenced! I have never hit the ground as fast as on that occasion. My Evans, obviously shaken, attempted to cover himself by berating the sergeant in charge of the sharp end and fortunately, no one was injured.

We returned to camp, wet, miserable and speaking for myself liberally coated with Ballykinlar mud. Obviously something had to be done in redress. A thoroughly military planning operation then took place in the cadet's quarters to decide how to make clear our displeasure. Some of the suggestions were positively violent so were not considered seriously, but we thought inflicting a little personal discomfort on Mr Evans might not result in our all being *Returned To Unit*.

Enquiries had shown that all other officers would be spending the night out of camp and our victim would be Orderly Officer. He would therefore be alone in the Officer's Mess. Knowing that he had a liking for the bottle it was reasonable to assume that he would spend most of the still wet evening in the bar being obnoxious to the barman.

At about 21030 hrs, two cadets crept around the static water tank, out of sight of the mess windows (just in case Mr Evans looked out). We knew that he was not in the sleeping quarters as there were no lights on at that end of the Mess. The two cadets then proceeded with military precision to balance a large bag of flour on the top of the door into the sleeping quarters. After a successful withdrawal we all retired to AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS.

Unfortunately, the CO, Major Uppington had decided to collect

something from the Mess. Our first indication that something was amiss was when the fire alarm sounded. As prescribed, everyone turned out, pulling on greatcoats over their night attire. This was pretty varied - I remember one cadet parading in his greatcoat and unlaced boots, showing a fair length of purple silk pajama leg.

When we were all fell in on the square, Major Uppington appeared from the Mess, still covered in flour which, in the rain began to run down his always immaculate uniform. He walked slowly to the front of the assembly and said, "Gentlemen, there is no fire. In order to accentuate the eccentricity with which you all credit me, I have decided to see just how well you are getting on under your drill instructor."

He then gave the order, "Company will move to the right! Right turn! By the left, quick march!" We then marched around the perimeter of the square, wheeling to the right when so ordered. As we approached the front of the Officer's mess came the order, "Left wheel!" This brought the column in line with the static water tank. We duly marched up the slope of the bank until the first file was right at waters edge.

As everyone began to mark time, 'Uppy' shouted, "Who told you to mark time?...Forward!" Which is how 100 plus potential officers had a cold bath in highly stagnant water in the middle of a wet, miserable February night!

CHARLES ASHDOWN (42A)
- A Biographical Sketch of 50 Years

Rather than write a long resumé of my career, I present a 'biographical sketch' of my fifty years of service to the Crown. I hope you find it readable.

21 Jan 1942 Enlisted in the British Army as an Apprentice.

18 Oct 1944 Entered man's service as a Craftsman REME as a qualified Electrician V&P(AFV) Class III, *(on the Editor's seventh birthday no less !- Ed.)*

April 1945 Appointed Lance Corporal.

Sept 1945 Drafted to India (as a Lance Corporal).

12 Dec 1945 Posted as permanently attached to the Indian Army (IEME) and promoted to Sergeant. Served at 516 Command Workshops, Secunderabad.

8 Sept 1947 Posted to Malaya and subsequently to Singapore. Left the Indian Army.

Nov 1948 Completed overseas tour (Python).

Mar 1950 Attended No. 6 Armt. Art. ECE course.

12 Dec 1951 Qualified Armt. Art - promoted to Staff Sergeant. Posted to 23 Heavy Workshop Wetter, BAOR.

18 Mar 1953 Completed 8 years with the Colours and served extra Korean War Service until 18 March 1953, finally having served a total of 11 years, 3 months in the British Army (including leave time).

15 April 1953 Enlisted in the Canadian Army (RCME) as Staff Sergeant and moved to Canada. Served at 205 Workshop Camp Borden, Ontario, then RCME School at Kingston, Ontario, then 16 Company RCME at Whitehorse, Yukon.

15 Aug 1963 Promoted to WO II and posted to 202 Base Workshop, Montreal Quebec.

August 1966 Posted to Canadian Forces HQ Ottawa

5 Oct 1966 Promoted to WO I.

5 Sept 1967 Commissioned as Lieutenant RCME and posted to Air Defence Command HQ, North Bat, Ontario.

14 Aug 1970 Promoted to Captain, LORE (Land Ordnance Engineers) on unification of Canadian Armed Forces and posted to NDHQ, Ottawa.

5 Sept 1974 Promoted to Major, LORE at NDHQ.

May 1976 Posted to UNEF II HQ Ismailia, Egypt as Staff Officer for 6 months tour, until November 1976.

Dec 1976 Posted to Training System HQ Trenton, Ontario as Staff Officer.

May 1979 Poste to UNTSO Jerusalem (United Nations Truce Supervisory Organisation) as Military Observer for a 2 year tour. Assigned to UNMOG Tiberias, Israel. Spent 1 year as Observation Post Officer at OPs on the Zone of Separation, Golan Heights between Syrian and Israeli Forces.

April 1980 Assigned to UNMOG, Cairo, Egypt. Spent 3 months as Observation Post Officer at various POs in the Sinai Desert between Egypt and Israeli Forces.

August 1980 Returned to Canada. Posted to NDHQ Ottawa as Staff Officer.

Oct 1981 Reached retirement age (of 55 years) for the Canadian Army, having served a total of 28 years, 6 months in the Canadian Forces.

Oct 1981 Took employment as Systems Analyst with the Canadian Department of Defence.

March 1992 Employed carrying out organisation and management analysis on any (and all) units of the Canadian Forces until March 1992:

Specifically: From October 1981 to March 1986: employed as Organisation and Management Analyst (O&M 3) - equivalent to Captain. From March 1986 to July 1988: employed as Senior Analyst (O&M 4) - equivalent to Major. From July 1988: employed as Team Leader (O&M 5) - equivalent to Lt. Colonel.

1 April 1992 Retired from the Canadian Civil Service, having served a total of 10 years, 5 months as a Civil Servant.

The final analysis is that I have served with various Crown organisations for a Grand Total of 50 years, 2 months!

3 YEARS IN THE MID FIFTIES

By Brian Hornsey (54A)

It was almost blowing a blizzard as I gazed out from the HQ Company office window, the wind hindering the progress of three squads of PT clad boys as they forced their way along Nuffield Road towards the main gate, taking part in an activity I later learnt was a 'road run'. The boys, moving as robots, seemed indifferent to the driving snow, dressed as they were in a mixture of red or white PT vests, navy shorts and working boots.

As my gaze followed their progress my attention was halted at the sight in the background of two high heaps of snow covered coke being 'softly' shovelled into what appeared to be a boiler house by three unfortunate soldiers dressed in fatigues. Coming here on interview from my private school as I had, I mistakenly thought the shovellers to be some form of low-life soldiers, good for nothing but maintaining the apprentices in a standard of comfort suitable for the future 'cream' of the British Army.

We, my father and I, had arrived at the School on an exploratory visit and were being regaled in the rosy future the School had to offer me by Major Stocker, Rifle Brigade, the Officer Commanding HQ Company. The Company Office was extremely hot, heated by an old fashioned pot-bellied stove. I remember Major Stocker spoke with a pronounced stutter and on leaving I knowingly explained to my father that it was probably due to shell shock from the last war. What a little know-all I was and a snob to boot! As you all know, my assumptions were to be somewhat rudely straightened out in the months that followed.

I arrived as most of us did by Army lorry from Reading station on 17 February 1954 and was off loaded at the Guardroom where I hung about until there was enough of us to be formed into some sort of squad and walked up to F block.

We had been made to line up along the

main corridor in the spider, tallest on the right - shortest on the left and from this divided up into squads and then allocated barrack rooms.

I was in C Squad and our permanent staff drill Sergeant was to be Sergeant Perry of the Royal Tank Regiment. Rumour always had it that all the permanent staff at the School were medically down-graded personnel and in Sergeant Perry's case this was true. He once showed us a substantial bayonet wound on one of his forearms which made his hand bend back permanently at a peculiar angle. It was also rumoured that our (HQ) CSM Brady, Irish Guards only had one lung. All this, of course added to their aura, especially to us innocent new recruits. Other names that come to mind while in HQ are Corporal Cowan and Sergeant Channel, Royal Hampshire.

"Next!", came the call from Jack the barber - we had all been squeezed into this little barber shop, some of us with the more cocky natures cheeking the barber and others displaying great thick 'DA' hairstyles. There was no escape - in one end as individuals and out the other as shorn convicts, all identical and gaping with slightly dazed expressions at each other - I have never had such a short haircut before or since that first assault. I could actually touch my skin above the ears - I even discovered I had ears and could probably finish off the underlying bone with sandpaper!

