

O B A N



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

President - Brigadier R J Croucher, MA, CEng, FIMechE, psc+, me, DEME(A)

Vice Presidents - Past Commandants

COMMITTEE

Chairman

Lt Colonel Jim Mitchell RE

Vice Chairman

Colonel Brian G J Hutchins BSc(Eng), MSc, CEng, MIEE (61B), Late REME

Honorary Treasurer

(To be designated)

Honorary Secretary Designate

Lt Colonel W Cleasby (61C) REME

Assistant Honorary Secretary

Major (Retd) Mick T Harold (53B)

Honorary Membership Secretary

Colonel (Retd) Peter Gibson CEng, FIEE, FIMgt

Editor OBAN

Mr Brian Hornsey (54A)

Members

Major N Maher AGS(ETS)

Captain Jason Donnachie RLC

Warrant Officer I (RSM) P B Rooney WELSH GUARDS

Warrant Officer I (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**

**Honorary Secretary AOBA:
(Designate)**

Lt Colonel W Cleasby REME
REME Museum
Isaac Newton Road
Arborfield
Berks RG2 9NJ
Tel: 0118 976 3227

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Membership Secretary AOBA

Peter Gibson
35 The Avenue
ANDOVER
Hants SP10 3EP
Tel: 01962 887429
Fax: 01962 887376
E-mail:
peter_gibson@compuserve.com

OBAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Editor OBAN

Brian Hornsey
6 The Crofts
Hatch Warren
BASINGSTOKE
Hants RG22 4RF
Tel: 01256 816188
Fax: 01256 816188

Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter

Table of Contents

OBAN - Issue 17

Arborfield Old Boys' Association	(1)
From the Editor	
<i>Brian Hornsey (54A)</i>	1
Chairman's Message	
<i>Lt Col Jim Mitchell RE</i>	2
From the Assistant Honorary Secretary	
<i>Maj (Retd) Mick Harold (53B)</i>	3
From the Membership Secretary	
<i>Col (Retd) Peter Gibson</i>	3
Arborfield	
- The First 6 Months As I Remember It	
<i>By Dennis Elshaw (53B)</i>	4
More African Years To Remember	
<i>By Tony (Dom) Domoney (56B)</i>	6
Who Were They? What Were They?	
- Part 2 Photos ('42 to '45)	
<i>By Bryan Norman (Apr42)</i>	8
The Arborfield Experience	
<i>By James R (Dick) Wade (39A)</i>	10
Memories of 50B	
<i>By Mike Webb-Morris (50B)</i>	12
Keeping It Under Your Hat	13
WO I (RSM) McNally	
- Life After The School	
<i>Contributed By John Houghton (56B)</i>	14
Packaged Pictorial	
- A Thousand Words . .	
<i>By David Barrett (56B)</i>	15
Certificate of Commendation	
- East Africa - Jan 1955	
<i>By Fred Wells (44A)</i>	19
Easter Monday 1953	
<i>By Frank Fendick (Hill, 45A)</i>	22
Letters to the Editor	23
Notices	31
<i>Departure of Lt Col (Retd) Larry Le Var</i>	31
<i>Resignations</i>	32
<i>Donations</i>	32
<i>Your Committee Still Needs You</i>	32
<i>Deceased</i>	32
Association Items For Sale	33

From the Editor

Contents. The contents of this Newsletter are strictly copyright and all rights are expressly reserved. The views expressed herein do not necessary reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise of the editor, therefore no responsibility for these will be accepted.

Acknowledgements. Printed by Printing Dept, SEAE Arborfield

Issue 17. 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.

As I always say, 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?

From time to time 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'.

In this Issue, we have something of a first. David Barrett approached me with the request to include 'tasteful' cartoons produced by him. I, in turn, approached the Committee for their acquiescence, got it and here is the first contribution (q.v.). I expect David can be approached if any of you wish to supplement your copy with pictures.

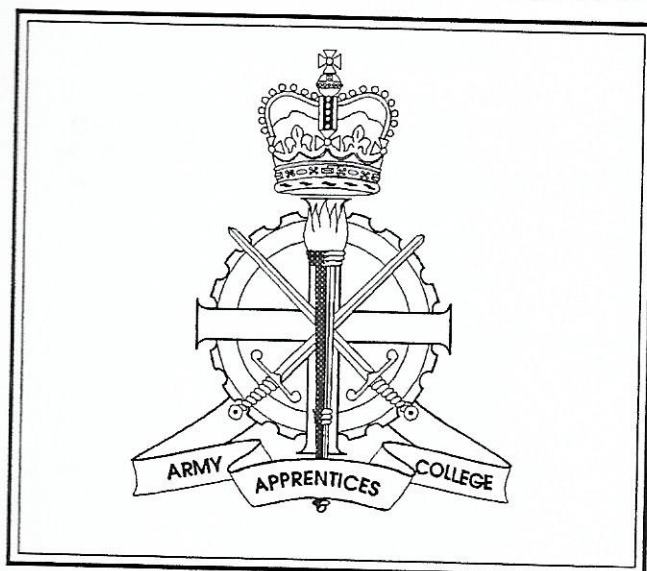
Contributions received for anonymous publication must be supplied with the writer's name and address (not for publication, just for reference), otherwise its no go.

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!

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.

Brian Hornsey (54A)



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Lieutenant Colonel J W Mitchell RE

In recent years, the summer term at the College has proved to be quieter than the rest of the year. The May intake of apprentices numbered just short of 200, well short of the College's intent of admitting 334 recruits at each intake.

This smaller-sized May intake reflects the pattern of previous years and highlights the recruiter's difficulty in finding prospective apprentices during periods out of cycle with the school year.

The September intake is filled with school leavers, whilst the January intake catches those who just fancied a short breather after leaving school or who had to retake examinations. By the springtime, the recruiter's pickings are slim. From the College's perspective, the smaller May intake is proving to be a blessing in disguise.

A summer term with fewer apprentices in training means a period for the College's permanent staff to catch up on their own training and career courses before the next big influx in September. With ever mounting pressures upon the military (several key members of the College staff have been called away to Kosovo at short notice), periods of even relative relief are particularly welcome.

The College's new gymnasium is now complete. The contractors, Tarmac, have done a magnificent job in producing an excellent new facility, which includes two new squash courts, areas for weight-

training and cardio-vascular exercise, and a fearsome climbing wall. Although the College will be using the new gym this term, the official opening will take place in August during the summer Passing Out Parade, allowing many parents to witness the event.

Meanwhile the old gymnasium will be refurbished to provide a range of new facilities, including new classrooms, a large lecture theatre/cinema, and a hobbies area. With the construction of an all-weather astro-turf pitch beginning in the autumn the College will justifiably be able to boast of having really first-class sporting facilities within Rowcroft Barracks.

It has been extremely gratifying to hear from the various trade training schools how well ex-apprentices have been doing. It is quite clear that the foundation training that the young men and women receive here at the College is exactly right.

The balance of education, military training, leadership and initiative training, and character training is preparing apprentices extremely well for their future careers and, in particular, is giving them a real head-start in the promotion stakes. I have no doubt that we will continue to build upon this success and will do even better with the longer, less pressurised course, due to start next year.

I am delighted to be able to reassure members of the Association that the quality of apprentices now is just as high as it ever was!

Jim Mitchell

**From the Honorary Secretary
(Designate)
Lt Col IWJ Cleasby (61C)**

As a product of the Sixties, I thought I had better introduce myself, particularly as I have only just got off the right-hand table at the annual Old Boy's dinner. Actually it says a lot about the depth and strength of the Association, in that after 35 years of trying, I still have a long way to go before I reach the senior end. Never mind my fellow 61Cs, one day it will be our turn.

As some of you may know, I am currently in the process of retiring from the Corps and taking over the reins from Larry Le Var as Director of the REME Museum of Technology. Larry is a hard act to follow and I feel very privileged that I have been given the opportunity to develop the museum over the next few years.

The Museum is at an exciting stage in its development and following the opening of the new Vehicle Exhibition Hall in late autumn, it will be full steam ahead to build the next phase - The Armourer's Hall.

The Armourer's Hall will give us the opportunity to display the fascinating collection of small arms currently hidden away in one of the SEAE armouries. I will be bringing you up to date on progress in future issues of OBAN.

I have rambled on a bit about the Museum but in conclusion I am very pleased to take on the appointment as your Honorary Secretary and look forward to meeting many of you at the next October reunion.

Bill Cleasby (61C)

**Advance Warning To This Year's
Forty-Niners**

Reunion 99 Report. It has become traditional for the 50th anniversary intake (this year intakes 49A/B) to supply an author to write the report on the Weekend for insertion into the Reunion Issue of OBAN.

If anyone would like to volunteer in advance, rather than be co-opted on the Weekend, please contact the Editor on Telephone Number: 01256 816188. Advance notice would be greatly valued.

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

For this issue of OBAN, but hopefully only this issue, I have to make my excuses to you all and say that as a member of the Kosovo Planning Team, I have been working 24 hours a day and 7 days a week on the current crises. Consequently I have had no time to pursue my duties as Membership Secretary. To those of you who have been writing to me requesting membership details, advising me of deceased members and sending donations, I would like to say that I will acknowledge all correspondence when the situation becomes less urgent, certainly by the next reunion issue of OBAN.

Recruiting & Publicity Member. Your Committee *still* needs you!

As stated in OBAN 16, 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 should have his or her own computer with access to the Internet and experience in using it.

The new Recruiting & Publicity Member member will be required to attend committee meetings in Arborfield and to meet with the Membership Secretary and other committee members as the need arises.

This is a creative job for someone who would like to be involved with the running of the AOBA. All reasonable expenses will be refunded.

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

Peter Gibson

ARBORFIELD

- The First 6 Months As I Remember It!

By Dennis Elshaw (53B)

I made my entrance through the gates of the Army Apprentice School, Arborfield on the 10 September 1953 with a group of other lads from the north of England. Within a couple of days my civilian identity had all but disappeared together with my civilian clothes which had been returned north wrapped in the issued brown paper secured with the issued string. I had now become 22967684 A/T Elshaw D, HQ Coy with a brand new set of kit, a bed in F block and a new mother by the name of CSM Brady.

Very quickly we had learned how to 'box' our denim trousers, spit and polish boots, 'box' our bedding (there seemed to be an awful lot of boxing going on!) and lay out kit in a beautifully ordered way for Saturday morning inspections. We even became acquainted with extra vocabulary we were 'jeeps' or 'sprogs' and as such the older apprentices could 'jip' us in the meal queues. Our kit was either 'milo' or 'manky' and as such would drop us in the 'dido' etc.

The first few weeks were spent square bashing under the watchful eye of our drill sergeant, 'Ginger' Roberts, East Lancs. One of the sounds I missed greatly in later years was the crash of ammunition boots being driven into tarmac. It was never the same parading in boots DMS!

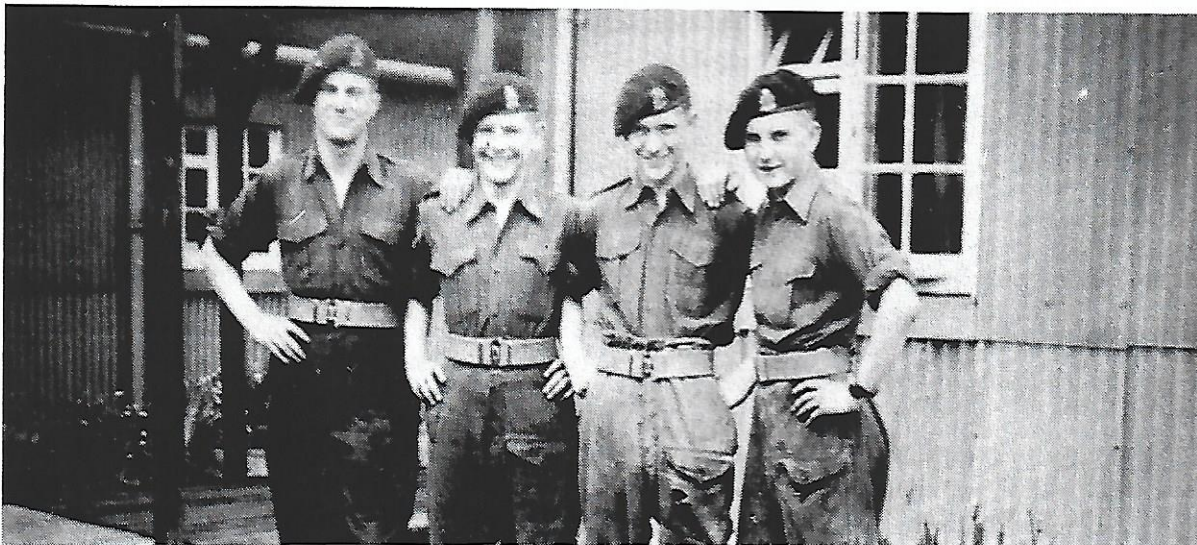
Trade training began by learning the use of hand tools. This meant bashing lumps of mild steel with cold chisels and hammers until thumbs became impervious to any pain. Then we got to use files many and varied, drills and reamers. Oh, the delights of cleaning up swarf without getting a cut! Alongside this we had hard pressed members of the RAEC attempting to fill our heads with even more knowledge. All this for 17/6d per week less stoppages and PO savings. Each pay day we actually got 6/- (30p) in our pockets.

Of course, while all this activity was going on, we were busy making friends. Particular mates I had at that time included Ken Chambers from Leeds (we actually became blood brothers), Jack Wigley from Weedon (an excellent boxer who went on to become A/CSM A Coy), Mick Costanzo from East Sussex, Charlie Quigley from Blackpool, Dave Chequer from Kent, Ted Lord and Bob Chapman from Lancashire, and a lad from Long Benton near Newcastle who I think was called Dave Hutchinson. John 'Dixie' Dean from Leeds was also in our intake and he distinguished himself by becoming the first A/RSM in the '50s. I later met John at 8 Inf.Wksp., Goojerat Bks., Colchester when I had risen to Corporal - he was already sporting his WOII badge!!

I have included two photographs taken during our first six months. The first photograph shows (from left to right): Jack Shepperd, Jack Wigley, Ken Chambers and myself. The second photograph shows (back row, from left to right): A/Cpl ?, Ted Lord, Bob Chapman, Jack Wigley, A/Sgt ?, ?, Mick Costanzo and A/Cpl ? In the front (from left to right): Dave Chequer, Ken Chambers, Charlie Quigley, and Terry Gillam. If anyone can identify the blanks I would be grateful.

Permanent staff members from that period included Colonel McGee, East Surreys, RSM McNally, Scots Guards, Maj.Stoddard? Rifle Brigade(OC.HQ Coy), CSM Brady, Irish Guards, Sgt.'Ginger' Roberts, East Lancs, Corporal of Horse 'Donkey' Wilcox. Names that escape me are those belonging to a tall black sergeant in the fusiliers, the Scottish Corporal who worked alongside Fred Silvers in the guard room and the bevy of bombardiers who ran us ragged in the gym. Two other famous characters of the period were 'G-flog Jock' and Jack the barber. When he hit bone he knew he had taken enough off!

