

ISSUE 18

AUTUMN 1999



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

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Lt Colonel Jim Mitchell RE

Vice Chairman

Lt Colonel I Swinton REME

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Lt Colonel(Retd) WG Cleasby (61C)

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David Schofield (65A)

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Captain Jason Donnachie RLC

Warrant Officer I (RSM) W Emmerson COLDSTREAM GUARDS

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

Staff Sergeant CD Holmes (85C)

Mr Alan Hardy (65C)

Mr Bill EN 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
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Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter

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From the Editor

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Acknowledgements. Printed by Printing Dept, SEAE Arborfield

Series 2, Issue 18. 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'.

The winning essay by Charles Ashdown (42A) is included in this issue and since then he has sent in *Defining Experiences II*, which will be published in due course. I intend to publish all other entries, but ask those contributors to send in the text on disk in the formats requested - there is a lot of typing there!

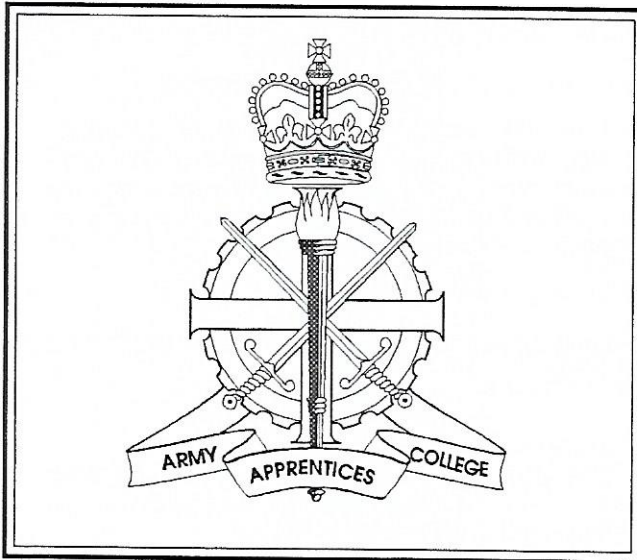
If possible, it would be a great help if all contributors would send their contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows 6 version).

If you don't have access to a computer or to someone who has, then of course I will accept clear, hand-written contributions - but manuscript contributions will go to the back of the queue (letters in manuscript cause no problems). 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!

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.

Photos for the Pictorial Archive in the REME Museum, are always gratefully received either as donations or borrowed for copying. All loaned photos are logged and would be returned to you after copying. Many thanks to those of you who have 'enriched' the Archives already.

Brian Hornsey (54A)



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Lieutenant Colonel J W Mitchell RE

This edition of the OBAN follows hard upon the heels of the 36th Reunion weekend, which took place at the Army Apprentices College, Arborfield, on 23rd and 24th of October. Sadly, like last year, the 200 or so Old Boys attending were subjected to a wet weekend and, hence, the March Past and Parade on the Old Square was curtailed in favour of an indoor programme. Nevertheless, the weekend proved to be the usual combination of pomp, pageantry, comradeship, discomfort and good humour which have characterised so many previous successful weekends.

We were all particularly grateful for the splendid services of the REME Band who entertained us superbly during the Parade and at the Dinner. Major General (Retired) Peter Baldwin CBE (42A) performed magnificently both on Parade, by raising his hat in all the right places, and at Dinner by proving that while he may not have been a star at 'taps and basins', he was certainly a star entertainer.

Life for the current crop of apprentices and permanent staff continues to be as busy as ever. Recruiting is healthy, and both the trade training schools and the field army continue to be impressed with the quality, enthusiasm and commitment of the young soldiers Passing Out from the College. Almost without exception, apprentices in the final days of their training, declare that they have had

the time of their lives at the College - worthwhile, relevant, challenging fun! During the last year, as a part of that challenging fun, apprentices have taken part in a variety of successful adventurous training expeditions around the world. There have been expeditions to Nepal, Austria, Cyprus, Spain and Bavaria; and all of these expeditions have been helped on their way by non-public funding from the College Trust Fund and the Old Boys' Association.

You may recall that there has been an intention to lengthen the current course length from 7-months to a year. This proposal has now been temporarily shelved, pending a decision regarding the creation of a third junior soldier training establishment to complement the Army Apprentices College and the Army Foundation College at Harrogate. Hence, for the time being the apprentice course will remain a 7-months long course.

The College has particularly benefited of late from the completion of the new gymnasium, which I wrote about in the last edition of OBAN. Located right in the centre of the College, this impressive new structure provides some tremendous facilities - a climbing wall, for example - and about three times the floor space of our old gym.

In addition, the old gym, now called the Beachley Centre, has been internally refurbished to provide a large lecture hall/cinema, a new chapel, and offices and classrooms for the College padres. Our sports facilities will also shortly be improved by the further addition of an all-weather, astro-turf football and hockey pitch, which should be ready for use next spring.

Jim Mitchell

Sixth Artificer Telecommunications Reunion Dinner

The Reunion Dinner will be held in the Bailleul Sgts' Mess, Arborfield on Friday 12 May 2000. The dinner will be preceded by a seminar and is limited to 120 places.

If you wish to attend or require further information please contact SSgt McKenna on Arborfield Mil (94251) Ext 2680 (Civil 0118 9763680) or by post to SSgt McKenna, Technology Branch, SEAE, Hazebruck Barracks, Arborfield Garrison, Reading, Berks RG2 9NH.