Once herded together after this shearing, I was taken down to the Quartermaster's Stores to be issued with an incomprehensible stream of items. What the devil are *drawers cellular* or *button sticks* or a *housewife* and those *khaki shirts, hairy*, to be worn without a nice soft vest underneath. My world was quickly becoming threatened by all things alien. Somebody stood behind me pinching in the waist of some sort of straight-jacket into which I had been inserted and was marking the sides with chalk. I gradually passed along down one side of a long counter collecting bits of kit until I emerged at the other end staggering under a pile of clothing and topped with a peaked cap which because of my newly styled head, rested

on my newly discovered ears. As I peered out under this canopy, I couldn't understand the amused looks I was attracting from established apprentices as I proceeded back to my new barrack room. I imagined I looked very promising in my new hat.

"Spuds? Gravy? Get your tea from the urn over by the door! You didn't know to bring your eating irons and mug with you? ... and your supposed to be our hopes for the future? Bl..dy Hell!" I had arrived at the cookhouse with the remainder of my intake outside the normal mealtimes having been delayed by our induction process. The food was awful! That was to be the only day that there was not an evil boy NCO gleefully waiting to shout "Plates!" as you deposited your dirty plates on the table on your way out. We soon got to know what it meant and how to avoid it.

After struggling with that fortifying feast it appeared that it was time to listen to our new friend, the room Corporal. My room was supervised by one Corporal Dale, a small-built pompous ginger-haired boy, swaggering around full of his own importance, an attitude I later found to be common to a number of boy NCOs.

"You are now going to learn how to make your beds *down*. I was shown what a *blanket US* was and indeed that the green blanket was to be used as a counterpane such that it was ready for lying on. Ah! At last, time for a rest.

"Don't get clever with me lad, get off that bed! You haven't nearly finished yet - you are now going to learn how to make a bed *up*." We stripped our newly made beds and were shown, as budding engineers, the method by which sheets (yes - we had sheets in the fifties) and blankets could be folded to exact dimensions, stacked alternately and finally wrapped in the green blanket, rather like some sort of large sponge cake. We then had to make our beds *down* again!

A practice which is now sadly lacking was the announcement of activities by Bugle Call. How lovely it was to be woken up at 0630hrs in the morning by

the melodic blasting of a bugle which seemed to go on and on, one's attention only being diverted by the Orderly NCO smashing the end of your bed with a mess tin until you responded to his kindly request, "Wakey, wakey, get your feet on the deck!" The only bugle call I really welcomed was the cook-house call. Thinking about the cook-house, what about those trays of cold fried bread put out on a Saturday morning for mid-morning break? I remember tearing down the square from E block, determined to get as many slices as I could - they were simply delicious!

And then there came 'room jobs'. I'm sure we all remember Sweep Floor 1 and 2, Bumper 1 and 2, Dusting, Utensils, Firepoint, Sheets & Laundry, Denims and finally Ablutions. So many happy hours were spent 'bumping' the barrack room floor using a bit of blanket until it shone or throwing buckets of water over the ablution floor and squeegeeing the water up again in the great pursuance of hygiene.

As the next few weeks passed, I learnt how to skive as we all did - lurk around out of sight until the most unpopular fatigues had been doled out or pretend that you had been ordered by some other NCO to do something else or as a last resort just hide in the toilets.

Later in the divisions, I remember once being discovered skiving in the toilet and watching in great embarrassment as the beret and cap badge of the Oxford & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry gradually arose over the other side of the cubicle door and encountering the gaze from the eyes of the D Company CSM Ron Patie. I was told to join the parade in no uncertain terms!

For the first 6 weeks (I think) we were to concentrate on learning foot drill and bringing our kit up to the standard demanded by our instructors. Interspersed with periods of drill were periods of 'internal economy' which as we all know meant, beezing boots, polishing brasses, blancoing webbing, in fact every conceivable activity which would eventually transform us from green recruits to trained squaddies. At the end of the basic training period a

drill competition was held between squads - I think C squad might have won, the squad I was in.

Trade training started with the rest of the term being spent in the General Fitting shop. Our civilian instructor was a kindly, portly man who was blind in one eye, made obvious by his spectacles having one of the lenses permanently misted and of course we nicknamed him 'Nelson'. He once caught me idly swinging two hammers together such that their hardened heads would strike each other and 'bounce' apart. He lectured me on how hardened metal was very brittle and if I continued, almost certainly one of the heads would explode in my face, probably with a sliver of metal entering my eye, so blinding me as it had him. I have always been very wary of hardened metal since.

We were all issued with a toolbox filled with a comprehensive set of tools to be padlocked and kept in the workshop. The 'jobs' we had to make were all made from mild steel. Nelson's desk was situated along one side of the rows of work benches so that he could keep a firm (but fatherly) eye on us all. We learnt how to mark out a job on a marking-out table with a scribe and block, which we were told was an extremely valuable set of equipment and on no account were we to attempt to scratch the table's surface.

There followed a series of jobs, among these being a B, a U, a Cube and a peculiar shaped assembly which in its manufacture had taught us to drill using a hand ratchet, tap the resultant hole, file one corner off the parent piece to follow the marked out arc of a circle, cut out a small rectangular piece from its bottom edge, square up the remaining slot and fit a new piece of squared metal into this slot. As we completed each job we took it up to him for inspection and marking. If your work was exceptional, it was mounted in a display cabinet in the workshop. I will always remember the smell of that milky coolant liquid used on the saw and drilling machines. I only have to walk into any machine shop now and the smell of coolant takes me straight back to Arborfield.

Although I joined the School with 4 GCE subjects, I was still subjected to educational instruction and had to take the Army Certificate of Education exams, Class II (Intermediate Test) and Class I (Senior Test). Of course there were subjects like Map Reading and General Physics in which I hadn't previously qualified, so perhaps there was some purpose.

Map Reading and Geography were favourite subjects, not because of their content but because the classes were taken by a WOII Cawson, RAEC, who if you coaxed and prodded him gently enough, rather like a small bird persuading its parent to bring up the contents of its crop, he would regale us with his adventures in the far east - once he got started he could be maintained in this 'instructional mode' until the end of the period - it all made fascinating listening to us boys.

The only subject I hadn't mastered before joining the School was maths. My brain just wouldn't respond to the efforts of various schoolmasters and coaches, until that is, we were to be taught by a Captain Polan, RAEC. His method of putting his subject across was exactly right for me and in the winter of 1955 I actually passed Maths at GCE O level to the disbelief of my father. This was indeed a notable achievement for me.

I was to remain a humble A/T for the whole of the 3 years, promotion was not to be. Looking at some of my old reports it is now obvious that to succeed in D Company you had to be a keen sportsman. Three of my reports carry comments by the Company Commander, Major Martin which say 'Would like to see him on the sports field more often' and 'Would like to see him become more interested in Company activities', and 'would like to see him interested in games'. Of course, there were those enforced games afternoons where you had to play Rugby or Hockey, but given the choice I would rather skive about on gardening detail on a Wednesday afternoon or even go on a road run! PT was a different story. I have to admit to enjoying exercising in the Camp Hall Gym, clambering up

wall bars, balancing on beams and climbing up ropes. Rings worn on the fingers were banned - we had been told grisly stories by PTIs about fingers being ripped out complete with tendons so we were only too glad to comply. At one time I could actually climb up a rope to the ceiling using my arms only! Looking back, we must have been pretty fit.

I cannot remember how, at the end of our first term, we were allocated to our Companies. I suspect we were once again lined up, tallest on the right and shortest on the left, and then selected from the top in groups of four, A, B, C, D, then A, B, C, D, to be repeated on down the line. I know that the lads in my HQ barrack room were all dispersed to different Companies, so it certainly wasn't by room, neither was it by trade.

We moved as 2 Division into K Block at the top of the square to begin our time in D Company. Life relaxed a little after the discipline of HQ. I was now to start my trade training as a Telecommunications Mechanic and I remember being led into the Telecom Shop and thinking what a quiet place it was after the Fitting Shop. It had, what I can only describe as, a peculiar 'nutty' smell to it. There was a small area fitted with work benches for practical periods and at the other end a series of classrooms for theory.

The Chief Instructor at that time was a Captain WHR Evatt, a person you didn't encounter very often, the main instruction being given by civilians such as Mr Booker (practical), Mr Hall (of dancing class fame), Bill Riddeford (quite a character) and Bob Coe (our future Radar Instructor).

We started off learning about electricity and magnetism, progressed to resonant circuits, valve theory, electronic techniques and in 5 division I actually built my own 'superhet' radio. This was while under the instruction of Bill Riddeford, who was also in the progress of writing his own reference book, later to be published as *Riddeford's Radio Reference*. We were very proud to know someone who had written a book!

We had had it drummed into our heads that when wiring up a radio receiver, it was very important to keep the wires as short and straight as possible, otherwise the set would be unstable and break into oscillation without warning - this was known as 'motorboating'. I did my best to follow these guide-lines, and having completed the build and successfully aligned the i.f. coils with an AVO signal generator, I switched on! What a disappointment - my set proceeded to motorboat like a good 'un. The only way I could stop this and get it to work properly was to tip it onto its side. I kept that set (on its side) for some years but eventually its novelty value diminished and I threw it away.