Other memories that come to mind were the constant screams of our fatherless drill instructors of, "That man, you're idle on parade!" and, "You slovenly soldier, look at



Four of the Best!

yourself. Improperly dressed with your boot laces all twisted." Hardly a boy escaped committing those two offences and ending up before the OC.

Odd behaviour also took place. For instance, immediately one took receipt of an SD cap, the first thing one had to do was to mutilate it in order to turn its peak from the horizontal to the vertical, lengths of bicycle chain had to be worn in trouser bottoms so that they hung nicely over gaiters, small packs must contain cardboard to obliterate creases in the webbing and the strangest ritual of all, floor polish must have Zebo added so that brown floors could be blackened.

In OBAN 15 Nick Webber reminisced about Major Charrington. By coincidence his successor, Major Stoddard also suffered from a stutter which led to a repeat of the scene described by Nick. The incident I remember was when a lad in our room, who suffered a speech impediment caused by a previous accident playing rugby, was brought before the OC by A/Sgt Ravell who, unfortunately, also had a stutter, and of course the charge was to be heard by Major Stoddard. The accused had prepared his defence in some detail and was fairly confident of receiving no more than a reprimand. However, having spent some considerable time listening to the efforts of the A/Sgt. and his OC, when finally being asked if he had anything to say, all the accused could manage to blurt out was "No, sir!" in the fear of getting a heavy sentence if it was thought he was taking the micky." Five days CB, march out."

One particular Saturday we were about to be subjected to a CO's inspection which of course involved a full kit layout. One of the lads suddenly panicked in the knowledge that his soap was reduced to no more than wafer thickness and that this would cause him great heartache when noticed. One of his mates had a good idea. His mother had sent him a parcel

that contained a piece of cheese. He would sell this to the panic-stricken lad who could shape it a little and place it inside his soap-dish thus escaping punishment. Shortly afterwards in came the entourage. The CO, the Adjutant, the RSM, the OC, the CSM, old uncle Tom Cobbly and all and horror of horrors a large Alsatian dog which I believe belonged to the Adjutant. They moved slowly from bed to bed making comments, kit adjustments and dust searches as they progressed. Eventually they stood before the panic-stricken unfortunate. His general demeanour aroused suspicions and they seemed to X-ray everything until, inevitably, the dog ran away with the 'soap' firmly grasped in its jaws.

Needless to say the barrack room inmates were ordered, *en block*, to parade for a repeat inspection the following day, Sunday. In those days *en block* punishments were the rule rather than the exception. We were always told they instilled team spirit.

Finally, a quick anecdote concerning myself and 'G-flog' Jock. I found myself on cookhouse fatigues on a particularly cold day in January 1954 and the work to which I was allocated was to shovel a few tons of coke from A to B for eventual use in the cookhouse. When G-flog Jock, who was in charge of fatigue details in that area, noted my work rate he said, "That's a grand job ye're daein' laddie. When ye come in fer yer tae report tae me an' I'll gi' ye somethin' special." Full of anticipation, I duly did as I was told and, lo and behold, I received an extra slice of bread for which I had to appear truly grateful! I never forgot his generosity.

After six fun packed months I was fortunate to become a member of the school's top company A Coy and the fun really began! Perhaps more of that later.



With Our Squad Apprentice NCOs

MORE AFRICAN YEARS TO REMEMBER

By
Tony (Dom) Domoney
(56B)

I was a apprentice general fitter in D Company at Arborfield from 1956 to 1959 and finally reached the rank A/Sgt in the band.

Like Roy Miller, in his article, 'Years to Remember' (OBAN 14) I was also bitten by the Africa bug when I was posted to Kenya in 1961. By that time I had been seconded from REME to the new Army Air Corps (Number 11 Course in 1960).

I scraped through the mechanics course, secured my light blue beret and Lance Corporal stripe and I started out on an aviation career that I have enjoyed for the past 40 years. Having spent my first year in Middle Wallop I was itching to get a posting anywhere abroad. My chance came in 1961 and I was posted to 8 Reece Flight, Nairobi, Kenya.

For 3 years I travelled as a mechanic servicing Auster & Beaver aeroplanes and Alouette & Scout helicopters all over Kenya and Tanganyika, but regrettably not Uganda as this was before and during their independence.

It wasn't long before I met my first truly wild animals - lions at a kill in the Nairobi (Princess Elizabeth) Game Park. That was it and I was hooked on Africa! I have a wonderful photograph of 8 Reece Flight troops, having just completed the first elephant count in the Tsavo Game Reserve, standing with juvenile elephant, rhino and buffalo 'mascots' amongst the aircraft.

After completed the 3 years which

included a short stint with the Kings African Rifles based in the most remote part of Kenya, the Northern Frontier District, I reluctantly returned to Middle Wallop. This was followed by a 6 month stint in Cyprus with the UN, then back to Old Sarum, Salisbury. As the government of the day was intent on closing bases in Africa and the Army Air Corps was under threat I decided to leave the Air Corps at the end of my 12 years and return to Africa as an aircraft mechanic.

Africa called and as I had friends in Rhodesia I decided that was the place to start my civilian career. So in March 1968 I embarked on the old 'Castle' liner 'Oronjemont', then with the South African fleet, arriving in Durban on 1 April 1968. From Durban it was by a train drawn by those huge 'Garret' steamers on a 4 day journey which took me through Natal, Transvaal, Botswana and into Rhodesia, arriving at Salisbury with just £10 cash and a suitcase of hope! Immigration met me at the station and put me in a guest house with a bill of £56 - so I arrived in debt!

I found Salisbury airport and was lucky enough to secure a job as a mechanic overhauling Hunter fighters and Canberra bombers - not really what I wanted to do - but it was a job!

Luck continued to be on my side and because of my experience on helicopters in the Army Air Corps I was invited to join Autair Helicopters which was operating a fleet of Bell 47 machines used predominantly for crop dusting.

That meant 'bush' operations and a chance to see wild animals. The job was not without its risks as there was a war on at the time and the aircraft often came home sporting strange little holes in the fuselage and en-

gine compartments which needed patching.

I was not disappointed and soon came to terms with snakes, mosquitos and other nasties along with the superb 'big five'.

I had great pleasure in covering most of the country and a lot of Mozambique. The great Zambezi, the Kariba Dam, the Victoria Falls and the Hwange Game reserve were added bonuses, but the greatest bonus of all was an invitation some 6 years later to be the licensed aircraft engineer in charge of the Kruger National Park aircraft. This job I held over a period of 4 years. Some folk only dream of paradise, I believe that I lived it over those years and got paid as well!

My little cottage set in a garden of 2 million hectares consisting of most animals and flora found south of the Sahara.. Fixing aircraft was only a means to an end for me to work with game rangers, dedicated like Roy Miller, controlling the animals in this magnificent reserve and indeed all the other reserves in South Africa.

A typical day would start at 0700 hrs, when the HQ staff would be in radio contact with the rangers in the field. My job entailed talking to the pilots by radio and establishing the airworthiness of their aircraft in case I was needed to fix a snag. I then went to my hanger to perform any inspection due, fix equipment, check stock, check fuel dumps, order spares or load the truck for any field work needed.

Weekends were just two more days in the week, but I didn't mind - I felt I was doing a worthwhile job helping animals. Trips to the field were always a joy as I had the advantage of going off the tourist routes and seeing nature in its unspoilt environ-

ment. It was also a privilege to work alongside game rangers, biologist, zoologists and all the other specialists.

Game counting was hard graft; game catching and relocating animals was fun.

Searching for poachers was frustrating and emotional, especially when you found a fresh kill of an elephant or rhino, killed for their tusks or horns.

Culling I didn't like but did understand the need - it was, after all, my helicopters that were being used. I did a lot of work in the Gemsbok Park, Mountain Zebra National Park and the Addo Elephant Park. I have to say that after a hard days game catching, to just sit around the camp fire drinking a cooling ale and smoking that well used pipe, sharing a joke with your colleagues before falling asleep under the stars, listening to the sounds of Africa, really was a dream come true.

I had the 'pleasure' of being charged by an angry elephant that we had put under sedation for statistical purposes. When he got up I was the nearest! My colleagues suggested that I stand absolutely still while the animal flapped its ears, trumpeted and thundered towards me. The elephant actually stopped about 3 meters from me, put his trunk within a meter of my face, then decided to reverse (probably my smell) and thunder away. Just a little nerve racking. That cost me a crate of beer that night!

Another incident that occurred was during a barbecue at my cottage where a leopard leapt the fence chasing a bush buck, ran between me and the fire, knocked over a small table of beers and disappeared into the bush.

For those of you who saw the film, *The Gods Must be Crazy*, you will remember a scene where some elephants are stampeding in front of a landrover. What you didn't see was our helicopter 'pushing' the animals passed the cameras - I was in that helicopter. In fact, most of the aerial filming was shot from our helicopters; there were a number of films made during my tenure there.

I remember one hair-raising scene when the helicopter 'pushed' a herd of over 100 elephants towards a National Geographic film crew filming perched on the back of a Ford pickup; the idea being that the elephants, on seeing the truck, would swerve to pass it. They had a different idea and in fact surrounded the truck in total confusion - I was the driver and had great difficulty getting through the herd unscathed!

I could prattle on for pages and pages telling animal stories and perhaps I will write more stories at a later date. However, before I finish I must just tell this little tale about a tourist who decided that the river Sabi which runs through Skuruza in the KNP was just the place for a swim to cool off. Lucky for him that Tony Domoney just happened to be driving past at the time.

This Belgian tourist was just about to jump into the water. I stopped and advised the gentleman not to be so stupid. He remonstrated with me and quite frankly I felt like pushing him in, when around out from the bush came a pack of wild dogs. His wife screamed and her husband went a paler shade of white. I got them into their van and on their way. What they didn't have time to find out was that the river was full of crocodiles and under the bridge was a family of hyenas. I swear that I heard the wild dogs laugh as they loped past.

Such are the politics of Africa that nothing is permanent. Africa was changing rapidly. The National Parks were under pressure to release land to the natives. Changes in the Executive meant radical changes in the KNP with which I was not happy.

I knew that I had to decide on a more realistic future in aviation, so the day came when I decided to leave. Like Roy Miller, most of my colleagues out there have been *Africanised* and have opted for early retirement.

I emigrated to Australia in 1980 and soon joined the Department of Civil Aviation. But that is another story.

I have spent, all told, 15 years in Africa. It is ironic, (is it not?) that I am now back in Zimbabwe, the country where I started my civil aviation career.

This time I am the airworthiness engineer seconded to an ICAO project from the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (DCA). My job is to train and advise the Zimbabwe DCA airworthiness inspectors on international standards.

The country is just as beautiful as it was back in 1968. It is now, of course, African rather than colonial and like all of Africa has its problems. It is still Africa though and I am privileged to have been part of it.

I have not forgotten, though, that my ability to have achieved was only because of the excellent training and disciplines I had knocked into me during my apprenticeship at Arborfield - great days with great folk!

**WHO WERE THEY?
WHAT WERE THEY?**

Part 2

Photos ('42 to '45)

By Bryan Norman (Apr42)

Before launching into yet another set of nostalgic photos, a few comments on those 8 photos in OBAN 13.

Photo 1. The silver rose bowl in Photo 1 in OBAN 13 is the Commandant's Cup for the A/T making the best progress in the year. The Arborfield Apprentice for December 1944 congratulates (on Page 5) Craftsman ADG Wheatley on winning the Commandants Cup for 1943. I recognize the Cup in the photo as I won it in 1945. Later in 1945 I joined the Woolwich Course and met Tony Wheatley who was already there, and worked with him in the Royal Arsenal.

In 1949 we met up again at 3 Battalion. Electrical Wing, Bailleul, where we were both on the teaching staff of the Radio Section and I therefore quite sure that Tony is the A/T in Photo 1. It certainly could not have been taken post 1945 as Brian Conway suggests (despite the band on the RSM's hat!), since Tony was by then a reservist with me at Woolwich. Incidentally, I was also presented with the Cup on the Camp Hall field on what I believe was an Open Day, as I remember my parents being there.

The Arborfield Apprentice for December 1944 has a Foreword by Colonel White, still Commandant at that time, so the lady in the 1943 photo is probably Mrs White.

Photo 2. Although I cannot find myself in Photo 2, I am somewhere in the rear ranks, tooting an F flute and I believe the date to be 1943.

Photos 1 to 8. I suspect all 8 photos were taken on the same day by the same (professional) photographer and judging by the shadows on the ground, buildings, faces and equipment, were taken in the order:

5, 6, 7, & 8 (early afternoon),
2 (mid-afternoon),
3 & 4 (late afternoon).

Since the field (and vaulting horse) is on a North-South line, the shadows on Photo 5 indicate that it was close to the Summer Solstice (21 June). The 1948 Arborfield Apprentice gives the School Athletic Sports Meeting date as June 19 and the Passing Out Parade as August 17 that year and if the time-table was similar in 1943, the occasion is unlikely to have been associated with the latter.

As the Editor states in OBAN 14, other interesting items in the December 1944 Vol 1, No. 1 edition of The Arborfield Apprentice are articles by Corporal Coombs, Corporal Danahar, SI Clayton, SSI Cunliffe and Bandmaster Nel.

There are also reports from the detachments at Aldershot, Ashton-under-Lyme, Bury, Chilwell, Donnington, Greenford, Old Dalby, Sevenoaks and Woolwich. *(I intend to re-print these in future issues of OBAN - Ed.)*

The first VIP to take the salute at the Sunday march past after the School re-assembled was Major General Rowcroft, DME in October 1944. *(After whom, I presume, the existing barracks was named - Ed.)*

Continuing onward, I have found a few photos of my own that might interest our older members.

Photo 9: This shows the 16 candidates for the Woolwich Course, taken on VE Day 1945.

Photo 10: This shows the staff bugler blowing Reveille. He was RAOC - anyone help with identification?

Photo 11: A portrait of Colonel White.

Photo 12: A shot inside a barrack room, polished up and beds prepared for inspection - which room and when?



Photo 9: The Woolwich Course. Back Row 1(L - R): R D Hichson, G Broom, R O Bradley, R J Palmer, B A Olds.
Middle Row (L - R): L/Sgt A Dallaway (S Staffs), J P Sands, E H Galbraith, Alec F Maudsley, T G Lane, R Stanley, Bryan W Norman, L/Sgt J Plume (KOSB).
Front Row (L - R): R V Evans, R S 'Swiper' Saxton, Wally E Stark, J W B Maddock, J B 'Chick' Adams.



PHOTO 10: A Staff Bugler
blows Reveille



PHOTO 11: Colonel J D White
DSO, MC

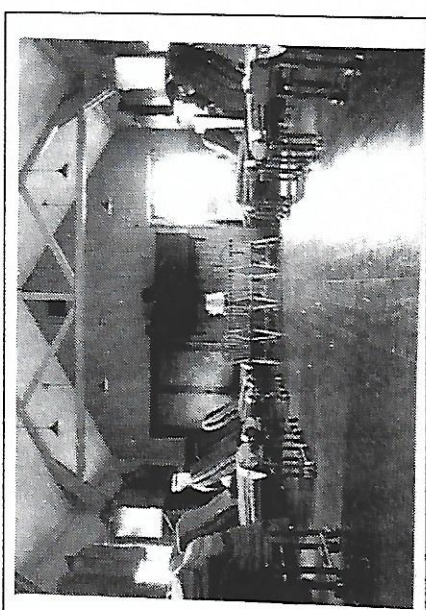


PHOTO 12: Barrack Room -
Ready for Inspection!