During the fifties, each barrack room had a radio mounted centrally on one wall high up on a shelf, and in our room it was always tuned every night to Radio Luxembourg. On Sunday nights there would be an hour long program which would start (I think) at 11pm, called *Top Twenty*, with disc jockey Jimmy Young and later a very young Jimmy Saville. We would lie snugly in our beds endeavouring to listen to the whole hour of hits, always waiting in anticipation of the top ten, sung by such pop idols as Ruby Murray, Connie Francis, Fats Domino and eventually Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and Tommy Steel. In fact as with all teenagers, pop music became a major interest. I remember going on leave and on the way home via Reading I stopped at a record store and spent about £12.0.0^d on an auto-changer record player and four of the latest pop 78s. I then proceeded to drive my mother crackers while on leave with the non-stop playing of the records at home.

6 Division brought a new challenge. Volunteers were required to convert from Tele Mechs to Radar Mechs. Myself and a number of others volunteered and found ourselves under the kindly administrations of Bob Coe, an ex Navy man. A 3MK7 Radar along with its Lister generator had been positioned adjacent to the Tels Shop and we were allocated our own classroom.

That Lister was something of a brute. It took two fit boys to swing the starting

handle, and one around the side to engage the clutch bar. Initially, you had to decompress the engine to its lowest setting by unscrewing the three compression wheels, swinging the starting handle as fast as you could and then slamming in the clutch bar on the side. If you were lucky she started and once running, the compression had to be increased by screwing-in the three wheels equally until they would go no further. This was always something of a chore as our last 6 months on Radar was during the winter '56 to '57 and it was always cold and wet.

That 3MK7 was a very complex piece of equipment for those days, but when you compare it to modern sophisticated electronic equipment, it was relatively simple. But the complexity of the filament heated valves, the large number of relays with their myriad of contacts, the inaccessibility of component parts and the enclosed area in which one had to work, not to mention the heat and noise, made it a memorable piece of machinery. As a boy, of course, one's brain is very retentive and even today I can still remember how parts of the Radar worked and even how to follow the complex switch-on procedure.

Once in the divisions you were allowed out in civilian clothes on a Saturday afternoon (unless you had misbehaved and were on rodeo). Rodeo was that inconvenient punishment that had you drilling for at least an hour in best SD on a Saturday afternoon. Was this just a fifties institution? You were only dismissed once the drill instructor was satisfied that the squad's ability to drill had reached the standard he required. I can remember one drill Sergeant, Sgt Phillips, KRRC, becoming so frustrated with us that he actually whipped off his beret and threw it together with his pace stick onto the ground. He almost jumped up and down as well!

Reading in those days was much smaller than today, with no pedestrianised areas. On a free Saturday, we would forego lunch in the cookhouse and flee the camp on the first possible opportunity and catch the bus outside the Bramshill Hunt to Reading. Alighting at St Mary's Butts, we made a 'bee-line'

for 'Ma' Beasley's. This was a combined tobacconists/cafe, located at the bottom of Castle Street as it joins The Butts.

Mr Beasley was a diminutive man who inhabited an area behind a stacked counter and was very rarely seen elsewhere. Ma, on the other hand, was a large 'motherly' lady who ran the cafe side. I suppose she could be compared to the character who runs the cafe in *Last of the Summer Wine*, currently on TV. We would all troop in there and order the most magnificent fry-up imaginable (to us at least). It was actually served at your table with bread and butter and a cup of tea for the huge cost of about 2/6d! Then it was off to the pictures in the afternoon.

The evenings were spent in one of two ways. Either we went to the Palace Theatre (it no longer exists) or to a pub. The attraction of the Palace was that every so often they had a program of static nude displays (it was all that was legal in those days) and us boys would eagerly pay our 1/6^d for a seat in the 'gods', right at the top of the auditorium and gaze with undisguised lust at the unavailable ladies.

The pub we most favoured, especially in the winter, was called the *Clifton Arms*, now covered by a new road. It always had a large, glowing coke fire which filled the bar with a radiant heat. We were gradually accepted by the locals, most of whom worked for Southern Railways.

One particular man, (Lionel) befriended us and after many Saturdays spent drinking mild & bitter, we invited him and his wife (whom we hadn't yet met) to the next Passing Out Parade. In the event I think only his wife was able to attend and us boys made a big fuss of her on the day. We just couldn't understand how such a rough diamond as Lionel was, could have such a pleasant and homely wife!

Having finally taken our trade tests, we were to follow a program of 'draft training'. We were to learn the complexities of weapon training and field craft, prior to being posted as 'trained soldiers'.

Stripping the Bren gun was a favourite and once having learnt to strip the gun, a number of us competed in who could strip it the quickest. If you pulled out the 'body locking pin' at the same time as releasing the 'barrel locking nut' to its fullest extent and then gave the gun a violent shake at the same time pulling out the butt group, the thing would fall to pieces in about 5 seconds. I don't think it did the gun a lot of good though! We also learnt to carry out the more advanced drill movements which included rifle drill on the march.

Then, of course, came the dreaded tear gas period. I am sure we all remember running around the outside of a sealed shelter wearing gas masks, stumbling into the shelter gasping for breath, being ordered to whip them off and trying not to gulp in lungfuls of tear gas.

Finally, our own Passing Out Parade was upon us and after much practice in our new BDs we finally passed out from the School on 31 January 1957.

At 1100 hrs on that day the Ceremonial Drill Parade took place. The Inspecting Officer arrived onto the Parade Ground and he received the General Salute. There followed the Inspection, the March Past in Slow Time to the sound of the Military Band, followed by the March Past in Quick Time to the sound of the Pipe Band. Boy, did we swagger! In those days the bands were quite large, both having a fair complement of side-drummers which enhanced the rhythm of the beat to which we marched. Finally, the parade advanced in Review Order and the final General Salute given.

The visitors were asked to stand when the Inspecting Officer arrived and remain standing for the first General Salute and stand again for the final General Salute. They were also told that the Champion Company Banner was not a Regimental Colour and should not be saluted. Incidentally, our (D) Company was Champion Company in July 1956!

The Senior Staff having been introduced to the Inspecting Officer at 1145hrs, everyone repaired to the

Camp Hall for a short prayer, the Commandant's address, distribution of prizes, an address by the Inspecting Officer and then the National Anthem.

At 1240hrs, the Senior Regimental Staff were introduced to the Inspecting Officer and then we all went to lunch at 1300hrs.

At 1430 hrs there was a Physical Training Display in the Camp Hall and after that visitors were encouraged to wander around the School grounds and workshops until 1700 hrs. No doubt a good time was had by all!

A/Sgt A.R.W. Ivens (of 'Skiver' Ivens fame - 54A) won the Education prize for the Senior Division as did A/T P.D. Gripton (now a venerable member of our AOBA committee from 56B intake - bit of a jeep really) for the Junior Division.

Looking at the Program for the 1957 Passing Out Parade, the majority of the Education and Technical Ability prizes went to boys of mere A/T rank. Why had they not been rewarded for their ability by promotion as they progressed through the School? After all, we were supposed to be the future tradesmen of the British Army and that side of our training should have been rewarded with more emphasis than ability at sports. Out of the 27 boys awarded School Colours for sports from our Senior Division, 20 were A/NCOs. This shows that to get a promotion in those days, it didn't matter how bad you were at Education and Trade Training, as long as you were a keen sportsman you were promoted. This is just by way of being an observation, you understand.

Pity promotion wasn't based on one's ability to skive, to cut the grass patches between huts with a table knife, to wear elastics, to make toast on an upturned smoothing iron or to sell 'dog ends' to smoking addicts. These qualities together with the fact that I emerged from the School as an X3 craftsman made me a fine trained soldier, ready to join REME and ultimately be a credit to the Corps!

Introduction by Pete
Gripton (56B)

Regular readers will recall that I contributed an article on RSM McNally in OBAN 13, without having met the great man. This follow-up article was originally published in the Christmas 1956 edition of The Arborfield Apprentice as an introduction to RCM Sallis, who succeeded Mr McNally. A hard act to follow I'm sure, but during my 3 years service (1956-59), the RCM was a well respected figure - and woe betide anyone who called him RSM! Perhaps 'younger' members of the Association may have details of other famous figures from their Arborfield past, but forgive me for saying none will be remembered as long or affectionately as RSM McNally.

RCM J T Sallis
Royal Horse Guards

When anyone holds an appointment for a long time, he is apt to leave a large sized job in the hands of his successor. Mr McNally was with us for 15 years and now we welcome in his place Regimental Corporal Major J T Sallis, Royal Horse Guards. Already he has had a term with us and firmly established himself as a worthy successor. We may meet the RCM in an official capacity only too often, but in this account we are chiefly interested in the man and his career.

John Thomas Sallis was born at Cheltenham in Gloucestershire on the sixth of March, 1916. Educated there, he decided to make the Army his career, Being keenly interested in horses and riding it was only natural that he should join the Royal Horse Guards. This he did without the bother of a recruiting office, and he reported direct to the Horse Guards depot, then at Knightsbridge on the 6th of August 1934. To quote him, "I literally gave myself up!" Here, he did 10 months cavalry training and eventually moved with his Regiment to Windsor. This changing of barracks was done jointly by the Life Guards and Horse Guards. Each regiment occupied the barracks for one year and the Regiment occupying Knightsbridge barracks was responsible for all ceremonial duties, such as the opening of Parliament, The Queen's Birthday Parade, The Horse Guard's Parade in Whitehall. When changing over, the two Regiments rode to their new homes and one can imagine



RCM J T Sallis, Royal Horse Guards

the magnificent spectacle as the two regiments passed each other on the Great West Road.

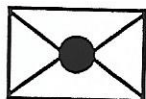
Training and duties continued until the beginning of World War II for Mr Sallis, who was at this time a Troop Corporal of Horse. This time was an historic one for the Cavalry, for it underwent a complete mechanisation and re-training in the art of warfare. World War I was the summit of the Cavalry's achievements as such, as a fighting unit. At this time also and for the duration of the war, The Royal Horse Guards and The Life Guards were amalgamated into two Regiments of Household Cavalry. Mr Sallis stayed with the second regiment in England who were training and preparing for the big assault on Europe in 1944. The second Regiment went to France at Normandy on D-Day+21 and pushed on right through Germany.

The Regiments were again reformed after the war, and Mr Sallis stayed in Germany until 1952. In February of the year he was posted to Cyprus but returned to take up duties here at Arborfield in June.

Thus, in twenty-two years' soldiering which includes serving under 4 sovereigns, Mr Sallis has seen many changes in military organisation and discipline. He recalls that it was an offence to shave the upper lip in the Horse Guards - an offence punishable by 7 days' CB! Walking out dress in those days included either a bowler hat and an umbrella or a walking stick - a habit to make even the most broad minded shudder. Mr Sallis admits, however, that a well groomed soldier still gives him pleasure and that he cannot help but inwardly smile at certain members of England's future Army who display a 'Mohican' or 'Davy Crockett' hair-cut! When one remembers that the RCM was brought up in the school that had the criterion of a correct hair-cut summed up by the phrase, 'What's under your beret is yours - what sticks out is the Army's,' - one is not surprised!

Thus we warmly welcome Mr Sallis and hope that both he and his family enjoy a long and pleasant stay with us at Arborfield.

LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR



Pete Gripton (56B) writes about old pals

Although Dave and I joined up as Apprentices at the same time, back in late Summer 1956, we weren't destined to meet until the following year, as he had the unfortunate experience of being sent first to Chepstow ! Things took a turn for the better for him next year, when he was sent to join the start of '3 Div' at Arborfield, joining myself and others as trainee Radar Technicians. We spent the next two years becoming fairly good mates, but then that applied to all of us at the time - Boy's School tended to make you become a tightly bunched group of mates - you always had to stand together against those 'Senior Div' lads who had already been through it all, and were now 'cocks o' the walk', and boy, you couldn't wait to be up there in that exalted position yourself !

When we eventually came to that sadly sweet day of the 'POP', both of us had our Mums there for the Parade, and I recall us all meeting together that evening - remember the 'Peacock', Dave ? Fortune had decreed that at that stage of our careers, due to the advent of ONC training, we - that is, all our group of 'Techies' - should all be posted together, to the great outside world - in Arborfield !! Yes, we were destined to spend yet another 18 months 'in training', split between those great pillars of education, Nos. 3 and 5 Training Battalions and Reading Technical College. Ate well in those days, didn't we Dave ? Lyons Tea-shop in Reading's Broad Street for breakfast, a liquid lunch at 'The Mitre', then a slap-up self cooked fry-up in the cookhouse ! Eggs, bacon, sausages, mushrooms, beans, fried bread - all washed down with pints of cold milk straight from the walk-in fridge. I can also remember Jim Rampling, sitting at the back of class in Reading Tech, eating fruit salad directly from the tin, with his fingers !

Finally, the training was over, and at the end of March 1961 we were off to our first posting. Via Harwich to the Hook on the old 'Empire Parkstone', and across Holland on the 'Blue' train into Germany, where we spent the night at '87 Special

Tels Workshop' at Minden. One of our old 56B mates, Norman Dewdney, took us out for the evening, I think it was to a town called Buckeburg, Minden being still 'off limits' thanks to the infamous Black Watch 'Poison Dwarfs' - or 'Gitzwerfe' as the locals called them ! Anyway, that very first taste of Deutsche bier sure went down a treat - I think Watney's 'Red Barrel' had just been introduced back in Blighty, so readers will know what I mean ! The following day we were split up into two parties, sadly saying farewell to those lads who were heading up to the far North, to Delmenhorst, (35 or 12 LAA Regiment? - Ed.) while our party made the rather shorter trip up to 94 Locating Regiment at Celle.

Both Dave and I had left sweethearts back home, and wedding plans were in the air. Dave had decided to change to RC, in order to 'get married in church', and to this end was advised to see the local German Catholic priest. Due to language difficulties, Dave became friendly with a young local lad, Carl-Heinz, and soon became a regular guest at Carl's home, not far away from the Kaserne (camp). One weekend, he asked me along too, and that was the start of a relationship, which has lasted, although rather tenuously these 31 years later, until the present day. Mutti and Poppa have visited England, as well as Gisela, who now lives in the States, and also Rita and husband, while I actually visited Ulli and his wife, during a TA trip back to the area in 1979. Good friends, the 'Familie Godawa'.

After a few months in Celle, both Dave and I were designated to move to a new location at Fallingbommel - the dreaded effing-B !! 21 Regiment were moving over from Rhyl in North Wales, remustering from a Medium Regiment to a Locating Regiment, and we were to set up as an advance party for the new Workshop. Without equipment for the first six months or so, we had a pretty cushy time, with plenty of opportunities for going back to Celle for weekend visits. It must have been around that time Dave, that you bought your first car - that yellow Ford Anglia from Ron Scott ! After some time in Fally, it was inevitable that eventually Dave and I would have to go our separate ways, and sure enough, for reasons that I won't go into here, I was forced to return to Celle and told I must

change my trade to Control Equipment - or 'ECE' as it was termed in those days.

I eventually returned to Arborfield for a basic ECE course, followed immediately by Upgrading - our course was known as 'Fed Up 9'! Dave and I never served in the same Unit again, but our meetings continued over the years, during our subsequent marriages and the bringing up of our eventual families. At one time, Jo and Dave lived upstairs above the Recruiting Office in St Mary's Butts, in Reading town centre - that was a weird place Dave, I can remember you showing us around lots of crooks and nannies !! Then there was the time you visited Joyce and I at Queens Cottages in that old Hillman - the one in which you had to put up an umbrella if it rained ! Didn't Jo once borrow numerous coats and scarves for a drive back to Gillingham one cold night - and can we please have them back ?

I left the Army in 1967, at the 9-year point, having decided on an instructing job at SEME, Bordon. I've been there ever since, and I'm living in the same house that I bought in that same year, 1967.

Dave continued his career in REME, going on to a Commission, ending up as a Major, and finally retiring early in 1997. In those last 30 years, we've continually kept in touch, and had quite a few memorable meetings in different places, mostly remembered for the laughs we've shared. Just a few to recall here. The fancy-dress party over at Winchester, where I failed to recognise the well-dressed bird in all that make-up, who turned out to be Derek 'Lofty' Newman from 56B ! The trip to Malvern, where I managed to back into the biggest tree in the widest of Avenues, and that was on the way to Dave's quarter ! The weekend in Woolwich, including a theatre trip to see Dave's son appearing in the musical 'Oliver'. A visit to Donnington, when we managed to find the farm where I'd been evacuated to towards the end of the war, and also found my long-lost cousin Bill.

It's amazing how the memories keep flooding back. After many years living in Kingston, Jo and Dave have now made the short move across to Surbiton, and are currently busy at the task of re-furbishing their dream cottage. Thanks for all

the memories and good times Dave, and just hope this article appears in the OBAN, encouraging you to put together that long-promised article of your own !! (Get the house finished first mate !)

✍ Ron Hague (50B) writes

My first encounter with RSM McNally was in HQ Company in 1950. We were being shown around the carpenter's shop when one of my comrades (who shall remain nameless) walked past Colonel E L Percival HLI, in all his kilted splendour (he was a fine figure of a man) without saluting. He then proceeded to salute the RSM. The culprit was taken to one side and 're-educated'.