THE ARBORFIELD EXPERIENCE

By
James R (Dick) Wade (39A)

Arriving at the RAOC Appren-
tice School gate 2nd May 1939,
we 16 ex Lawrence Military
School boys from India were the
first intake. We were met by the
Commandant and permanent
staff of various regiments.

After a formal introduction we
were directed to the cookhouse
dining room for a meal, which I
believe was intended to make us
feel at home; the meal was an
absolute disaster, curry and rice
which amounted to meat and veg
stew laced with a sprinkling of
curry powder and this concoc-
tion was poured over a plate of
boiled thick lumpy rice which
was more suitable for wallpaper
paste, I did overhear one of the
staff say to another the boys must
be homesick.

After the meal we moved into our
accommodation. A coy spider
huts; The following days started
off with square bashing and May
39 being a hot month the melting
tar on the half finished barrack
square stuck to our boots making
it difficult to keep in step in spite
of our drill experiences at our
respective military schools.

In those early days I among
others had to attend the Alder-
shot Tattoo in Rushmoor Arena
and our job was to show visitors
to their seats, I picked up a few
tanners (sixpences) in tips, which
in those days was wealth indeed.

It was not long before I was

moved from A to E coy top left
of the barrack square, new in-
takes were due to come in from
Jersey, Didcot and other appren-
tice establishments, the bulk of
arrivals in October, 1939.

On September, 3rd 1939 we all
went down to the NAAFI to hear
on the radio the declaration of
war, there were a few tears from
some of the ladies present who,
no doubt were remembering
World War 1.

After the broadcast we were told
to return to our huts to get our tin
hats and respirators, which (in-
itially) we had to carry where
ever we went. I cannot recall the
date; but a German plane came
over and dropped a bomb, it fell
in a field (not far from the school
hospital gate) killing a cow. At
the Sunday church service, the
chaplain showed us a piece of
shrapnel from that bomb, so for
many of us it brought home the
realities of war, I believe that
plane was shot down in the
Guildford area.

From here on RSM Ben Cook
came to the fore, sand bags to fill
for protection of the MI room
(First Aid post if you like) and
sand bagging the admin blocks;
but not the spider huts, our shel-
ter were the air raid shelters be-
yond the top end of the barrack
square.

Our defences amounted to a
sandbag pit in the middle of a
field with a mounted Lewis gun
which we were instructed on;
when I was on guard manning
this anti-aircraft weapon, I had
grave doubts that an enemy plane

would come low enough to be
shot down (nice thought if it did)
I surely would have qualified for
the Guinness Book of Records.

Now to that wonderful man RSM
Ben Cook, what an experience
that was; the dig for victory cam-
paign had started and Ben be-
came completely involved, one
day we had to plough up a field
and there in this field was a slave
carrier (a half track vehicle) with
a harrow attached, Ben ordered
me to drive this vehicle, so there
was I merrily jogging along pull-
ing the steering levers left and
right, when after a while there
was a terrific commotion out-
side; Ben screaming STOP!
STOP!, looking out to see what
was wrong Ben pointed to a large
unploughed patch which I had
missed and subsequently had to
plough over.

The harvesting of the spuds was
another event; we were outside
the QM stores bagging the spuds
and weighing up to the required
weight, one boy hoping to get
into Ben's good books, was
washing the mud off each potato,
when Ben saw this he went ber-
serk. He made the lad fetch a
bucket of soil and mix it with
water into a sludge and dip each
washed spud and laid out into the
sun to dry before bagging. 'You
would never make a good
farmer,' said Ben.

Then there was this Welsh boy
(Pardoe I think his name was),
Ben was forever chasing him on
a cold winters morning, Ben had
us double marching along the
perimeter roads around the
spider huts; though Ben could

hardly see us he would be shouting out the step and Ben would shout, 'Get in step Pardoe!' Pardoe (who was in step) would mutter, 'He's at me again.'

Saturday mornings were often confined to barrack room and kit inspections; we would distribute an orange polish over the floor, then bumping it till it shone like glass, the windows were cleaned then buffed with newspaper, on the day you would have thought someone had nicked the glass it was so spotless.

On kit inspections the bottom half of the beds were pulled out, biscuits (mattresses) were piled up at the head of the bed, blankets on top were folded with one blanket wrapped around in box fashion.

Above the overhead steel lockers:

-steel hats and respirators.

Below the locker,

-great coats hung dolly fashion.

On the bottom half of the beds:

-spare socks rolled and inverted with cardboard slipped in on four sides make them look square.

Among this layout:

-spare shirts, pullovers etc.

Also on display,

-PT kit, pumps (plimsolls)

-a housewives pouch for make

do and mend,

-holdall opened out with the following contents:

-knife, fork, spoon, razor, lather brush, comb, toothbrush, button stick, button brush

and beyond that lot,

-your second pair of boots highly polished including the studs beneath

-and of course there were other items such as water bottles, ground sheets, mess tins etc.,

-next was our service dress.

How we hated those drain pipe trousers, when on leave we had V inserts put in to produce flared bottoms, which most of us thought looked smart, not realising that in time drainpipes became the in thing for youngsters e.g. the teddy boy era.

Another dodge was inserting broken toothbrush handles to prop up our SD peaked hats; but only to see them yanked out by Sgt Hotchkiss and dumped in a bucket by the booking out table; goodness knows what Hotchkiss did with his collection, perhaps he used them to bone his toe caps, just as we did during the spit and polish ritual.

Now to the workshops; my instructor was a Mr Lee and I think I can go one better than what was stated in a recent issue of Oban; Filing that metal cube down to OXO dimensions; I could never get it right,

A little bit off here and a bit off there old Lee would say again and again, my cube finished up the size of a small dice all it needed was 1-6 centre dots on each side.

When it came to the square and plate test piece one boy came up with the perfect fit, in fact it was to perfect, he had the male square hardened in the blacksmiths shop, and drove the square through the opening in the plate, he was caught out and thereby failed his test.

Outside the workshops there was the motorcycle and driving instructions; our M/C instructor (I cannot remember his name) rode in motorcycle races in Germany pre-war, so we were in good hands.

Our first exercise was to be pushed down the barrack square to master balance, later we would start engines and ride along the top road off the square in bottom gear, later came the ultimate going through the gears and changing up and down.

The driving instruction; Who remembers that dual controlled Morris commercial? We used to drive between Wokingham and Reading, stopping at a wayside transport cafe for a NAAFI break, we all enjoyed that experience.

In the end I passed my trade test and got my Hammer and Tongs which to me was a status symbol. I left Arborfield wondering what the future had in store for me.

MEMORIES OF 50B

By
Mike Webb-Morris (50B)

My first reunion has prompted me to write. I had been in civvy street since 1960 and I had forgotten what good organisation is. I shouldn't have been surprised, but I really was impressed with the attention to detail and how helpful everyone was. I haven't laughed so much for years over some of the things that happened all that time ago, although we didn't see the funny side of things so well then!

My first memories are of A Squad in HQ Company. We were lucky enough to begin our soldiering under Sergeant Bill Buckley, Grenadier Guards and CSM Brady, Irish Guards - the Caterham Way! Bill Buckley was one of the fairest NCOs I served with and we would have done anything for him (or else). He never humiliated anyone in public as others seemed to do.

The incident I remember the best happened when we were getting close to the Drill Competition, the winning of which was compulsory. We were not performing to his satisfaction and had an attack of 'pace stick abuse' (long before McEnroe was even born), and hurled his stick on to the square. It broke into several peaces. Since it was all our fault, he said we would have to buy him a new one if we didn't win. It must have done the trick as the photo shows - from left to right; Jock Robertson, myself, and one of the Walker brothers (not John).

My second spell at HQ was not so successful and prompted the poem below by 'Poll' Perrot, a keen observer (as are all good poets).

'Chinny' was Major Charrington, 10 Hussars, Corporal 'De Hoise' was Corporal of Horse Stevenson and JB was the inimitable John Brooker from the Tels Shop. Not exactly Kipling, but a barrack room ballad nonetheless.

HQ and AC Theory did not mix for me and I was returned to C Company after one term, D Company having been disbanded by then, I think. However, I managed not to be relegated and hung on to my stripe. I learned some important lessons during that term, how to survive being one!

Even though I didn't stay in the Army for more than my 8 and 4, the training and experience I gained at the Army Apprentices School have carried me through life and I have never regretted those years.



HQ Company, A Squad, 50B - 3 Winners

YOURS TRULY

A sad story I'll relate to you,
About a fatal day for poor HQ.
Webb-Morris grabbed his tape with glee,
Amidst loud cheers from D Company.
For though HQ could have their pick,
All they did was take the mick.

'Chinny' sits in his armchair,
Knashing teeth and tearing hair,
And all HQ regrets the choice,
Especially Corporal of De Hoise.
For they all 'love' their clueless clot,
Who thinks he's funny when he's not.

His Auntie Glad, she sends him cakes,
which she so carefully bakes.
One small drop of arsenic,
Just enough to do the trick.
When she heard our Mick was bad,
Oh dear, oh dear, was Auntie glad.

He tried to buy a base trombone,
But swapped it for a gramophone.
The blooming thing was one big frown,
It won't wing up, it won't wing down.
He'll jump on you if you don't replace,
The records in their paper case.

In 'shops' this lad always excels,
and JB gives ferocious yells.
He says, "You dumb and ignorant fool,
Can't you remember just one rule?
For this you'll have to pay the price,
Double round the workshop twice."

He washed a shirt all bull and white,
and hung it up to dry that night.
While he slept that blooming shirt,
Slipped and fell down in the dirt.
Then our Mick got really shirty,
The names he called that shirt were dirty.

There's just one thing our lad can do,
And this I'll have to tell to you.
He likes to bull the notice board,
And hopes that points will thus be scored.
But once again our mug was floored,
'Twas Major Charrington who was bored.

By D Perrott (Poll)

KEEPING IT UNDER YOUR HAT



When I threatened Larry Le Var with publication of this little photograph and a rude caption, he said he would give his permission, provided I pass on his little tale of why the hat was not a good fit - and no caption!

The hat worn so well by our distinguished ex-Hon. Sec. was originally purchased in the last minute realization that it was part of the required dress to attend the ceremony of the fallen from the Gulf War at RAF Brize Norton. As part of the ceremony, as a coffin passed by, one saluted by doffing the hat in respect.

At the time of purchase, fitting was made in something of a rush, and at the time Larry had lots of hair. Subsequent to the funeral parade he had his hair cut and the next time the hat was needed was at the AOBA reunion with the unfortunate result that it had to rely on support from Larry's ears. Hence the photo.

The story of this unfortunate hat doesn't end there. The following Reunion year, Brian Hutchins (61B) had volunteered to lead the AOBA parade, but had neglected to think ahead and on the day realized he had no headress. A frantic mention to Larry in passing and Larry being the considerate chap he is, the hat was passed on to Brian.

Same problem! Big hat, small head. But being a highly qualified engineer, the problem was solvable. Brian, at the last minute, chopped up some sheets of the AOBA weekend program, and proceeded to line the internal leather band shim-like until the hat fitted.

However once on parade, Brian was constantly tortured with the thought that as he doffed his hat in salute, all the scraps of programme would fall out and scatter all over the parade ground and his secret would be discovered. In the event, God was on the side of those who dare!

Ed.

**WO1 (RSM) McNALLY MBE
- Life After The School**

Contributed by John Houghton (56B)

An article in Issue 13 of the OBAN by Pete Gripton concerning WO1 (RSM) McNally, MBE, Scots Guards has prompted me to put pen to paper. Both Pete and I were in the same intake (56B) and therefore just missed 'serving' under RSM McNally.

However, I did make his acquaintance on a number of occasions in the early 1960s after I had left the School. My wife Marjorie (whom I was courting at the time) became friends with RSM McNally's youngest daughter Ann (who was also courting a 56B boy - George Gash). Their friendship developed further after I was posted to Cyprus in May 1960. Marjorie became a regular visitor to the McNally household whilst I was away and was always made very welcome.

I was introduced to the McNallys, who lived in Reading, when I came home on leave from Cyprus. Having heard of the RSM's past reputation, from senior boys who had been on the receiving end of his wrath, I was full of trepidation. However, my concerns were unfounded, the RSM greeted me warmly and as an equal and made me feel very welcome. I was invited back to their home on several occasions for supper (I remember his fondness for cheese) and joined them on the occasional trip to the pub.

The last time I saw the RSM and Mrs McNally was when they attended our wedding in July 1961 (see picture). After that we lost touch, as one does due to numerous postings abroad and was saddened to learn of his death, due an accident in Reading, some years later. We last saw Mrs McNally at the AOBA 50th Anniversary Dance; regrettably this lovely lady died a few years later.

While on the subject of School RSMs, RSM McNally's successor in 1956 was WO1 (RCM) John Sallis, Royal Horse Guards. He looked resplendent in his everyday officer style service dress, as a result of which he was constantly being



Back Row: Mrs McNally extreme left, RSM McNally in the centre. Ann McNally is in front, just left of her father. George Gash (56B) is behind Ann's left shoulder.

An Enlarged Extract from Our Wedding Photo

mistaken for an officer and saluted by many of the boys during his first few months on joining the School. (I admit to being one of the guilty ones!)

At the end of senior division in July 1959 we were informed of our postings. I, along with Roger Clarkson and Eric Pratt were to join the LAD REME, Royal Horse Guards at Windsor. All three of us were summoned to the RCM's office and lectured on; *"..... how privileged we should consider ourselves on being selected for attachment to one of the Army's most famous and senior regiments, etc. etc."*

One year later, while on a bus travelling through Bovington, who should I spot strutting down the road but a newly commissioned Lt Sallis!

PACKAGED PICTORIAL
- A Thousand words . .

By
David Barrett (562B)

When I was talking pictures with our star editor (no not the 'gaff', but possibly gaffer) I was persuaded (coerced) into a potted history to support (prop up) the offering overleaf. I did explain that my recollections come 'packaged pictorial', a thousand words etc., etc. So to me my own mental impressions of the three years at Arborfield provide *me* with a vast amount of amusement (when viewed from this side of the cell - brain that is), but become awfully boring I suspect when written. We were after all 'uniform' so our experiences are probably differing views of the same thing.

As there seemed to be a scarcity of blathering from 52B, I agreed to add my twopenn'orth. Eggy Eggleton thankfully shares memories of some of the same oddities; 'G-flog Jock' draped over the tea urn, being unpleasant to all and sundry. The meal tickets that served equally well as a calender for days 'till next leave, (as did the loo walls).