In all the 3 years I was at the school I came to form a great respect for our RSM. He had the ability to get the best from us boys. I can remember now being formed up on parade and waiting to hear the tread of his boots as he appeared to our left with his stick parallel to the ground. He would then sort us out in time for our diminutive adjutant to come on parade.

Who could forget his cold weather drill for getting warm? Marking time in unison with outstretched arms coming together with a large and loud clap. This repeated until one's arms and legs were ready to drop off from sheer muscular fatigue. Himself darting about the parade to make sure there was no slacking.

I bear witness to the fact that the RSM was once lost for words in the middle of a passing out parade practice. An apprentice L/Cpl whose name is lost to me but whose face will never be, was the cause of this. This boy took the wrong turning on parade and suddenly found himself occupying a large area of the square by himself. Spotted immediately by the great man, his question came like a rifle shot, "Where did you come from ?" The reply, heard by most of the parade was, " Wolverhampton Sir !"

Myself and Pat Hennessy (50B) were made permanent parade markers under that same beady eye. As we were the last to leave any parade we had to get our timing correct - stepping off as one in time to meet and turn with an already marching marker.

Being nearest to the saluting base and the RSM I had to keep on my toes.

In June 1953 a squad of us were chosen to be Guard of Honour at Windsor castle for Empire Youth day. Our rifle drill, already very good, was honed to perfection by the RSM. I think the Guard was made up of the tallest and best looking boys in 6 Div. (no comments please).

We arrived in Windsor highly groomed and polished. We left our No. 4 DP rifles and white buckskin belts in the guardroom. The guard at the time was being provided by the Scots Guards and I remember that Mr McNally was not happy with the state of the guardroom and said so.

We were given about an hour to wander around Windsor before reporting back for duty. After a while it was considered by the bunch I was with that a beer would be welcome (although some of us were under age - we were not allowed to drink). Somehow I was nominated to be first through the pub door. On entering I spied a polished boot just around the corner - and on peering round a little further my eye took in a stick, a suit of service dress and finally came to rest on the steely eye of the RSM regarding me.

To use a phrase from the Royal Navy, I was out of there like a three badge racing snake, explaining my reasons to the boys behind me. On returning to Windsor Castle, the RSM sent for the A/CSM - I think it was Nick Webber - to find me. On reporting to him I was scolded for leaving the pub just because he was in there - something like, "Never do that again boy, I was very embarrassed!"

After a successful guard we were conducted around the Royal Apartments and the Chapel of the Knights of Windsor or was it the Order of the Garter - I forget! When passing out soon afterwards I met RSM McNally only once more. He looked much older, but was pleased to see one of his old boys. His bearing was still that of a guardsman. I took great pleasure in that meeting and will always remember him with the greatest respect and fondness.

✍️ *Brian Conway (42A) writes from Cyprus*

Firstly, my wife and I would like to wish all the members of the AOBA a very happy and healthy New Year.

Secondly, with regard to the letter from Ron Savage (39A) published on Page 26 of OBAN 15, I am very familiar with the distinctive peaked caps worn by each of the 5 Regiments of Foot Guards, having served under 4 RSMs (one each from 4 of the 5 regiments namely, The Grenadiers, Coldstream, Scots and Irish Guards) during my 13 years service, man and boy at the School (Page 29, OBAN 14 refers) and with all the regiments of Foot Guards well represented by most of the Company Sergeant Majors, including 2 CSMs of my Companies, while serving as a member of the school staff - CSM 'Taffy' Hill of the Welsh Guards and CSM Bill Trotter of the Coldstreams, of C and D Companies respectively.

The point I was attempting to make on Page 12 OBAN 13 under the heading, 'Who are They, What are They?' (perhaps you should have added '...and When?', Ed?) was that Photo No. 1 on Page 13 could not have been during 1943 because of the distinctive chequered dress cap of the Scots Guards worn by RSM McNally in this particular photo. It is my contention that this type of colourful head dress WAS NOT WORN by members of the Brigade of Guards during the war years from 1939 to 1945.

By way of illustration I asked readers to note the type of cap worn by RSM McNally in the 1942 photo of General Montgomery talking to Boy Drum Major Conway - an ordinary plain SD khaki cap - as worn by the apprentices and members of the 4/7th Dragoon Guards Military Band standing behind me! Indeed, the wearing of distinctive regimental insignia was discouraged during the war years for obvious reasons (Gad! How we apprentices must have fooled those dastardly German spies who lurked around The Bramshill Hunt, by wearing our ATS shoulder titles??)

However, could I be wrong? I was wrong about our Pipe Band wearing 'Kilt Order' during the war years. I cannot believe that the RSM would have

worn an ordinary khaki SD cap for the visit of a General Officer and then would don his dress cap for the presentation of a few prizes at a gymkhana on a sports field!

Perhaps RSM PB Rooney, Welsh Guards could determine for us whether or not my contentions are right? (*I have passed your letter on, Brian - Ed.*)

It was not until I returned to the School as an instructor in 1953 that I noticed the RSM wearing his dress cap!

In the same vein, I also disputed the identity of the lady in the same photo, believing her to be Mrs White and not Mrs Hillborne? I can remember myself and 2 other apprentices being driven over to the Gordon Boys School at Woking by our instructor, Mr Giddings of 3VM workshop (so I must have been in the final term of my apprenticeship - early 1944, just prior to the dispersal of the School before the D day invasion of Europe). We were driven over to deliver some items to the Commandant of the Gordon Boys School, Brigadier Hilborne - our former Commandant at Arborfield. I believe that Colonel White had taken over command of our School, in 1943.

I am now in the process of writing my essay 'Memories - The Army Apprentice', which I intend sending to Major Bob Hambly (64A) in the hope that part of it may appear in a future edition of OBAN.

(Brian, I would hope to publish all submitted essays, whether they win or not - what is the point of encouraging members to write and not letting them publish their efforts? Please continue contributing! - Ed.)

✍️ *Bob (Wally) Walters (56A) writes*

As a member of the flock recently returned to the fold (I still don't know how you managed to find me!), I thought that I would pen a sentence or two for possible inclusion in OBAN.

I was a member of intake 56A and as far as I can

remember was in 'A' Company although I may be mistaken. It was a long time ago. Living in the same block were Taff Coulter, Pete Horne, Decker Dunham, Jim Wheeler and sundry other characters, all of us united in adversity. Where are they now? To say that I enjoyed Arborfield would be wearing rose coloured spectacles of the thickest kind but it was a lesson in survival, which stood me in good stead in later life.

The 'jeep' system was iniquitous. Does it still exist? The bullying of the weak by the strong is detestable in any society. The money lending rackets would have made Shylock blush. The bastion against which this tide of delinquency often met its match was Dougie Huxley from the Brigade of Guards. A fairer, more decent man it has never been my privilege to meet. His gruff manner concealed a heart of buttermilk softness (although he would have gone ballistic if anyone had actually said it). I heard that he later joined the staff of Black Rod in Westminster but again all of this is hearsay.

Arborfield wasn't all bad. The opportunities for sport were unrivalled for the time, and some good friendships were forged. The technical training was first class with an excellent staff of instructors. The exception was one of the Army Education Corps instructors. This man was heartily detested by everyone who came into contact with him. But there are bad apples in every basket.

Probably the biggest cause of misery was the rigid 'walking out' regime. We were allowed out just one day a week, either Saturday or Sunday (not both) and we had to wear approved 'mufti'. Reading or Wokingham were the obvious destinations for most of the would be Casanovas. I can remember spending many a day on the football field behind the gym looking wistfully over the hedge and watching all of the cars and people passing. During those times I honestly felt imprisoned. What none of us realised at the time was that the years 15 - 18 are your formative years when you start to learn what life is about and to shape your attitudes and perceptions. And we spent those years effectively locked up. That we didn't leave as social pygmies is a wonder to this day. On joining we were paid the princely sum of 17/6d a week and that did not increase until you were aged

172. At this age you achieved man service wages and became rich overnight! The amazing thing was that a lot of us managed to make the 17/6d last a whole week even though we frequented the WVS club. The great moment always came when you drew your credits to go on leave. Remember those big white £5 notes? Now that was real money! You could get a hot napkin shave in the barbershop on Reading Station in those days for half a crown. Luxury.

The day eventually came when we had to depart, apprenticeship completed, to Blandford for basic training. My only memories of Blandford are that it was the depths of winter and it was freezing cold. We used to travel into town in a Pontiac Straight Eight that someone had bought. This car could carry 14 licentious squaddies if I remember correctly, albeit in somewhat cramped conditions! We used to get our pint of tea for breakfast in those big white china mugs, drink half of it and shave in the other half. And those are supposed to be the good old days!

Basic training completed we all split up for postings to our various units. I went to the newly formed Army Air Corps Middle Wallop along with several other VM's to retrain as aircraft technicians. Well into my training I disgraced myself one night down in Bournemouth and was sacked from AAC. It was entirely my own fault and I have only myself to blame.