I have included in my 'pictorial package' some of the things that stuck in my mind from my arrival at Reading and the following few days only. Arborfield and HQ Coy in particular was as I remember so utterly crammed full of new experiences that now I could fill numerous sheets with cartoons.

Of course, after this span of time, all appears humorous to me, indeed it was far from that at times, but who wants to remember misery? Didn't know though 'Eggy', that one could be awarded the Iron Cross. You must have been *somme* NCO! (That was dreadful.) Maybe we should put our heads together sometime. I'm sure we could come up with some memory joggers.

Having survived the AAS relatively unscarred and definitely over filled with confidence, I arrived at the first posting as a multi-starred General, posing as a Craftsman.

One of the many lasting odd memories from there was the shaved down jam jars in which we had our civvy canteen tea, hard on the fingers! Comet, Churchill and Charioteer tanks - wonderful toys to play with. Also, the two 'near death' experiences whilst learning to drive. Sorry you chaps who had to share the same Bedford, it must have been horrifying to have been stuck in the back, but character forming, dammit!

From Burscough there was the first overseas posting - to Cyrenaica? Where's that? If the man had said Libya I would have known. A DC3 painted in East African Airways livery departing from Blackbushe, taking two days with a one night stopover in Malta sounds lovely, well I enjoyed it! Also Benghazi, I found the place fascinating, from the dig at Cyrene to the items of World War II equipment preserved in the desert - the work was interesting too.

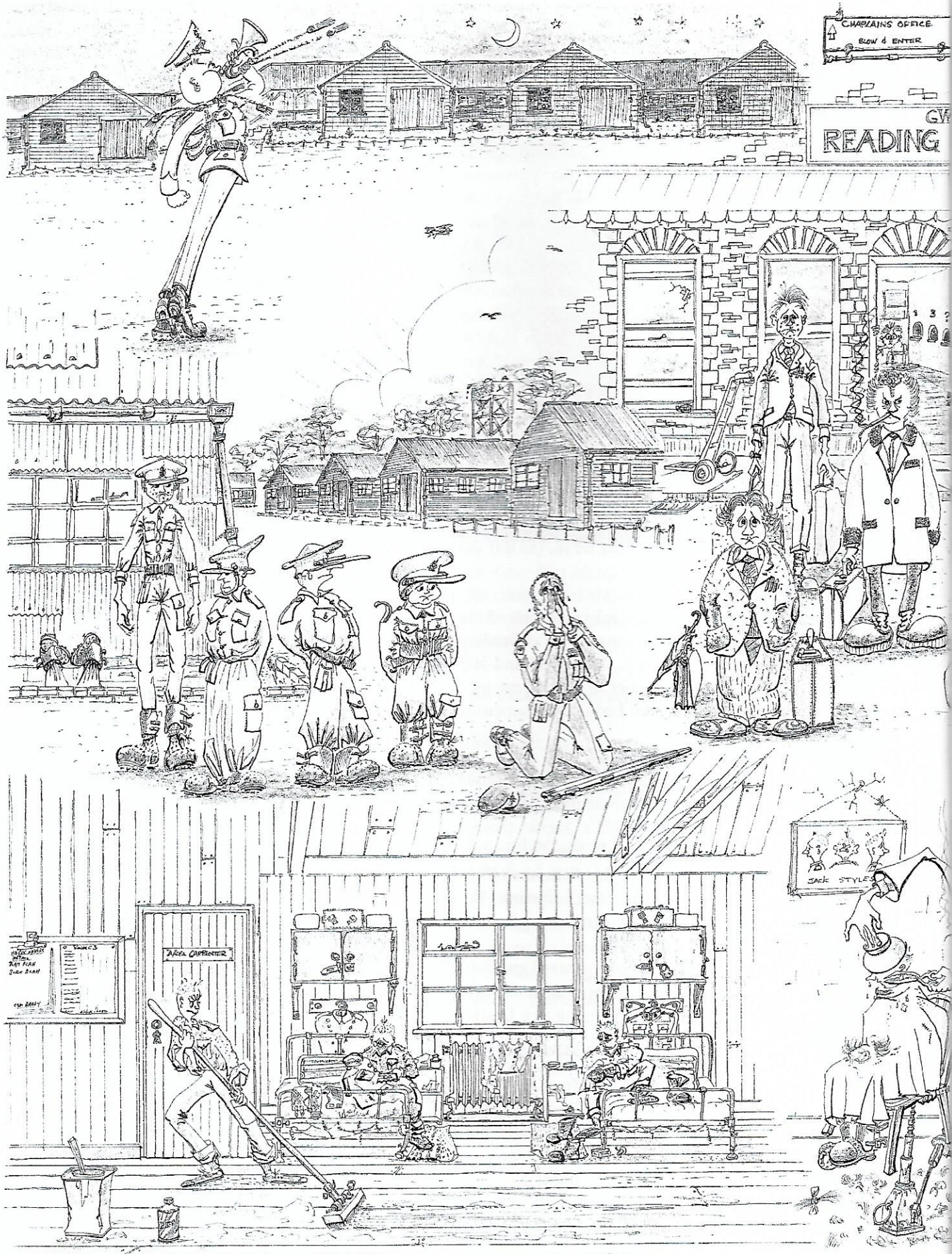
Fro there to Cyprus, via Middle Wallop, where I failed to metamorphise into an Aircraft Tech something-or-other. The trip to Cyprus aboard the cruise ship *MV Devonshire* was much enlivened by the visit to Valletta and our introduction to the 'Gut'. Did those ladies really manage to do all those things on stage?

Limasol, Famagusta and Cyprus in general were an eye opener, mainly because all the locals were a tad more hostile than the Arabs had been, who had only heaved the odd brick due to their being upset at the goings on in Suez. Here, though, I was at last removed by quite a few miles from under the eagle eye and the REME umbrella. I also know some words have been written on the subject of the seemingly casual attitude of the Corps to its detached members, but personally speaking, I revelled in the 'wing stretching' in which I could indulge.

After completing my first overseas tour, my family and I arrived for a thoroughly enjoyable stay in Ashford. Other than the terrific people met there, memories include a visit to the quarter sessions over a misunderstanding about who could and could not shoot Lord Brabourne's pheasants. The fine, I think, was £2.17.6d.

I still think the gamekeepers were guilty of highway robbery and the grizzled old bat on the bench had no sense of humour at all. My fellow 'minor criminal' was another ex-brat - Brian Lawrence (50B). Needless to say, we carried on working hard and playing even harder until my posting away to KL and the beginning of my life-long love affair with Asia.

Batu Cantonment, where I seemed to have spent an awful lot of time drawing and painting. From shed 69, an early social club, to lots of cartoons aimed mainly at our administration officer - a civilian, who was also the head of the civil service union; a mix of jobs I considered a conflict of interests on his part, as he appeared to spend a great deal of energy and Army time, writing inflammatory articles about the military, for the local press. I have no doubt, at times I had the wrong end of the stick, but it became a wonderful source of fun. Also





the tea breaks and a congenial group sitting around the table in the inspection bay. Alf, Ernie, Don Walker, Dennis Luckes, John something, rather tall Mick? Paddy McGrillen (the MG went well for years thanks) and others whose names but not faces escape me temporarily.

Once the hand over to the Malay Federation Army gathered pace, I moved down to Singapore and the Gurkha Brigade, with whom I stayed quite contentedly until 1972. Side trips included Brunei, where there were some skirmishes with the local discontented and the follow-on slightly longer 'konfrontasi' with Indonesia.

The battalions with the brigade exchanged areas on a regular basis, so the far East became for us the 'grand tour' - Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Brunei etc., ad infinitum - sadly now only names in holiday brochures for the present day soldiers. Happily for me, I belonged to the group of lucky ones.

We returned to UK in 1972 with options severely limited. Between Europe and Northern Ireland the choices ranged from dismal to dreary.

My introduction to civilian life in 1979 began with a charming personnel manager wondering if I would like to become chief engineer on a fully mechanised 32,000 acre project in Belize. I was a mite puzzled when the flights were routed through Miami. It would have been crystal clear to me had he said British Honduras, Belize sounded to me like one of those newly emergent African states, which I had never heard of.

I should add, at this juncture, that my experience then and since of the civilian attitude to the military was quite the opposite to what I had expected. The very intense military and technical training we had received coupled with the experience gained using that level of training in at times, some appalling conditions, gave us quite an edge over civilian graduates. Most highly rated, I believe, was the level of responsibility shouldered at an earlier age than our civilian counterparts and a willingness to take on work in most countries world-wide, and all without blinking!

I shall now clamber off my soap box. The project I found fascinating, paddling about in paddy fields in Asia, does not equip anyone for the sight of the quantity of specialist machinery poured into the growing and processing of rice by the Americans, rows of ladies in big hats transplanting by hand it is not.

Bovington and the courses there prepared me quite well

for the repair and servicing of tracked equipment and in the setting up of the workshop organisation involved. However, when actually 'on the ground' things can be a little more, well - difficult. Having completed the initial contract, it was nice to be asked to return for a further stint.

For those fortunate enough not to have been there, the delights of Belize City are easy to miss. Trips out to the Cayes and inland to the Mayan ruins were limited by the amount of off-duty time available, but thoroughly enjoyed when we could indulge.

That period in Central America stood me in good stead for a further series of agriculture projects in Asia - a description of which I will write one day.

To finish up and without intending any sideswipes at technical authors, my illustrating career was given a boost when in Bangladesh on a ground water project I had to explain to local farmers the necessity of maintenance.

The technical manuals issued with the various pieces of pumpset equipment were so much gibberish to people who could not read or write their own language, without the further complication of the books being produced in English.

The only option was verbal or pictorial. I opted for lots of cartoon type pictures, verbal explanations, *no* written notes - which I hope brings me very neatly back to my own exhaust pipe, packaged pictorial, a thousand words etc., etc.

I have been quite pleased with the reception sheet of cartoons has received from the ex A/Ts who have seen it so far. However, producing further offerings depends a lot upon your comments I would welcome any, in plain wrapper please, to:

2 Willow Grange Cottages,
Ely Road,
Chittering,
Cambs CB5 9PL
Tel No. 01353 648484.

David Barrett (562B)

CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
East Africa - January 1955

By Fred Wells (44A)
(ex 2548947 S/Sgt F.C.Wells)

I was, originally, a Royal Corps of Signals boy (Intake 43B) at Catterick Garrison, but transferred to Arborfield in March 1944 to be with my brother who had enlisted in Intake 42B. Whether that was a wise move or not I am still debating! It resulted in my being a boy soldier for 4 years! I was only 14 years of age when I enlisted.

The editorial in OBAN issue 16 requesting photographs of Apprentice and/or REME service prompted me to contribute the enclosed photos, copies of letters and a brief history, arising from the period.

I once served at Command Workshops, Kahawa, Nairobi, Kenya in charge of the Electrical Section of the workshop with the added responsibility of maintaining the various electrical equipments in the static and field military hospitals. This was during the Mau Mau campaign between 1952 and 1955, when I returned to England for demob.

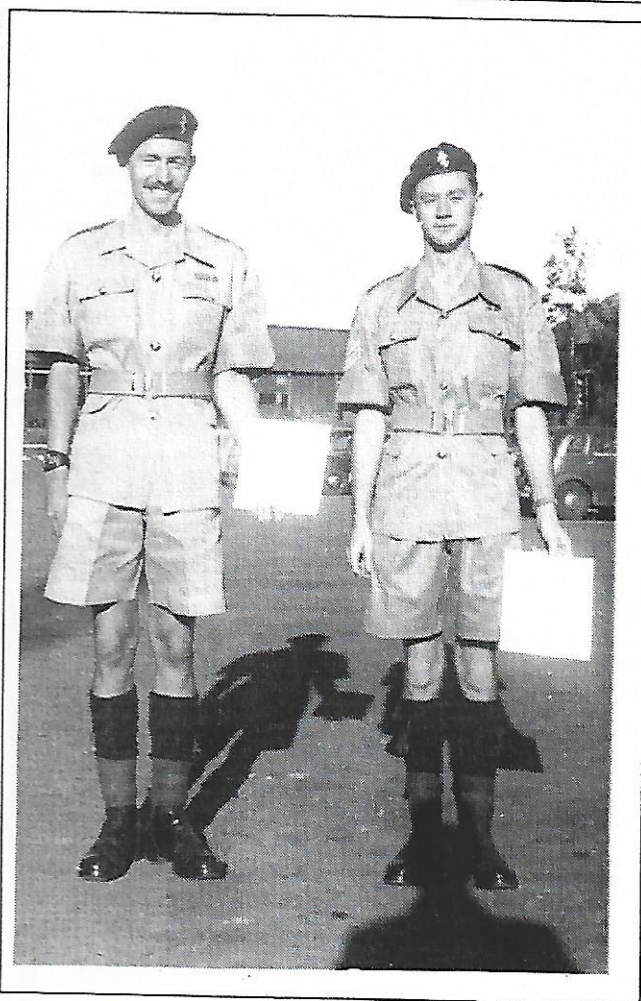
I had previously undergone a 9 month medical equipment service course at Woolwich and the Royal Herbert Hospital on Shooters Hill during 1951, and after a spell at Mill Hill in London was drafted to Kenya in June 1952.

During 1954 there was an epidemic of Poliomyelitis affecting the troops in Kenya and unfortunately, as I recall, there were only 2 or 3 mechanical respirators in medical stores in Nairobi. These were old and did not have the more modern controls such as variable speed bellows (except by changing pulley diameters) to give breathing control. Neither did they have manometers or pressure gauges to indicate pressure levels. The access ports to the patient were also inadequate.

Enlisting the help of WOII LW Merrick and WOII GA Bourne (both ex boys) we made the necessary improvements and built the extra mechanical respirators to accommodate the increasing number of patients. This action and the added fact that at times we had to isolate ourselves within the patient environment was brought to the attention of the ADMS and the ADME East Africa (see letters in this article - Ed) and subsequently were commended by General Erskine the Commander in Chief, East Africa resulting in a mention in the Queen's New Years Honours List 1955.

The first photo shows myself (at right) and WOII Merrick with our certificates. To this day I do not have any record of WOII Bourne; I can only think that perhaps I gave both the negatives and the prints to him at some point.

The photo of the presentations is not so clear. I still have the rather thin negatives so if necessary if better prints can



WOII Merrick (Left) & S/Sgt FC Wells (Right)

be made I will make them available to the Museum. The original letters are on rather thin paper which has yellowed with age and are rather fragile; the Certificate is on sturdier card but it too has yellowed, but perhaps something could be done with them also. I hope they have some historical interest.

Incidentally, I think we managed to evacuate 16 of the 17 patients to the UK by air using portable respirators flown in from the UK with a medical team from Oxford, I believe. It was unfortunate that during the transfer of one patient from the static respirator to the portable one, he died.

Since leaving the service my working life has been mainly in and around the hospital environment. A very rewarding experience.

I do not know where the other two ex boys are, but if they read this article, perhaps they would like to add their own reminiscences.

Incidentally I have noticed that a member of the committee is a WOI Dave Merrick (77C). I don't suppose he is any relation to WOII LW Merrick by any chance?

Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter - Issue 17

From:- Colonel WGS Foster OBE
ADME, East Africa

General Headquarters
East Africa
P.O. Box 4000
NAIROBI, KENYA,
Tel:- 21251. Ext:- 75
12 June 54

ADMS/DC/54.

Dear Merrick, Bourne and Wells,
I want to thank you all personally for the great work you have done, and are doing, on the Iron Lungs.

I fully appreciate what a sweat it must be but I would like you to realise what, in fact, you are doing.

It is not only the fact of the lung working steadily that saves a man's life. It is also a fact that when the unfortunate chap has to go into it and realises that he has devoted experts available at any time his moral immediately goes up.

With a high moral many diseases can be conquered.

Please carry on this very good work.

Yours Sincerely
W.G.S. Foster

WOII L.W. MERRICK, REME
WOII G. BOURNE
S/SGT F. WELLS

Command Workshops, KAHAWA

From:- Major G. WYRILL REME

Comd Wksp EAEME KAHAWA.
P.O. Box 4029, NAIROBI.
Ref:- CEK/0239/WY.
17 JUL 54.

Dear Wells

I should like to join our ADME Lt. Col. H.P.V. Bailey, in thanking you for the excellent work done by you in connection with the maintenance of the Artificial Respirators at the hospital.

Such work is of tremendous importance and it is by your untiring efforts that the apparatus has been kept working.

Yours Sincerely
Major G Weyfill

Commendation

Military Hospital.
P.O.Box 4026
NAIROBI, KENYA,
Tel:- 60301.
Ref:- Gen/18.
28 Jul 54

ADME,
GBO (ME) EAST AFRICA

2547234 WOII L W MERRICK. REME
2548511 WOII G A BOURNE REME
2548947 S/SGT F WELLS REME

Now that the recent epidemic of Poliomyelitis cases nursed at his Hospital has considerably abated culminating with the successful air evacuation of the more serious cases to UK on 17 Jul 54, I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation of the excellent service rendered by the a/n REME Warrant Officers and Senior NCO.

Not only did they always ensure a highly efficient service in the maintenance of the mechanical respirators, but their unfailing cheerfulness and confidence did a great deal to encourage dangerously ill patients, during the critical days of their illnesses.

Their work at this hospital during the past few months has made a lasting impression of the whole hearted co-operation between the Corps and the fact that the final medical evacuation to UK was so successfully completed was in no small part due to the excellent services that they rendered.

I would also like to thank C.C Comd Workshop EAEME, Kahawa, in making available these personnel to maintain a 24 hour service during a difficult period.

A GLEAVE Lt Col RAMC
Officer Commanding

Copies to:- ADMS
O.C. Comd W/Shops EAME, KAHAWA

EASTAFRICA

2548947 STAFF SERGEANT F. WELLS

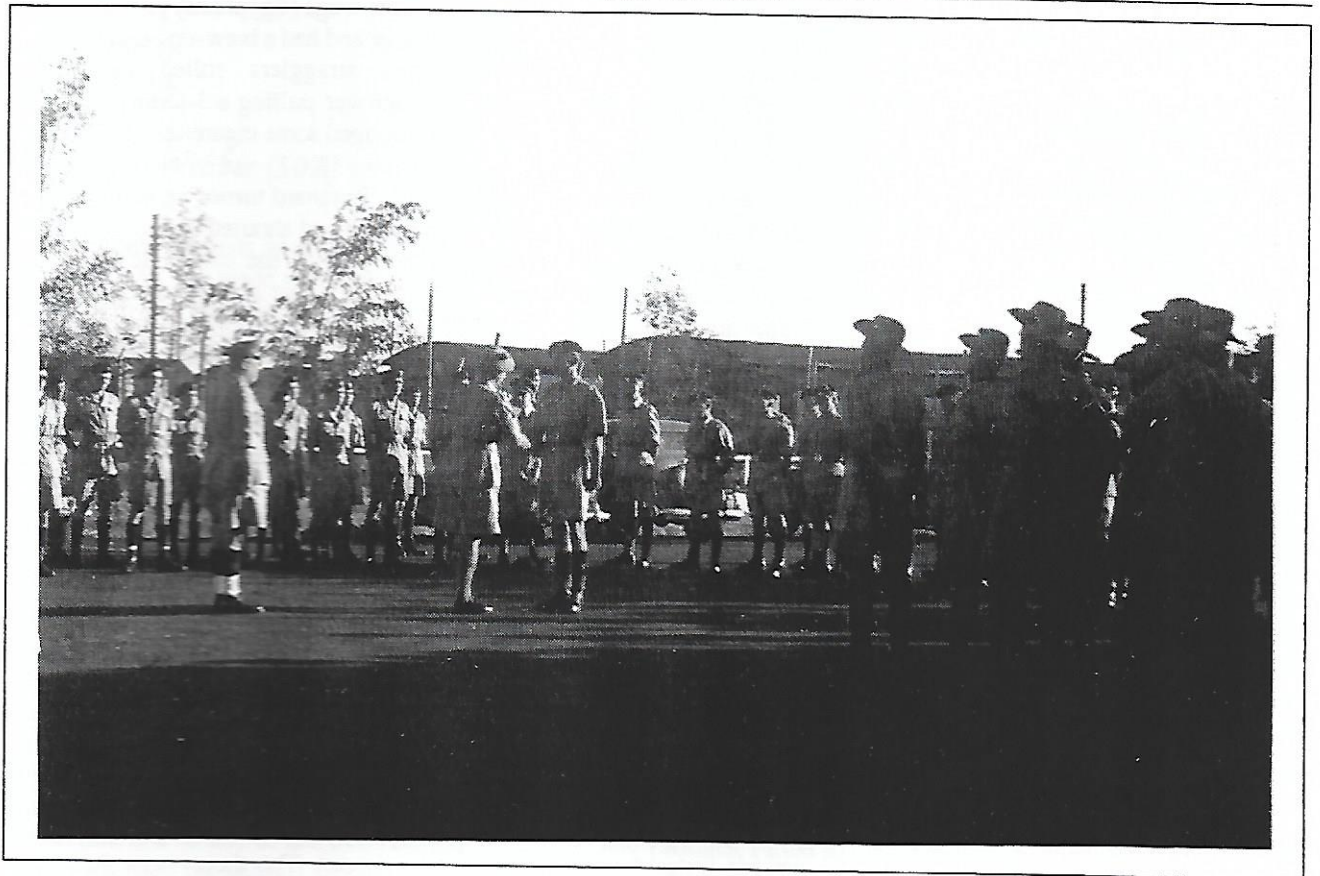
ROYAL ELECTRICAL MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

Your name has been brought to my notice. I am authorised to signify by the award to you of this Certificate my appreciation of the good service which you have rendered.

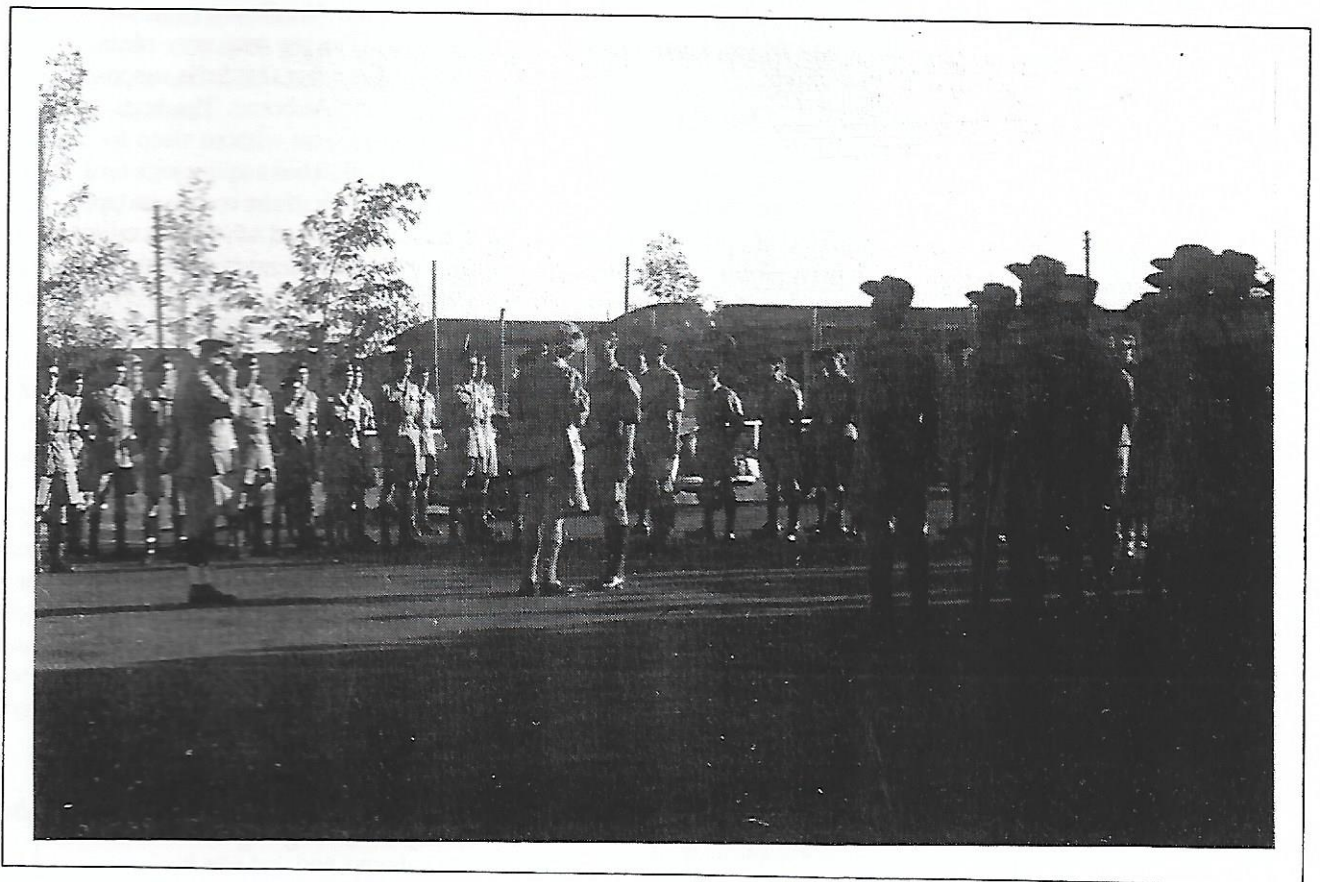
I have given instructions that a note of your devotion to duty be made on your Record of Service.

Date 1 January 1955

Signed: *ErsKine*
General,
Commander in Chief,
East Africa.



General Erskine presents the Certificates of Commendation



General Erskine presents the Certificates of Commendation

EASTER MONDAY 1953

By Frank Fendick (Hill 45A)

(An extract from my diary, dated Easter Monday 6-4-53. At that time I was serving as a Sergeant Telemech in 16 Airborne Workshops stationed at El Kirsh, Suez Canal Zone, Egypt.)

The unit last week came back from the most rugged scheme we have been on. A Brigade scheme. We first went down to the Suez area where we stayed for a couple of weeks. Had very little trouble and managed to turn out quite a bit of work in spite of the fact that most of the blokes are new and know nowt about the working of the unit or about telemechery. We now have seven telemechs, Bloxham having just left. He was made up to substantive sergeant the day before he left for demob.

We crossed to the Sinai in L.S.Ts. No, I can't do it. Describing events seems to take a lot of will power. In case I never get around to writing any more about the scheme, must at least state that it was the roughest country vehicles could ever have been taken over.

I was driving the Z waggon (radio repair vehicle). On one trip we first had an HT short - fan wheel rubbing against the HT lead; next an LT short - lead caught in the break racket; and then the trailer hook broke off. Was towing two trailers as the towing

attachment of the I waggon (instrument repair vehicle) had snapped in two. Ours was so bent that it looked as though it was going to break at any moment.

Was miles behind the convoy. Only knew the route by searching for the I waggon tracks. Luckily it had a very singular tread on the two rear wheels. At one time after starting out from a location we passed 29 vehicles bogged down in 15 minutes. It was impossible country for 4 x 2s.

Worst thing happened on the way back. Was 100 yards from El Fedan bridge when the Z waggon blew a gasket. Couldn't get a tow from anyone. The bridge closed and didn't open until 1 o'clock the next day (well actually the same day as this was 2 am). Before realising a gasket had blown I made everyone piss in a bucket in order to fill up the rad. (we had no water having been rationed to half a gallon per day per man perhaps). Later we got water from the canal. After waiting for the engine to cool down we started to pour the water in. I had poured in two biscuit tins' full and still the rad. wasn't full so I looked underneath. The water was pouring out of the exhaust pipe.

Came dawn, and there we were, only about five miles from camp but couldn't get there because of 100 yards of water in between. It was ironic after having come 150 miles. We had no water, no food and no fags. We managed to scrounge some water

off the wogs (Egyptians) guarding the bridge and had a brew-up. Later some other stragglers rolled up - a Landrover pulling a 3-tonner - and I scrounged some cigarettes.

Taffy Pritchard turned up early in the morning and shouted across from the other side of the canal. He tried to scrounge a boat in order to bring some food across but couldn't manage it. To make matters worse, the worst khamsin of the year sprang up and kept blowing all morning. At 1 o'clock Taffy got across the bridge but we had to wait until 3 o'clock before we could get back again. Then we only just made it as the khamsin had blown a drift across the road. Taffy was towing us with the Fordson machinery waggon in first gear, four-wheel drive. It took four minutes to cover 10 feet.

I think I have covered the main incidents of the scheme even though I have not followed through what we actually did. The theory was that we (the Airborne Brigade) had to capture some professor. The Commandos were the enemy. Needless to say, we won. General Festing was very pleased in spite of the fact that he is supposed to dislike the Airborne. The bods in the battalions went without sleep for days and all-round had a very rough time. On the way back, if the convoy stopped, it was necessary to send someone along to wake the drivers who had fallen asleep.

THE LAST JUMP

One said, "My God, I'm going to die"
as he rushed towards the final hit.
There was a thump, and that was it -
"Goodbye".

Like the others, they were scared, but lied,
as they were even more afraid of showing it.
One thought,
"My God, even I might die".

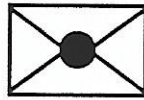
So they messed around to hide the lie
as they checked each other's kit,
and shuffled towards the door and the final
"Goodbye".

The second man should have let one second go by
as he followed the other's exit,
but their scared bravado caused them to die.

They jumped together. Their 'chutes tied
together and couldn't open as was fit.
This was their last jump - it was their time to die.

I was rolling my 'chute when I looked up and spied
two men, falling fast with unopened kit.
One said, "My God, I'm going to die".
There was a thump, and that was it -
"Goodbye".

LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR



✍ Nick Webber (50B) writes

In doing some research on my family and Army service, the period at AAS has made me think of odd things that I am unsure as to they being true or just boy's gossip and wonder if any old boy may be able to confirm or throw some light on these events?

When in 1950 I joined Boys service, it was said that during 'agriculture' duties, Ben Cook used to let the boys pull the plough and let his horse rest, even giving some of the fatigues group's food to the horse? (Reference to earlier OBANs would seem to confirm this - Ed).