Back to being a VM I was posted to 10th Hussars LAD in Tidworth where I had an interesting job looking after the Recce Troop Ferret scout cars. We were soon to learn that being REME placed us in a social strata somewhere below the polo ponies. Then the whole regiment was posted to Germany. This would have been about late '59, early '60. We seemed to be involved in exercises or border patrols for a lot of the time. The rest of the time most of us spent in the Guard Room in detention for various infractions of barracks life. We began to call ourselves the 'pen pals'. If Jimmy Malcolm or Chick Henson ever read this they will remember it well.

However came the day when a new troop Sgt. arrived in Recce Troop called Smoky Scriven.

This man changed my life forever. He had returned from serving some years with the SAS in Malaya and Oman and his tales of a freebooting life inspired me. I promptly found the appropriate DCI for volunteering for the SAS and sent off my application. The EME of the time called me in and told me not to be stupid. If I refused to withdraw the application I was, under no circumstances, to darken his doorway again!

Posted to the SAS I had to travel via Arborfield. There I found a writhing mass of khaki coloured humanity with people being posted to anywhere from the Outer Hebrides to Maralinga in Australia. Also National Service was just coming to an end so Arborfield was wall to wall harassed posting clerks. On explaining that I was on my way to the SAS I was told that as it was an airborne unit I had to go to Aldershot. In vain did I protest that I should be going to Hereford. Somehow I arrived at Para Workshops in Aldershot still complaining that I was in the wrong place. As there was a 'P' Course just starting I was immediately thrown in the deep end and found myself at the tender mercies of Smoky Furness and his gang of fitness freaks. 'P' Course and basic para course completed I joined a Forward Repair Team at Para Workshops. The Grieves brothers were there as I remember. Para Workshops was actually not a bad posting with some interesting characters around. 'Mad' John and The Beast come to mind. An apocryphal story had The Beast trying to weld a petrol tank, which hadn't been flushed. The resultant explosion left his workshop shattered and him looking like Al Jolson in tattered clothing.

Am I boring everybody yet??

In early 1961 the inevitable happened. I upset the Workshop EME so badly that he vowed to give me a punishment posting. He marched me in and told me that he was posting me to 22 SAS in Hereford! They would sort me out! I was banned from ever returning to Aldershot. My boats were effectively burned.

Feeling a bit of an orphan I arrived in Hereford on a Friday. On reporting to the Adjutant, I was told that I would be starting the SAS Selection course on Monday! I started selection course in my cover-

alls as these were all I had until a friendly SQMS took pity on me and gave me a windproof smock and proper gear.

Some exhausting months later I joined 'A' Squadron 22 SAS. On one of my first exercises as a member of the regiment I met, one dark night on Salisbury Plain, a Para Workshop sergeant who had made my life difficult. I found it most invigorating to make his life extremely difficult for a couple of minutes.

There were very few ex- REME badged in 22 SAS. Pete Sherman (ex-Arborfield) was the unit armourer for a period until he completed Selection and went on to worldwide fame as a record breaking free-fall parachutist. Barry Jackson was another before retiring to sail to Belize where he opened a bar on the beach to cater for transient soldiery. I once encountered Ron Ward (56A) on an airstrip in Borneo where he was looking after an Auster which we were using. This was in the early 60's. Another old Arborfield hand I came across in the early 80's was, I think, Dave Glossop at Aldergrove airport. He was then OC a workshop detachment at the airport. (If I have his name wrong I apologise).

Sometime in the late '60s REME decided that my trade was now so far out of date that I was transferred to Para Brigade where I went on to the shadow roll. In the early '70s I was transferred yet again, this time to SAS permanent cadre. I retired in May 1986.

To say that I had a chequered career would be an understatement but in retrospect there is not much that I would have changed. My life since retiring from the Army in 1986 has been, perhaps, even more colourful but, what the hell, it pays the mortgage. I keep saying that I am going to hang up the old rucksack, but that would mean taking up golf or something.

If any of my old colleagues at Arborfield or elsewhere remember me I would be extremely pleased to hear from them.

Nick Dunmore (88A) writes

The Editor has asked us younger members to contribute, so here is mine, an ex-apprentice of PMC (i.e. Princess Marina College for those of earlier vintage).

I was one of the few who passed out of C Company, Intake 88A as an Armourer. My current posting is a 2 year stretch of Londonderry in the Station Armourer role.

I arrived in Londonderry in April 1996 and after a brief settling in period and a NIRRT course, began my tour. My first boss was Dave Leighton, one of the few Artisan Staff Sergeants remaining these days. He gave me a quick brief on my first day, "Nick," he said, "You run the shop and I'll sign the paperwork." So I did.

My first task was to set up the Technical Library which was virtually non-existent. While doing this I also delegated work to the lads under me. During my first 6 months I learnt more about running an Armourer's shop than I had in the last 8 years, including a Class 1 course at Bordon.

Not long after I arrived people started throwing strange weapons at me. Weapons that I had only ever seen before in Hollywood movies. They would approach me and say such things as, "You should be able to fix this as you're a Class 1 Armourer." In every case, I would take a step backwards, usher them out of the door and turn in to the Technical Library I had just built. The first strange weapon type was a Submachine Gun, 9mm, L92A1 (MP5A3) and its derivatives. These were quickly followed by various Remington shotguns, Walther P5 pistols and all manner of other weird and wonderful weapons. Up the road, at the RMP detachment, they were still using single shot Submachine Guns, 9mm, L2A3 for their MOD guard! Anyway their problems have now been remedied and those particular SMGs have been replaced.

During my time at this posting, I attended my first Armourer's Conference. There is not another conference of this type in the whole of the Army. It is held every 3 months and hosted by a different

Armourer's Shop each time. It has been in existence, as I am reliably informed, for at least 19 years thanks to the efforts of the many ASMs Weapons who have supported this tradition. Not only does it keep us Armourers in the field up to date with developments at OWIG (*What's OWIG? - Ed.*), but it is also a good chance to meet old pals and make some new ones.

My boss, Dave Leighton was posted to Cyprus in 1997 and as I waited for his replacement to appear I feared the worst and resigned myself to the expected changes he would almost certainly make. As soon as my new boss Tim Baitson arrived, he took me to one side and said, "Nick, you run the shop and I'll sign the paperwork!" Like old times.

Rumours are rife out here right now. Soon we will be losing our REME Commander ES (allegedly) and everywhere is scaling down. I am due to be posted within the next 6 months - so RMRO have been saying to me for the past 6 months but, I'll wait until I have seen it in black and white before I start packing!

I would recommend a 2 year tour to any Armourer who wants to see the more diverse side of the trade. You learn a lot more out here than you ever learn on a Class 1 course at Bordon!

(Nick, you have managed to break the mould and at last we have a PMC contributor. Please encourage your pals to follow your example and good luck in REME - Ed.)

 *Harold Price (42A) writes*

In my first letter to OBAN (13) I questioned the date of General Montgomery's visit to Arborfield, as I had remembered he had 'recently' been promoted to be GOC South Eastern Command (*thank you John Adey - OBAN15*). It is not hard to research Monty's progress - see *Monty, The making of a General*. From that, 'recently' was December 1941 so he had enough time to settle in, even to holding a 14 day exercise in May 1942. Added to this 1998 was 56 years after 1942 - 56 being a multiple of 28 means that 1998 and 1942 have

identical calenders, (i.e., 5 Sundays in May), therefore increasing the chances the caption was correct.

As regards the fatuous statement by Boy Drum Major Brian Conway (retired) about Montgomery doing an inspection tour before leaving for the Middle East, IT WAS WARTIME AND THAT KIND OF INFORMATION WOULD HAVE BEEN SECRET. Also, by referring to great battles of World War II, one will find that Montgomery was second choice to lead the 8th Army, because the first choice General Scott, was shot down and killed taking up the appointment. Montgomery was appointed then, so he had no time to say more than goodbye. When I read this my cynical reaction was that Churchill saw a way to get rid of the opposition (to the attack on Dieppe) by posting Montgomery to the Middle East.

During the time Montgomery was GOC South Eastern Command, the School was confined to barracks for one weekend to help with his manoeuvres. We were all allocated jobs. I was a stretcher bearer but never saw a stretcher or learned how to carry one - still that's life!

Changing the subject, I found a number of items in OBAN15 very interesting. One was the School layout - it was basically the same as it was from 1942 to 1945 but there was no J Block or J Company and the main road called Nuffield Road comprised 5 Company Offices, the Commandant's Office, the MI Room and the QM Stores. From my personal experience in shovelling coal (*coke in my day - Ed.*) there was no coal yard. It was dumped by the merchants at the boiler house adjacent to the cookhouse and shovelled into the bunkers there. Behind the main road was an incinerator and hard standing where Ben Cook flattened all the tins with the aid of a pre-war scout car (*shame we haven't a photo for the Museum archives - Ed.*).

Somewhere behind the main road was a path leading to the ATS girls' quarters on the other side of Ben Cook's field. It was on that path that one lad in B Company took to attacking the girls early in the morning. He was found out when one of the girls knocked off his glasses and from them he was traced - I think his name was Giles. This caused

almost as much excitement as when one of the ATS girls, while cleaning the hot plate from where the meals were served, leaned too far over and burnt her breast!

A reference was also made to the death by hanging of one of our lads in Palestine; this was recalled last year in *Yours* magazine on the page entitled, *The Way You Were*. As I recall he had joined the Intelligence Corps and had been hung as a reprisal.

One of the highlights in 1943 was when the BBC came to broadcast the church service from the camp hall. Another was that during the Remembrance Service the Last Post and Reveille were played on a post horn by a WOII of the 4/7th Dragoon Guards (*could this have been Bandmaster Nel? - Ed*).

One of the members wrote about about being at 3 Sub Workshops, North of Hiafa. This was part of 3 Base Workshops at Hiafa. 1 Sub was in Tel-a-Aviv and 2 Sub was at Athlit. There was also a military training camp for REME near 3 Sub Workshops and I think that most personnel from 3 Base went there for a week. The only thing I can remember from my stay there was the nightly croaking of the bull frogs in the swampy area nearby. I left 3 Base in August 1946 for 1 Base in Shiabad, Iraq.

(If this was the same 3 Sub Workshops referred to by Ken Burren in OBAN13, it conflicts. What say Ken? - Ed.)

✍ *Brian Fielding (51B) writes*

After many years of promising myself, I have finally got down to writing a letter to OBAN. My regimental number was 22771142 and I am from 51B intake.

During my years of travelling many places overseas plying my trade, I was always proud to mention that I was an ex-boy, and somehow persons who had never been in the forces recognised the statement and appeared to understand that the person who came from that era was someone who

knew his way about, not only trade-wise, but also worldly-wise.

Time passed by and it was only the advent of the internet that awakened my interest, and after placing advert in the section *Armed Forces of Missing You*, I came across a further advert from Bob Langley of 52B; we exchanged messages and when I returned for a brief visit to UK in December 1998, we conversed by phone. Bob kindly forwarded me the Summer and Spring issues of OBAN. I must admit that when read these it brought many memories back, and I have read each of them several times since. Perhaps my own memories will help to jog a few others.

I was very sorry to hear about the passing away of Mike Elkins. Mike was the first person to be accepted to OCTU from our intake and I believe he went to Eton Hall from 5 Div; they promoted him to CSM prior to leaving the AAS. On browsing through the editions, names like Brigham E F, (Band Major?), Keith Warboys (in Donations) appeared, and the missing members of Summer 1998 issue, O'Brien - 0041, the best shot in the school, Cavalier - 0016, who also had a brother (I think) in 50A, and of course Brennan - 0011, who smuggled a 12- bore into college and went shooting early mornings behind The Black Bull (*The Bull or the Black Boy? - Ed*).

I also read the article by Nick Webber (50B); we as boys, hated him for his discipline, though of course it was for our own good. Seems like he has not changed much.

The Commandant during my tenure was Colonel McGee, and the RSM was Mr McNally. Drill Sergeants were 'The Bull' - B Company, (cannot recall his name), CSM Patey - D Company, (I met him in 1968 when he was a car jockey for a Ford dealership), Corporal of Horse Wilcox, and Sergeant Lawrence, (unkindly named 'Rastus'). There was also the previous RSM in the area who had retired. I think his name was Ben Ford (*Ben Cook - Ed*), who used to work on the camp farm driving around the area on a tractor, so someone should remember him (*read your OBANs Brian - he is well remembered - ED*).

Our heroes at that time were Cronshaw, Captain of boxing and Julian Phayer, the knock out specialist. I saw him last driving a cab in Aldershot many years ago. We used to sing the song 'Julie Julie Fair' which was popular at that time when he arrived in the ring. Can anyone remember singing 'Here, here the reds are here, what the hell do we care etc', going on to state that we did not care what Chepstow or Harrogate thought. Happy days!

The memory I have arriving on the truck from Wokingham station was of having my packet of 10 Greys cigarettes taken from me, as smoking was not allowed. I also remember that on my free weekends I used to catch the last train from Camberley with Dave Paul (51B) to Wokingham, then hitch a lift on the van that collected and delivered the movies from the camp cinema. We did this so many times that the driver used to wait for us at the level-crossing each weekend. When we progressed to a higher division, we could 'jip' the queue at the cookhouse, leaving all the jeeps to wait a little longer. However, if you got caught by the duty NCO, it was back to the end of the queue and start again.

On reading Nick Webber's article, I was surprised to read that the boards in the gym, listing all the school sports captains from 1939? had been removed; if that is so it is such a shame - history has been eradicated.

After passing out as a Fitter, I moved to Malaya, Cyprus etc, eventually having my career cut short by a back injury and I was invalided out.

Keeping up with the changing welding world, I worked with the major welding manufacturers on the emerging North sea boom, then moved to the middle east in 1975.

I am presently a welding engineer in Dubai, (United Arab Emirates) working in the ruler's ship repair yard which has perhaps 50% of the world's repair business. I think that the year 2000 will see me hanging up my helmet, though life has been kind and I am still able to work and handle a stress environment. Perhaps this is down to the grounding that we all had at Arborfield - I like to think so. See you at the next reunion. I would love to hear

from any ex-friends and of course any letters would be acknowledged. my UK address is, 100 The Common, Freethorpe, Norwich. NR 13 3LT.

✍ *Bill Pusey (46A) writes*

As you all know OBAN was first published in the late 1950s. The issue numbers and dates were;

- No 1 - December 1956,
- No 2 - July 1957,
- No 3 - December 1957,
- No 4 - July 1958 and
- No 5 - March 1959.

To the best of my knowledge and belief that is all there were until issue No 1 - Spring 1992 of the present series, started under the auspices of John Northam (47A).

I have the originals of the first 5 issues and if any of the membership are interested, I would be prepared to have them re-printed on a limited basis.

If the response is very great, then perhaps it would be simpler to interpolate them in subsequent issues of the current series.

Anyone interested please let me know on Telephone No 01189 783900.

✍ *Steve Budd (69C) asks*

I am writing for information. My two uncles, Harry and Bruce, went to Arborfield, but I do not know their intakes. Bruce was rejected as a result of having tuberculosis as a child. My father went to Chepstow. My own intake (69C) was a large intake of some 200 boys, however, I think there were one or two larger intakes many years before mine.

I well remember the shock-horror stories about the static water tanks. I would like to know when the old school was pulled down and what was found under the spider huts and what secrets and surprises were revealed in the static water tanks (Gilbert was before my time).

Could anyone supply a list of all the permanent staff who were at the School during the three years from September 1969 to 1972?

The editor may well have difficulty in deciphering my hand writing for which I apologise. My hand writing has always been terrible and I remember the word 'atrocious' being used to describe it during my school days. A large number of people met during my Army career know me by my writing.

While I was in 6 Squad of intake 69C there was a Sergeant Longman who wore a cap badge unknown to me (GRI FFW?). Anyone know what this could have been? There was also a Sergeant Kemp in 1 Squad who wore a brown beret (a 'tanky', I believe) and was in the Royal Hussars. There was also an RSM Woodfield, Grenadier Guards, who was a family friend and he used to babysit for my parents. My uncle Bruce told me that when he was an apprentice they had folding beds to sleep on (*I thought he was rejected - Ed*).

During the summer term of 1972 we were taught by Harry Budd and Mr Coe (*would this be Bob Coe, ex-naval Chief Petty Officer? - Ed*). Another instructor was Jim Stanyer who taught us on the C42 radio. He had been an officer at Woolwich.

(I may well have made an error with GRI FFW - can anyone advise? - Ed).

CALLING REME AIRBORNE VETERANS

If you served with the 1st or 6th Airborne Divisional Workshops in World War 2 or later, then your assistance is needed for research by Don Jacobs for the REME Museum of Technology. Don is an ex-Boy Apprentice of 50A Group at Chepstow who later served for 14 years in REME.

If you can assist, please send your number, rank and name, with home address and (if convenient) your telephone number so that Don can get in touch with you, to Brig Martyn Clark (Retd) or Mr Brian Baxter at the REME Museum, Isaac Newton Road, Arborfield, Berks RG2 9NJ.

KOREAN WAR REUNION

The Corps Committee has approved the REME Museum's intention to hold a reunion of REME Korean War veterans on Thursday 6 July 2000. This is eleven days after the 50th anniversary of the invasion by North Korean forces, to allow for those who may be travelling to official events in Korea during June.