Sometime during 1951-2, the fireworks factory behind the Camp went up in flames and as far as I can remember some of the lads were supposed to have been responsible. Does anyone remember this event?

In 1951, I think we were joined by a Burmese group - in fact I met a soldier who, for some reason, had been in Burma for a short time and he said he had met a Burmese WO, who said he had attended the AAS. I wonder if anyone might have photos I could copy for a book?

During the period 1949 onwards there were a group of Poles who seemed to me to be bigger than us and were also very good athletes and rifle shots. Has anyone any idea what happened to them?

When I was in my junior divisions, it was said that the armourers had part or maybe all of a Bren gun in bits hidden in the walls or under the floor boards. These had to be moved every so often when there were barrack room searches. If this was true were any items found when the AAS was pulled down or were they disposed by the last inhabitants?

Does anyone remember the name of the local policeman who used to visit the Camp, always seeming to know about illegal motorbikes and other things, such as trouble out of camp?

The last item about which I would like some confirmation, concerns the training we did at Arborfield during 1952-3 for the Tors Walk on Dartmoor. I was involved in the training that was held along the road that passed the Bramshill Hunt and also on an open area somewhere around Camberley. I never actually went on the walk and wonder if anyone remembers this event?

✍ Weston T Robertson (50B) writes

I note with interest, that there seems to be a reluctance on behalf of contributors to admit to falling foul of authority

while serving the great institution, AAS Arborfield. Considering the high proportion of apprentices who must have been subject to the appropriate procedures and some of the antics, legal and otherwise which occurred, it would be a shame to allow the record to show that all was too rosy and that we became so low in spirit or moral that the occasional slip from the straight and narrow never entered our thinking.

To this end, I will confess to spending more than one Saturday afternoon doubling around the square and enclose a chapter (q.v.) from that tomb of happy memories resting gentle in my mind. The experience gained at Arborfield kept me clear of trouble for some months after entering 'man's service', when a slip by admitting I had shaved the night before, put me back on familiar territory. Trouble in the Far East saved me a while, then there was a period of individual thinking which the Army had difficulty in digesting, but these are other tales which I may get around to recording at a later date.

The routine for a defaulter is a bit hazy, but I have tried to recall the general gist and to show how easily it was to become one. The offences were usually mundane and I see no reason to deny them after all, if we had all been perfect the defence budget would have been badly stretched to pay for all that extra labour. In later years, when I wore bigger badges, I tried to remember my own little indiscretions and act accordingly, so even 'jankers' you see, was an essential part of becoming the complete soldier. If I may be allowed to quote from an article I produced for another magazine, 'The Army may not have liked it, but the soldiers did, and in this knowledge I was able to give a service I was proud of'. This attitude was born within me as a boy soldier, grew and matured as time passed and as the records could show, is what made those who trod that path, something special.

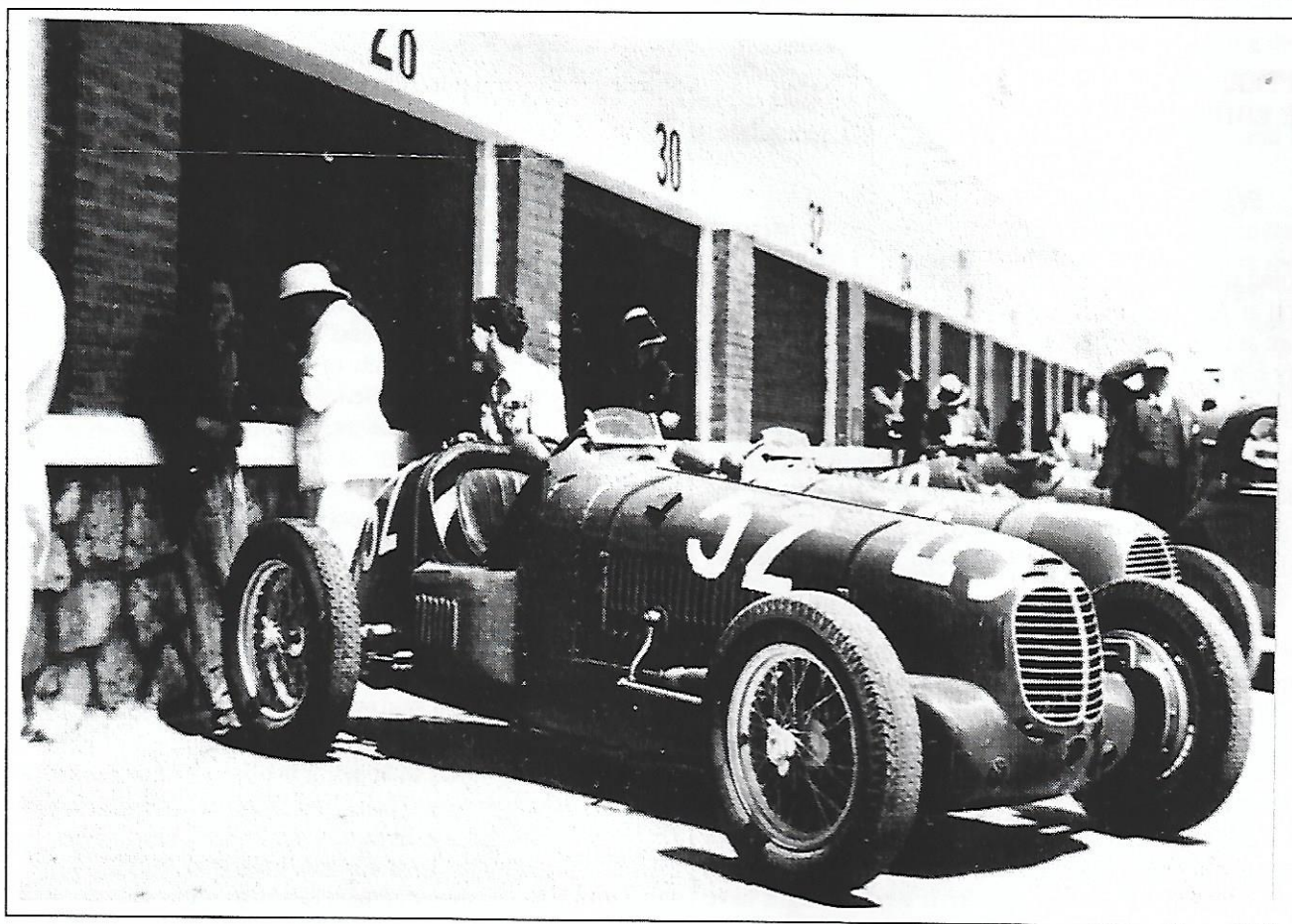
(Many thanks for your article 'Miss-Understandings' which will appear in a future OBAN - Ed.)

✍ Trevor O'Callaghan (42C) writes

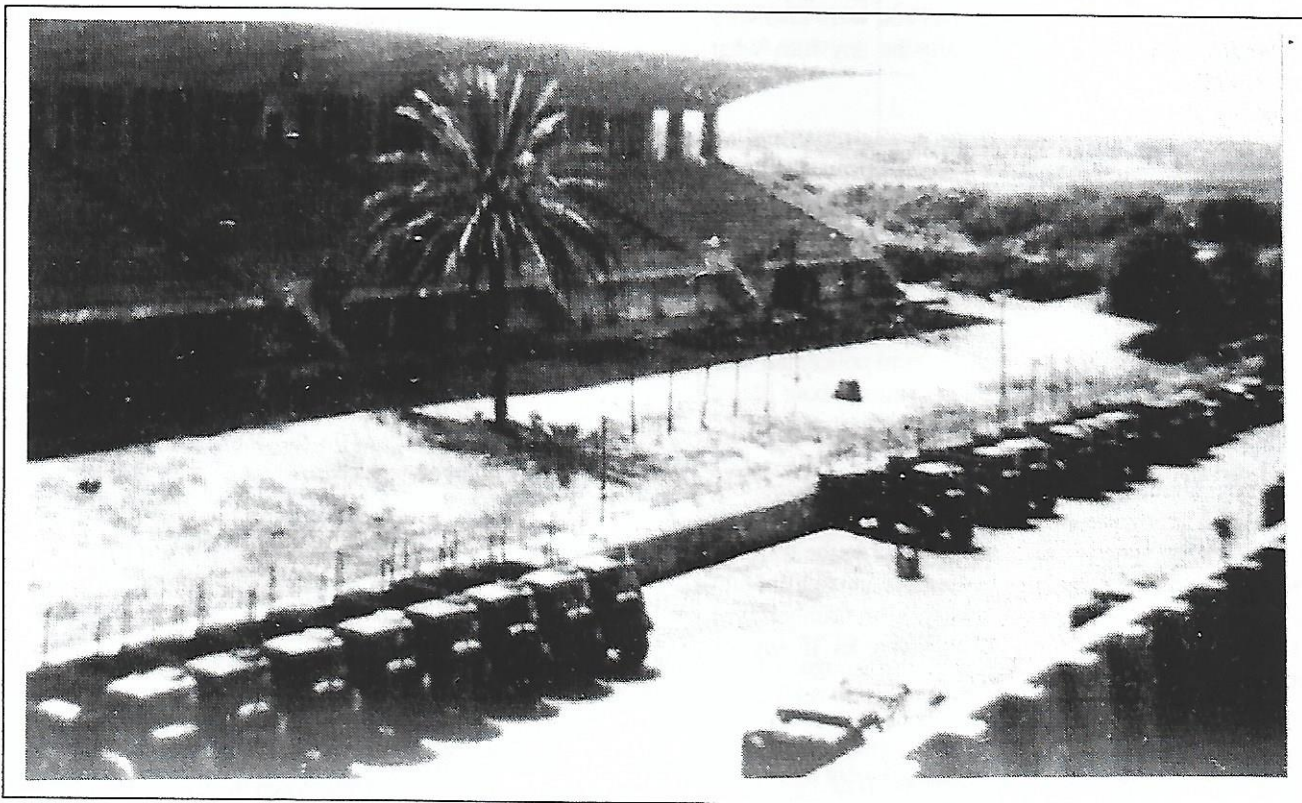
Motor Racing Circuit - Tripoli. Can anyone supply any information about this? I was in the REME Inspectorate Station at the above circuit in 1949.

The photographs I have included are of the Army occupation and what I believe to be the only major race prior to Italy's entrance into the war in 1940. The circuit was only completed in 1939 and was built as a show piece for the Italian Empire at a very high cost. The Maserati shown in one of the photos was the winner of the only major race on this circuit. We used to race around the circuit on motorcycles, Daimler scout cars, Jeeps etc. - great fun! The US Air Force occupied on end of the circuit and they blew down the tower shown in one of the other photos.

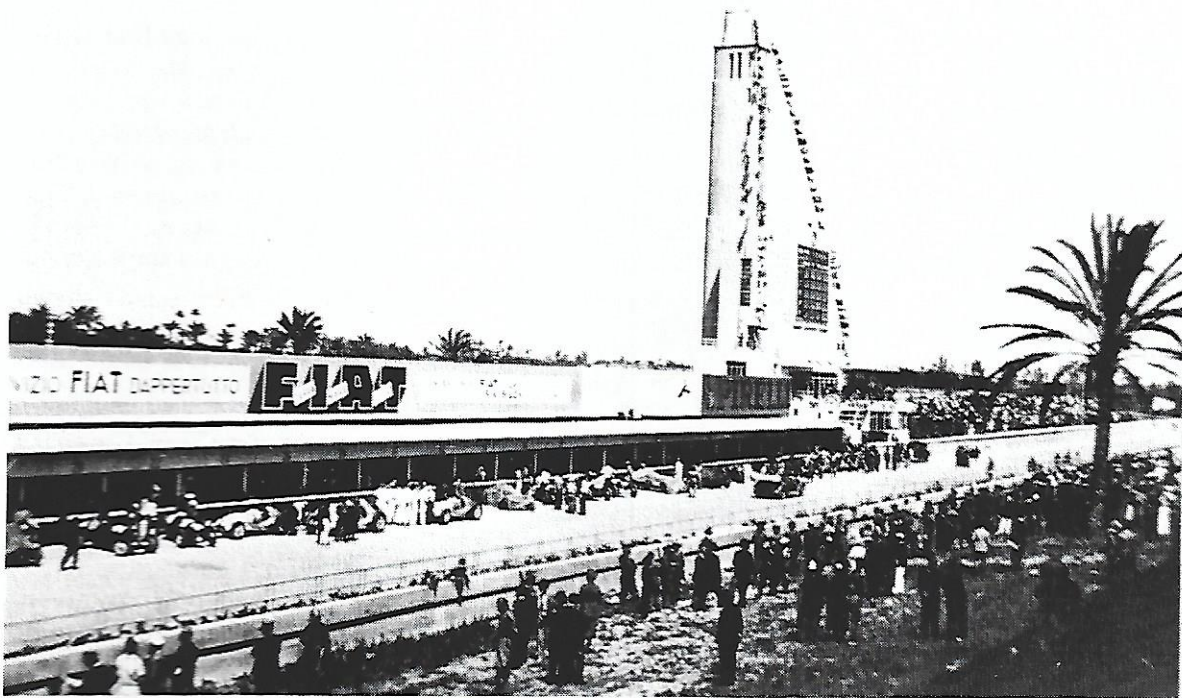
One other question - what happened to the circuit when the US and British units left?



The Winning Maserati



The Army in Occupation



The Unfortunate Tower

I have met several Italians who worked at the circuit and I was told some very interesting stories. I made notes from these stories and I had an article on the building and running of the circuit. Unfortunately, I have mislaid this information.

The majority of the members of the car racing / performance fraternity here have no knowledge of the circuit. It has been suggested to me that I should write an article on the circuit for the historians! If any member could assist me I would be very grateful.

(Trevor, I have taken the liberty of making duplicates of these photos for the REME Museum. Did the REME unit have a Workshop name and number? - Ed.)

✍ *Bill Page (43A) writes*

Memory is a transient and fickle element as reading OBAN proves.

Comments on Issue 16: Brian Conway, whom I knew, must be put right about RSM McNally's head gear. He did indeed wear his chequered cap during the war, but wore his khaki cap for official visits. Colonel White took over command in the middle of 1943 and on this he is correct. Now to Harold Price, whom I also knew. Lt General Montgomery was the second choice to command the 8th Army. However, the first choice was Lt General William 'Strafer' Gott and not General Scott (whoever he was!) The 3 Base Workshop in Palestine had four sub Workshops. The Sub Base Workshop between Haifa and Acre was 4 Sub Workshop and a

Regimental Cadre existed within its perimeter. It had an assault course, weapons training area etc., and was originally commanded by one, Major Deamer. These are not memories, but facts.

I was not a good example of an 'ex-boy'. I was rebellious and flouted authority. I fell out with officers and was thrown out of at least 6 units. How I lasted over 20 years and actually got promoted astounded me. I think they tried to kill me off sending me to Palestine, Malaya and Korea and nearly to Suez in between. Still, it was a great life. The Army made me what I am - a wreck. I was eventually medically discharged with a back injury. I left without a word and I'm sure everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

✍ *David Bone (44B) writes*

I always enjoy the letters and articles in OBAN. They are usually light hearted and funny. I just wanted to put the other side of the coin, so to speak, on a more sombre note by telling briefly of the experiences of some ex-boys I came across during my brief, inglorious colour service in the Royal Engineers.

They were not ex-Arborfield boys, but ex-Chepstow, although this is not really important. They passed out of Chepstow in 1942 and were posted to one or other of the many field companies RE, then forming. As ex-boys, the Company Commander expected them to be an example to the other men, who were mainly conscripts. If the ex-boys performed well they had good prospects of becoming junior

NCOs. They soon found themselves at sea, on the way to Operation Torch and two and a half years at the sharp end of total war in Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy. Their war was characterised by terror, death, blood, pain, exhaustion, anxiety, mud, rain and blazing sun. They were often employed as infantry, notably at Medjez El Bab and the Salerno landings.

The Italian campaign brought an endless succession of sapper tasks, often under fire and the pressure was relentless. Comrades were killed or had limbs blown off. Sleep was hard to come by and food was irregular and occasionally hot. One hopes that their training as apprentices helped them through their ordeal. Some, who performed bravely throughout the campaign suffered mental collapse when it ended.

When VE Day arrived they were 20 years old but felt like old men. Many of them went on to have distinguished careers, becoming warrant officers or sometimes commissioned officers, but the most vivid years of their lives remained those war time years. The re-unions they attended at Chepstow were rather sad because of so many gaps in the ranks. I knew and admired several of these chaps and often wondered how I would have performed if put to the test as they were. I sometimes have a suspicion it would not have been too well. I hope that none of today's apprentices will have to endure two and a half years of continuous front line experience, but I am sure that Arborfield will fit them for it as far as is possible.

✉ *Tony ('Skiver') Ivens (54A) writes from Australia*

Reunion 99. Many thanks for the Yellow Pages re: Hotels. At the moment I hope to make the trip and to come over early in October for about 8 weeks. Your prices for 2 Star hotels are unbelievable! Average about £70.00 per night (in Australia we would pay that for 5 Star accommodation).

I expect to come down to the Reunion on the Friday night from Scotland and return to Yorkshire on the Sunday - can we bunk down that night? (*I think it was possible last year, but you will receive a booking form in due course, so that will confirm whether it will be possible - Ed.*) A bit tiring at my age but I refuse to spend silly money for accommodation I can do without. I will be keeping business down to a minimum this trip (not unusual for me) and am just going to trip around like a fairy (in the nicest possible way of course). Coming from an Army family as I do, we never had much to do with relatives, so visits are kept to a minimum when I am over in the UK.

As a bone of contention, please do not run down my writing - my last job was teaching doctors to write out prescriptions, so watch it! (*No wonder we can never read them - Ed.*) By the way, you know old the saying, *In every man there is a novel*, well it's rubbish! I have been trying to write an article for OBAN, but it's not going well. I won't give up, but I am

frustrated. It is quite strange as I can write scripts for anyone, but not a simple article.

I have not been back on stage since a medical operation, except for a few charity performances (who would pay me anyway?). However, a young lad I know wants me to perform with him as a 'mentalists', (*sounds about right - Ed.*) Not too much to learn except for presentation, so have decided to give it a go. I think I need an interest, although I always seem to have something to do. A bit like the Editor's little job - I suppose it gives him a purpose and keeps him well in touch with what goes on in Arborfield.

I was surprised that 'Scotty' Holmes (54A) was not interested in the AOBA, he used to be in everything.

Has anyone ever heard anything of my 'twin' Claude Sutton (54A)? We were known as *Tweedledum & Tweedledee* of A Company. I would love to hear from him again.

Early April. Well thanks mate, I have just received the 'Spring' OBAN and have read your article. You have done me like a drain! I've nothing to write about now. I wouldn't mind so much, except that it was much better that I was writing and much more accurate - your memory leaves me for dead. However, I am pleased I got a mention - any publicity is good publicity. I will have to start again and re-write from a different angle and see how I go. I might not get one done until after about 2000, but will try.

(*Thanks Skiver, what about contacting the REME Association in Australia and tell us about the membership - Ed.*)

✉ *Howard Trill (54A) writes*

At last I have resolved the thing that has bugged me for quite a while. I kept wondering what was missing in the OBAN. On the back cover of the OBAN is a pair of gates., surmounted by the REME badge and showing the title of Princess Marina College. In front is a larger pair of gates with the title of Army Apprentices College, the title repeated on the Badge. You (the Editor) and I served in neither of these establishments, nor did we wear that badge. We were recruited into AAS Arborfield, the Army Apprentices SCHOOL, the predecessor of the AAC and the successor to the Army Technical School (Boys).

What chance of a slight change to the badge and another pair of gates? No doubt the earlier Tech' boys would also like to be remembered graphically.

(*Howard, I would only be too delighted to add the 'School' and ATS versions if I could obtain the graphic files. Could anyone scan any old drawings as PCX files and send them to me? - Ed.*)

✍ Bryan Adams (Oct 42) writes

Brian Conway (42a) in OBAN 16 is mistaken. RSM McNally did normally wear his distinctive chequered dress cap at Arborfield during the war years - though not in the presence of General Montgomery.

Identification of Photos. The presentation sports day photo in OBAN 13 was taken in high summer on Saturday 3 July 1943 and the lady, I assume, was the wife of the then Commandant, Colonel F A Hilborne MBE. Photos 1-6 were also of that occasion, but photos 7 & 8 were taken two years later, on the Sports & Gymkhana Day of Saturday 30 June 1945. The lady presenting the prizes then was the wife of the succeeding Commandant, Colonel J D White DSO MC. (Ref: OBAN 7 & *The Arborfield Apprentice* No. 2 of December 1945).

Other prints of the 1943 event show apprentices of the 1941 Armourer Intake sporting their new REME cap badges, thereby fixing the year. They still wore RAOC badges in mid 1942, and by 1945 they had long since been posted.

The photos could not have been 1944 because the School was effectively dispersed throughout the four summer months. We were sent on indefinite leave for Easter (April 7-10) and the boys were recalled to their various destinations from about April 27. I was ordered to report with the whole of my kit and equipment to 13 Command Workshops Aldershot on Thursday 18 May. *The Arborfield Apprentice* Issue 1 of December 1944 reports that the companies were re-formed during the first half of September 1944. I have no record of what day I returned, but we were still at Aldershot when A/T Clarke was seriously injured in a workshop accident on September 5. With the School trying to become re-established and take in a new intake, there was no time or summer weather to put on a Sports Day in 1944. This was also supported by *The Arborfield Apprentice* Issue 1 of December 1944 which makes no reference to such an event of that year.

I hope this clarifies the confusion over the presentation ladies and the wartime dress cap of RSM McNally. Memory alone in recalling minor details over 50 years past is not always to be relied upon!

✍ Peter Langley (Intake 41) writes

I have just joined the AOBA and so have a copy of OBAN. Well done - it is a good mag. I have some small experience in that area so know what goes into its production. It was the 'Reunion' issue, which reinforced my determination never to attend a reunion!

The other entries certainly stirred my memory buds. I was one of the '41 intake. Please note, there was only one intake that year. It was unique in being exactly 100 boys, though

some fell by the wayside - all armourers and the last boys to wear the RAOC cap badge, and therefore the only boys to wear the REME badge. (*Not so, they did at Princess Marina College - Ed*).

Tell me, what is an 'attende'e'? I know what an 'attender' is; one who attends something, a reunion perhaps. I fear you have succumbed to transatlantic sloppiness. Please don't! (*Would you care to bring this up with our Membership Secretary, since it is his expression - Ed*).

Taking a quick look at the list of 'those who were there', I see the irrepressible 'Spanky' Roberts - who could forget him (I hope his hip job is now sorted out) and from the same year, 'Polly' Packman. Along with him and 'Kitch' Kitchener, both of A Company, I used to go to (*as an attender? - Ed*) the Baptist Church in Wokingham.

It wasn't Christian fervour that lured us, rather the free teas dispensed Sunday afternoons and maybe the usual appearance of two pretty girls, Betty and Joyce. Of my lot, I don't recall a Miller, but Bill Wenborn and Dick Coultas were both fellow D Company-ites. I can relate anecdotes about both!

Stan Bates is probably the guy who wears REME sweatshirts and lives near Stroud. I must ask his wife Margaret next time we meet (at U3A play reading group). In 50B I see Clem Clements. We served together with the Gunners in Hohne. I still have press cuttings of his horrendous car crash, when a train hit him on a level crossing. It nearly deprived HM of Clem's future services. Oh yes, and Alan Loftus from 42A; I just remember him, though I don't know why.

The School layout is much as I remember it, though there was a static water tank on the corner of Stephenson and Faraday. The 'East Square' is where I was set against one, George Hayward for Boy L/Cpl. McNally drilled the two of us one summer evening for 10 minutes or so - George won (last saw him, Captain RAOC, in TEK).

Ron Savage's photos ring a bell. I think I recognize him and surely they are 'general purpose' poses. Hands up those who haven't got or had identical photos! That REME cap badge - did it not include a pair of callipers, that supreme instrument of precision measurement? It probably gave rise to the 'Rough Engineering Made Easy' taunt.

One last point: the contents of the Newsletter are somewhat 'rose tinted spectacles' stuff. Does anyone ever write about Arborfield 'as it was'? I have a host of memories to write about, but if I do it will be warts and all. I leave it with you.

(Try your luck, Peter, you never know, I might publish your contribution, provided it is 'grammatically' correct. Regarding your comment about rose tinted spectacles, look at David Bone's letter in this issue - Ed).

KG (Joe) Adey (Jan 42)

I go along with Harold Price, OBAN 16. In 1947 I stopped for two nights in the Transit Camp at Athlit while escorting the last fifty Italian POW's from Fanara to a ship in Haifa docks. 2 Sub Wksps. was almost on Khayat Beach and on a visit to Israel a few years ago there appeared to be at least one of the original workshop buildings in use. 3 Sub Wksps. was almost halfway between Haifa and Acre. It was later occupied by 6 Airborne Wksps. and I met up with Blondie Rich (E block) there in 1948. I wonder if Harold Price met up with Paddy Bailey, (Jan 42 E Coy.). Paddy was in the transit camp the same week-end that I was there but he was on route to Iraq as a punishment for getting mixed up in a near mutiny in Tel-el-Kabir.

PS: I have penned my memories from the age of three to the present date for the benefit of my grandchildren. I have put together some extracts from my military life between leaving Arborfield and my retirement from the Army. You may find some extracts from these extracts usable !

(Joe has written 4 very long articles spanning his service experiences in the Middle & Far East, UK & BAOR and Singapore which will all eventually appear in various issues of OBAN - Ed).

Brian Conway (42A) writes

I am indebted to Harold Price (42A?) for drawing our attention to the fact that the calendar for 1942 and 1998 are identical, with May of those years each having five Sundays (OBAN16, Page 23). I'm not quite certain of the significance of this statement, except for Harold to begrudgingly concede that I might have been right about the caption under the paragraph of General Montgomery talking to me? (Incidentally, why is Harold always shown as 42A if he enlisted at Arborfield in April 1942? Surely, he should be shown as Intake 42B.)

I enclose a copy of a letter dated 6 June 1998, which I received from the Imperial War Museum during my research on this subject, which shows that General Montgomery formally took command of the Eighth Army in North Africa on 15 August 1942. It also shows quite clearly that the General commanded 5th Corps, where he had been planning the Dieppe Operation before going to Egypt. He was not the GOC South Eastern Command, despite Harold's research of Monty's, 'The Making of a General', although he did come close, with his mention of Dieppe!

However fatuous my statement might have been about Monty's future movements, I am not at liberty to disclose what the General said to me on that occasion (the Official Secrets Act and all that, don't you know?) and since I am probably the only one shown in this picture who is around today, this information will go with me to the grave!

I can reveal, however, that as the General bade me farewell, I could have sworn that I heard him humming a snatch from 'The Desert Song'.

I cannot believe that Harold could be so naive as to believe that the enemy, having shot down and killed Churchill's first choice to lead the Eighth Army in North Africa, would not have known who the second choice was to be. In this regard, I commend to Harold, Station X, The Code Breakers of Bletchley Park, serialised recently in the Daily Telegraph (and TV - Ed), which gives an account of how 19 year old, ex convent educated girls helped to break the German Enigma Code in early March 1941, to gain valuable information about Italian naval battle plans in the Mediterranean, which enabled Admiral Cunningham to sink three cruisers and two destroyers in what came to be known as 'The Battle of Matapan'. If that sort of information was available to the allies, you can bet that the axis powers had similar information about us.

I should think that, by now, our readers have become thoroughly bored with the exploits of Boy Drum Major Conway (Retd) so I hope that this might be the last on this topic, although I don't believe that I'm going to be allowed to retire just yet Harold, if the proposal put forward by Peter Baldwin, seconded by Bryan Canning at the 35th AGM of the AOBA is anything to go by. This proposes that, 'the tune called *The Arborfield Apprentice* be adopted as the Association's tune/march'. No vote was taken on this proposal, to give the Adjutant time to investigate, as little (or nothing?) was known about the music! (Now there's a comment made deliberately to provoke one into putting pen to paper!)

May I draw the Committee's attention to my article on the subject, published in OBAN 13, Page 18 and to the letter from Peter Baldwin (the proposer of AGM Item 22) which was published in OBAN 14, Page 14. I seem to be the only one who knows anything about it. (Please find enclosed a copy of a letter which I have sent to a DYRMS OBA colleague who was a contemporary of Bandmaster Nel, and who the Adjutant might like to contact direct.)

This conveniently leads me on to a related proposal which may stimulate others to put pen to paper, by being invited to complete the words to *The Arborfield Apprentices*, which I entered on the music I wrote for publication (described above) and could then be adopted as the AOBA tune. Dare I suggest something like:

'The Arborfield Apprentices, bulls..t, snivel and creep!
The Arborfield Apprentices, we are a bl..dy great heap!
The Arborfield Apprentices,
Tah-Rah-Rah-Tah-Rah-Rah-Tah-Rah-Rah,
...and so on?

In Harold's most recent letter, he writes that he remembers the Last Post and Reveille being played on a post horn by a WOII of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, and you ask, Ed, could this have been Bandmaster Nel? The Last Post and Reveille was played by buglers of the Corps of Drums (of which I was

a member) on Remembrance Day and was played by us standing outside the front entrance to the camp hall.

Trumpet Major Towler of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards (who often doubled as one of the CSMs) played the 'Post Horn Gallop' on post horn at band concerts in the camp hall, which is what *Harold is probably thinking of. Trumpet Major Towler's younger brother, Corporal Towler (a trombonist) of the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards also doubled as one of the Company Wing Corporals (later to be a sergeant).

Norman Donnithorne (April 43) writes

During October and November 1998 my wife and I visited the Far East, including KL, Penang, Australia, with the last four weeks in New Zealand.