The Corps wishes to recognise the contribution made by many REME veterans, and makes this announcement now so that the above date can be entered firmly into your diaries. In outline the morning would include assembly with refreshments, viewing the Museum's special exhibition of Korean War documents, artifacts and other memorabilia followed by a Service of Remembrance in the St Eligius Church. After lunch continued activity in the Museum is proposed, together with the showing of selected films or video tapes.

Facilities to record individual anecdotes or items of unit history will be provided. In the later afternoon the REME Band, which will have been heard earlier in the day, will present a full Beating Retreat ceremony. A limited amount of overnight accommodation may be available in the Garrison, on repayment.

Intention to attend: It will help in our planning if you (and other members of your family) form an intention to attend if you would please write in now to register with the REME Museum (attn Brig M W Clark), Isaac Newton Road, Arborfield RG2 9NJ, stating intended numbers, together with your Korean unit(s), ranks, appointments and approximate posted dates. Please say also whether you have any relevant artifacts, memorabilia, photographs or documents that may be donated or lent to the Museum.

Finally, it is important also that your rank on retirement be stated together with any accommodation needs for the Reunion.

DONATIONS

The Committee are most grateful for the following donations which have been received since the publication of OBAN 15.

L V Barnes	43B	£10
G G Bonner	49B	£5
R J Callaghan	42A	£5
A W Cockerill	43B	£17.50
W S Footner	39A	£5
T Grantham	42A	£25

J Horwood	43C	£10
D J Howes	38B	£10
D J Painter	46A	£10
R A Sauvary	42A	£5
E G Senior	64C	£50
R I Warmington	39B	£5
T E Whiteaway	50B	£30
R G Woodfield	PS	£5

Should any donations have been omitted from this list, the Committee apologise and express its thanks.

RESIGNATIONS

The following members have resigned from the Association in recent months:

Name	Intake	Coy	Date
E Rhodes	PS	-	17/02/99
S R Peberday	88A	c	21/12/98

DECEASED

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

Craftsman Andrew Hart (96C) in a road traffic accident on 4 December 1998, as reported under Obituaries in **The Craftsman**.

Members whose deaths have been notified or discovered since publication of OBAN 15:

T H Hughes (PS), died 10 September 1998
W J M Sullivan (39C), died 14 February 1999.

YOUR COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU

In order to reduce the work-load on current Committee members, we have decided to increase our number by including a Recruiting and Publicity Member

The tasks of this new committee member will, initially, be threefold:

Firstly: To arrange appropriate announcements and advertisements in Service Magazines and other suitable locations.

Secondly: To arrange the design and publication of an Internet Web Site. Ideally the committee member will have (or acquire) the skills to do this himself/herself.

Thirdly: To assist the Membership Secretary with recruiting campaigns targeted at serving, and recently retired, Old Boys.

Whoever is recruited into this new post will have his or her own computer with access to the Internet and experience in using it.

He/She will be required to attend committee meetings in Arborfield and to meet with the Membership Secretary and other committee members as the need arises.

Salary is zero, but all reasonable expenses will be refunded.

If you are interested, please contact the Membership Secretary (Peter Gibson) in the first instance.

Peter Gibson

THE FORGOTTEN CORPS OF THE FORGOTTEN WAR

John Dutton (43A) writes

Gentlemen,

Can you help me? As an ex-ASM of the Corps and having recently retired from the REME Museum I have now served a total of about 55 years with MOD. During my time with REME I served with 10 Infantry Workshop in Korea as a Staff Sergeant from 1951 to 1953.

I expect each of you is now saying, "who is this chap?" or perhaps, "not him again!" Seriously, I am trying to contact as many members of BKVA REME as I can, through OBAN, in the hope that some of you can supply me with information about your service in Korea, legal or illegal, serious or funny or of just pure interest to the Corps. This is to assist me in writing a book about REME in Korea.

Suggested detail - the unit in which you served or to which you were attached, date of your arrival, the name of your transporting HMTS, your rank at the start and finish, movements with dates and place names, if possible. Also occurrences in Korea, no matter how trivial or stupid (for example, fuel freezing in the vehicle fuel tanks or trucks and armoured vehicles freezing solid to the ground). Did you assist your unit as an infanteer or gunner or what? Any special jobs or projects with which you were involved?

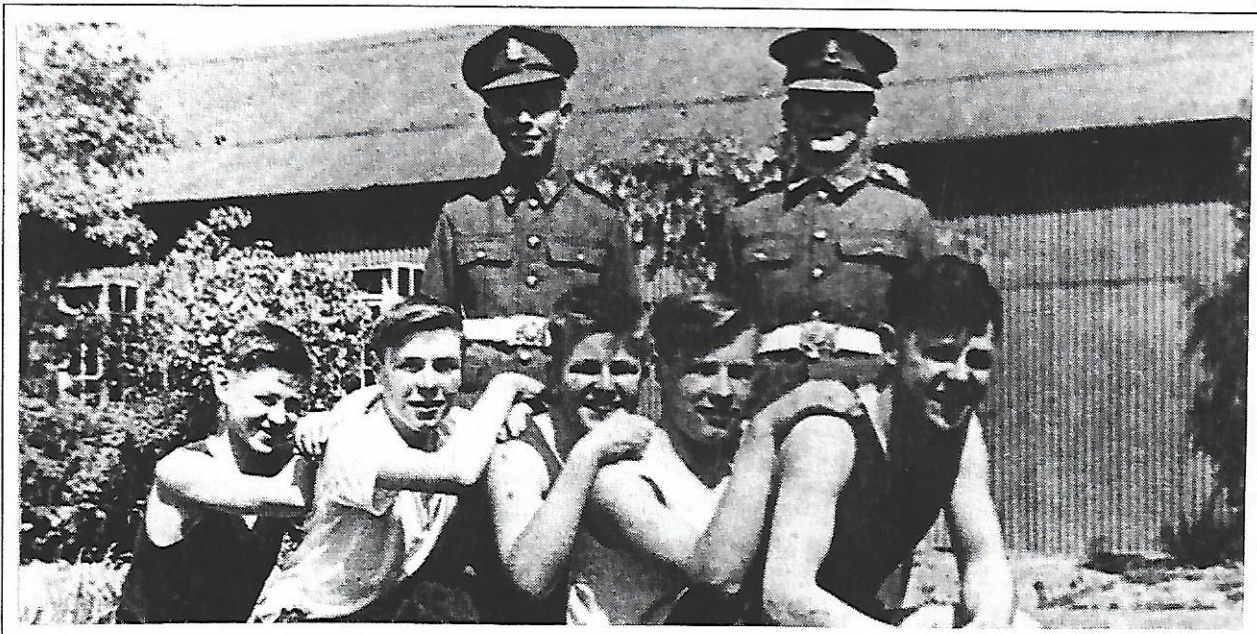
I realize that after all this time, this is quite a test for the old grey matter! Whether my book will ever be published only time will tell, but whatever the outcome it will have gathered together a considerable amount of Corps history before it is lost to the march of time.

Please contact me at 11 Sleepy Hollow, Forest Lane, Pamber Heath, Tadley, Near Basingstoke, RG26 3N11

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

John (Jock) Simon (52A) writes

Can anyone help? Further to my letter in OBAN 13, as a new member the stimulus to re-acquaint myself with old memories is at its greatest. The photograph was taken sometime during the period 1952-53 and I would like to know where my old pals are. The two boys standing are (from left to right): G Blythman and Bob Condon. The front group (from left to right) are: Webb, Gordon, N (Tubby) Brown, Brian Stacey and me.



ASSOCIATION ITEMS FOR SALE.

Video Cassette, entitled 'Army Apprentice' - running time 54 minutes - contents: *Reunion Parade 1997 + Old Boys Reminiscences + 'Soldier Apprentice' 1951 + 'Apprenticed to Adventure' 1962.*

Contact John Smithson (46B) on Tel. No: 01494 534971.

By post to members: £11.50

By post to non-members: £14.00

AOBA ties are available from the REME Association at the REME Museum (or the Hon. Sec.)
(Tel. No: 0118 9763223 for ordering information).

A 24 page history of the Princess Marina College/Army Apprentices College is available from the Membership Secretary, as are back numbers of the OBAN.

History: No charge, but 50p postage & packing to UK and BFPO addresses and £1.00 for overseas.

OBANs: £1.00 each including postage & packing. 5 Issues for £4.00 including postage & packing. (Orders from members overseas will attract considerably higher postage charges - overall cost will be £2.50 per issue).

For a copy of the History, UK based members should send postage stamps. Payment for a single copy of OBAN may be made with postage stamps (5 x 20p). Requests for more than one copy should be accompanied by a cheque.

Army Apprentices School Blazer Badges. I made a typing error (*would you believe it? - ED*) re: the telephone number published in OBAN 15. If the contributor would contact me, I will run the advert in OBAN 17. My apologies.

Cheques for ALL items should be made payable to: Central Bank AAC (AOBA).

THE CRAFTSMAN

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	Air Mail Rates:	On application.

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Berkshire, RG2 9NJ.