Thanks to the committee and in particular Peter Gibson, we left the UK with nine addresses of NZ AOBs and a copy of *The Video*. Incidentally, we had never met any of the AOBs listed. Therefore, in addition to seeing NZ and enjoying our holiday we hoped to meet some of the NZ AOBs and also deliver the video.

It must be said, most unreasonably, 'her indoors' thought that since it was our 50th Wedding Anniversary the 'see NZ' part should take priority. I was unable to make her understand that fishing and a drink with comrades should take precedence.

By coincidence, the day we arrived in NZ it was the NZ OBA Reunion. Unfortunately the reunion was in Napier, and we were in Auckland some 200 miles away. Attending the reunion would probably have taken four days out of our holiday so we decided to give it a miss. Napier would have been a good place to deliver the video, however, in retrospect not many, if any, AOBs attended the reunion.

We set off from Auckland to tour the North Island, sight seeing, taking video and doing all the things a good tourist should do. The main points of interest in the North Island being the Bay of Islands, Kauri Forests, Cape Regina and the thermal areas. By the way during the holiday I took 12 hours of film, since condensed into 2 hours of video, enough to 'bore the pants off' most.

A decision had to be made with respect to the video and contacting AOBs. We made a few phone calls and decided that the video would be delivered to Andrew Rackstraw (55A) in the Wellington area. Furthermore Andrew suggested that it would be a good idea to contact Denys Goldfinch (NZ OBA) in Auckland, an interesting character.

A word of explanation is probably appropriate at this stage. The NZ OBA is exactly that, the membership includes ex boys/apprentices from the three services. Denys Goldfinch, pronounced Dennis, address below, is Mr. NZ OBA and any request for information regarding NZ OBA should be di-

rected to him. You may ask why is Denys involved. He is an ex Chepstow Blacksmith (circa 43), that is rather strange since I thought they were all bricklayers, obviously he changed trades somewhere along the line to electronics. He is very much into computer software and communicates over Internet, E Mail, Fax etc., a born organiser. His visiting card calls him a Genealogist and Family Historian.

We stayed with Denys in Auckland and were made very welcome, for future reference his basement has been converted into a bar.

We left Auckland driving south in the direction of Wellington via the thermal areas, the 40 mile desert which includes an Army Range, and a place called Waiouru, the latter being the home of the NZ Army. Our final destination in the North Island being Upper Hutt the home of Andrew Rackstraw.

Andrew and his wife Edith live in Upper Hutt very close to Wellington, conveniently close to the ferry for the South Island, our next stop. Andrew is an ex Arm Art Instruments who split his service between REME and NZ REME. He is still involved with instruments, but his prime interest is motor cycles and in particular Vincent. He is a member of the Vincent Owners Club and has a Rapide and a Black Lightning. He will be attending the Vincent Reunion this year on the Isle of Man, complete with his 'Lightning', which incidentally is for sale. During our stay with Andrew and Edith we met Dan Rennie (55A), he also split his service between UK and NZ. Again we were made very welcome. It was indeed a pleasure to visit Upper Hutt. By the way the Video was much enjoyed by all.

We then crossed to the South Island, a three hour boat trip on the ferry. I won't bore you with details of the South Island, it would fill a book. Suffice as to say it must be one of the most beautiful places on earth. It is probably bigger than England, population 500,000. Rain forests, lakes, mountains, glaciers, fjords, in fact water in abundance. The roads are nearly traffic free and in excellent condition. One of the highlights for me was the Albatross Colony.

We only called on one ex boy on the South Island, Jeff Trowe (Chepstow circa 55), he lives in the town of Nelson.

In summary, we covered some 2500 miles in a Camper and met some wonderful people. The sites were excellent with full facilities, 'freedom camping' is permitted, i.e. camp where you like, when you like, no charge. Fuel is less than a £1 gallon, in fact the pound sterling goes three times further than here in the UK. Finally we would be very pleased to share our experiences with anybody intending to visit New Zealand. The address for Denys E Goldfinch is:

286 Manukau Road
EPSOM
Auckland
New Zealand

✍ Colin Newby (65A) writes

Having only joined the AOBA last year and being highly amused about stories of A/Ts ploughing the ground while Gilbert looked on, there seems to be a dearth of articles about the sixties. I was one of the great unwashed, good at my trade, good at education, good at keeping my nose clean (more or less), but not good at sports - hence my rank of A/T from start to finish, but then we all know that, don't we. Please find enclosed my article about the sixties.

I would also like to contact David Schofield (65A) who is mentioned in OBAN - a long lost pal, I think.

(Thanks for your article, Colin, it will appear in due course - Ed.)

✍ Brian 'Lex' Barker writes

In regard to your request in OBAN 16, I hope the enclosed photos are of use to you. Where I can remember them, I have put names to faces. I don't require any of them back

Regarding the enclosed photos of 16 JSTU, only one was taken up to 1963 of the Woomera Detachment and some who served there do not appear, for example, Captain Steed REME and Sergeant Kieth Skinner Tels REME, to name just two.

I also have some pictures of 20 Trials Unit on slides, of their activities in Scotland and Australia. If they are of any use, I will sort them out.

(On behalf of the REME Museum, many thanks, Brian. It is only as a result of the generosity of guys like yourself, that the pictorial archive in the Museum has been built up - Ed.)

✍ Jim Hutchinson (Jan42) writes

Last year I spotted an advertisement in a copy of *Soldier* magazine announcing an Arborfield reunion. I applied, joined and attended in October '98 and thoroughly enjoyed it. The comradeship of all those years ago was re-kindled to my great pleasure. I also applied for some back copies of OBAN and found, much to my delight, a photograph on Page 19 of Issue 11, from Ken Giles, with me located in the middle of the rear rank. Ken, I trust you will be coming to Reunion '99, I am looking forward to a reunion.

(Jim has contributed an 'open-ended' article covering the years 1942 to 1944, with portraits for future publication - Ed.)

ASSOCIATION OF HARROGATE APPRENTICES

✍ Douglas Dickson (54A) writes

I am writing to inform you about the formation of the new Harrogate Apprentices Association. Our original Association folded in the 1960s when the School became a college and trained only Royal Corps of Signals personnel and not all arms, as it originally was when it opened in 1947. I was disappointed about its demise and started to make waves in 1994 through the Royal Signals Association of which I am a member. I made it known to them that there were thousands of 'ex-brats' around the world who now no longer had an Association. There was no central body, therefore no means of contacting each other. Certainly, any thought of a reunion could not even be contemplated.

However, in November 1998 permission was granted by the Royal Signals Association for the Association of Harrogate Apprentices to be formed. I was asked to be the Hon. Sec. to which I agreed without question, although I have no experience in that field. I am learning fast and happy now that we have the Association.

I hope I have not bored you all with this preamble, but I thought you may like to know something of our background. We now have over 200 members and a reunion will be held in Harrogate on 8/9 October 1999.

I was a regular visitor to Arborfield being an all round sportsman. I boxed in the Army and ISBA Championships in 1955. They were then held in the old cinema or Camp Hall, I think. If my memory serves me correctly there was a boy from Arborfield in the Army team with me by the name of Kibby.

I was also very friendly with another Arborfield boy by the name of Alan Delbridge, he was in the LAD in 2 Division Signals at Bunde between 1957 and 1960. If either is a member of the AOBA I would be delighted if you would pass on my address.

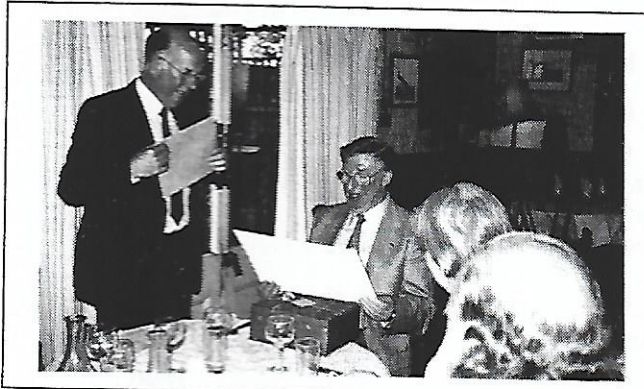
If any of the AOBA wish to be in contact with any ex-Harrogate lads, I would be happy to pass on any member's address

(Douglas's address is, The Hon Sec, 25 Cherry Way, Eymore, Dover, Kent CT15 4BY. Telephone: 01304 830022. email-dickason.d@lineone.net -Ed.)

DEPARTURE OF LT COL (RETD) LARRY LE VAR

It all starts and ends at Arborfield. This applies, of course, to the majority of members of the Corps of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. And no more so than Larry Le Var who started his career at the Army Apprentices School, Arborfield in the beginning of 1947 and now bows out as Director of the REME Museum in May 1999.

In the last two weeks in May he has had to endure a number of farewell gatherings, starting with the first on 21 May at a local hostelry, where he was 'dined out' by the staff of the



The REME Museum says farewell

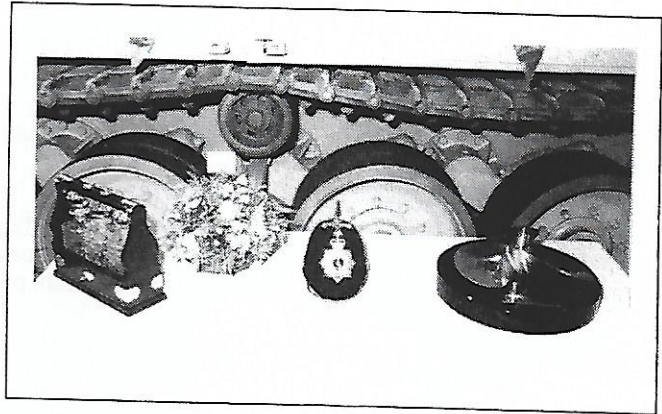
Museum. Each member of the staff made a small speech, thanking him for his dedicated determination to expand the Museum to its present day standard and to wish him and his family a long and happy retirement.

He is succeeded by Lt Col Bill Cleasby of 61C intake, who took over as Museum Director on 20 May and also assumes the position as Honorary Secretary of the AOBA later in the year, a position also once held by Larry. While at the helm Larry has been responsible for an immense amount of changes at the Museum, from a one room office to its present day spread and it goes without saying that all members of the Corps appreciate his efforts.

On 28 May, the day started when he was dined out at a champagne breakfast *au barbecue*, held outside behind the RHQ building. The staff of RHQ did its best to reward the



Major General Besgrove makes the Corps presentation



The gifts on display

efforts put in by Anne Murray and her colleagues by valiantly attempting to demolish all the champagne and breakfast fare in sight. Colonel Robin Joy presented Larry with a genuine REME band helmet which when tried on was a perfect fit (*unlike his bowler of earlier days - Ed*). This was followed by a final Corps farewell given at midday in the new Vehicle Exhibition Hall at the Museum. Approximately 120 staff and friends attended this buffet party, laid out amongst the newly restored vehicle exhibits which have so far arrived at the Museum.

A presentation was then made by Major General Besgrove, who not only thanked Larry for his long service with the Corps, but also informed the gathering of an earlier experience Larry once had with a certain Lieutenant Besgrove! Larry was then presented with a tantalus, a gift thought to be suitable for use during his retirement.



Staff & friends wave farewell

And this was not all. His sailing days were then brought into focus, and he was presented with a restored original screw (propeller) from the Master Craftsman yacht by Dicky Boast in memory of those salty weeks on the ocean.

Larry finally took his 'official' leave of the Corps, being applauded by all at RHQ and friends. In a tribute to the outgoing director, they gathered at the Hall exit to wave farewell as he was driven away in the Museum's oldest historical vehicle, a Thornycroft 'Hathi' at a speed which allowed him time to reflect as he went on his way, his plans for retirement, which *might just* include a little sailing. But don't think he's gone forever. Larry still expects to remain involved with the Garrison, especially in church matters and, of course, as a member of the AOBA!

Ed.

MISSING MEMBERS

Over the years, the Association has lost touch with large numbers of members. The Membership Secretary is continuing to search for these missing members and is having some success; a number have re-activated their membership and a few have formally resigned.

There are, however, large numbers for whom we have insufficient detail to mount a successful search. A list of these missing members will be published regularly in future issues of OBAN. If any member has any information at all which might help the Membership Secretary in his search, please contact him.

NAME	INTS.	INTAKE	MEMBER NO	NAME	INIT.	INTAKE	MEMBER NO
Ashton	A	51B	0001	Hill	-	50A	0027
Banks	M	51B	0002	Hoare	-	52B	0028
Barlow	D	49A	0003	Howard	-	52B	0029
Bennett	R	48A	0004	Hutchinson	J	49A	0030
Bennett	-	51B	0005	Humble	J	50A	0031
Bennie	R	49A	0006	Jacques	R	48A	0032
Blakey	G	49A	0007	Knight	R	48A	0033
Bradley	J	51B	0009	Longbottom	-	52B	0034
Brant	R	49B	0010	Newton	J	51B	0039
Brennan	M	51B	0011	Nixen	R	51B	0040
Brown	E J	PS	0012	O'Brian	R	51B	0041
Butler	G	Not Known	0013	Patterson	D	49A	0042
Callan	W	49A	0014	Parrack	-	47A	0044
Cant	J	51B	0015	Robinson	W	Not Known	0046
Cavalier	J	51B	0016	Russel	R	49A	0047
Charrington	N D	PS	0017	Singer	C A	51B	0048
Clement	K	49A	0019	Skeates	-	49B	0050
Coppen	M J	50B	0020	Stevens	R	49A	0051
Cullum	A	49A	0021	Smith	J	49A	0052
Daughters	p	49A	0022				
Foreman	R	50A	0024				
Goodes	J	49A	0025				

DECEASED

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

Major (Retd) C Munro REME (49A)

Members whose deaths have been notified or discovered since publication of OBAN 16:

WOII (CSM) Nick Ozanne BEM, Royal Hampshire Regiment (PS 1939-42), died 14 February 1999.

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. The Membership Secretary was told of the availability of these during the Reunion 98, not officially available from the AOBA, but from Badges of Pride, PO Box 94, Sarisbury Green, Southampton, S031 1ZE. Tel No. 01489 885389.

Cartoon Sheets. Copies of the cartoon shown elsewhere in this issue can be ordered in black & white on original size A1 (549mm x 841 mm) 80gsm paper, each sheet individually signed in red (to avoid any accidental copying) at £6.00 per sheet plus p & p - 2nd class recorded delivery (approx £2.00). In addition, sheets of different sizes and paper/card thickness can be produced however, the price will differ also. For each sheet sold, £1.00 will be donated to the AOBA. Copies in colour could also be produced to special order. Contact: David Barrett, 2 Willow Grange, Ely Road, Chittering, Cambridge, CB5 9PL. Telephone No. (Studio) 01353 648936 or Home 01353 648486.

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

THE CRAFTSMAN

Subscription Rates:	Single Copy:	80p.
	Annual Subscription:	£15.00, surface post paid.
	Overseas Subscription:	£18.60 surface post paid.
	Air Mail Rates:	On application.

Cheques should be made payable to REME Corps Account No. 2 and crossed. All correspondence should be sent to:

The Editor,
THE CRAFTSMAN,
Isaac Newton Road,
Arborfield, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 9NJ.