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Lt Col(Retd) WG Cleasby

Despite the enthusiasm of youth, it is still a bit early in my tenure to regale you all with the thoughts of Cleasby.

It goes without saying however, that it was a real pleasure for me to meet so many old friends and acquaintances at Reunion 99.

I am aware that there are a number of issues to face before the next gathering such as life membership and reunion weekend costs and you can be sure that your committee will be working very hard on your behalf to find solutions.

Before signing off, as the new museum director, I would like to thank everyone very sincerely for the generous donation to the REME Museum Development Fund.

We have great plans for the museum not least of which is a new Armourer's Hall to house our marvellous collection of weapons.

I also plan to move the old Depot Guardroom and Depot Gates to the museum site, if funds permit. The plea from the heart is that if you are thinking of making a donation to charity, please remember the REME Museum, your museum.

May I wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and an exciting and prosperous new millennium.

Bill Cleasby (61C)

Reunion 99 Photographs

As you will see, all the photographs taken at the reunion and included in OBAN 18 have been allocated reference numbers (in brackets) at the end of each caption. If any reader would like prints of any photos, they are available from Paul A Tyrrell, 1 Triumph Close, Woodley, Reading RG5 4AQ. Tel No. 0118 969 0684.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Col(Retd) Peter Gibson

Those of you who normally read these notes will have seen that I was unable to write anything for Issue 17. Please accept my apologies. My thanks go to the Editor who managed to fill the gap on my behalf.

Members who were able to attend the recent Reunion will know of two additions to the Executive Committee.

Mike Davis (60B) has agreed to take on the role of Treasurer and he will begin work very shortly. As a result of having our own Treasurer, we shall also have our own bank account rather than using part of the Arborfield Army Central Bank. In a month or so, Mike and I will be sending you amended Annual Admin Subscription Standing Orders for you to sign and return. The amount to be paid (£5) remains the same but our bank details will be different. Until you hear from Mike, however, any problems with subs should be addressed to me.

The second addition to the committee is David Schofield (65A) who has become Recruiting and Publicity member. His job will be to drum up new members either through mail-shots to ex-boys who have left the Army (or are about to leave) without joining the Association, or through a publicity campaign in suitable magazines and on the Internet. We will give you the address of our Internet site as soon as it is up and running

Production of the Membership Directory has been severely delayed but continues slowly and I hope to be able to print the first trial edition soon. When we are satisfied with the content I shall publish the first paper edition and arrange for publication on CD ROM as well. A number of Active Members have not yet given permission for their details to be published. If you think that you may be one of these, please telephone and I will look up the records.

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

Peter Gibson

EXPERIENCES IN PALESTINE 1947 - 1948

By Peter Langley (Intake 41)

When I was serving in Palestine, 1947/48, two British sergeants were hanged by the Irgun Zwei Leumi (??) in retaliation for the execution of some Jewish terrorists. One of them was Clifford Martin, said to be an ex Arborfield boy. Certainly when we met, briefly, he claimed acquaintance: I was unsure.

The enclosed press cutting doesn't add up (do they ever?). The event was in July 1947: if Cliff was 20, as stated, it puts his Date of Birth at 1927. So he couldn't have joined as a boy in 1944 - he'd be 17! And wasn't 1944 when the School was evacuated and turned over to being a Hospital or whatever? I know my training was cut short and we posted out early. Also, another press item says his mother is - was - a widow.

Biographies

Sergeant Paice, who was 20 this month, enlisted in the Army in October, 1945. He attended grammar school until he was 18, gaining matriculation and the Higher School Certificate. Before joining the Army he was in the Army Cadet Force (1942-1943) and the Air Training Corps (1943-1944). He did an eight week infantry training course and subsequently attended an Intelligence course.

He had studied music and played the clarinet, and was known to have read fairly widely. Both his parents are alive, and there are two brothers (one an Army officer) and two sisters. His father is a Customs Officer.

Sergeant Martin, who was also 20, enlisted as a boy soldier in September 1944. He was born in Egypt, where he lived until he was 12, attending secondary school there. He was transferred to the Intelligence Corps in September 1946. His father who is an invalid, was a Warrant Officer; his mother is Italian. He had been attached to the Tulkarm Police Station.

Press Cutting

So - does anyone recall a Clifford Martin who fits the story? It would be nice to find out. I once had a snap of him on the beach, but it's lost. I do have a press photo of him hanging. I only include that last piece of information because it leads to another tale.

A one time resident in this village actually knew Cliff well. He was something big in Intelligence and was surprised that I had the press photo. "I thought we had suppressed or confiscated them all", he said. Interesting? I thought.

And does anyone remember Michael Langley, joined about 1948?

During 1947/48 I served as REME attached to the 3rd Hussars in Palestine. Capt Bill Bailey commanded the LAD, with Q Pete Russell and Sgt 'Dutchy' Holland in support. These were ex-Chepstow boys, despite which we got on well together!

Shortly before the Mandate ended, the District commissioner for Nazareth decided to pack up his house and home. He did so using some magnificent packing cases, made for the occasion. The problem was, he had no way of even lifting them, let alone getting them to Haifa docks.

Now the LAD sported a Sherman ARV, complete with a jib capable of lifting enormous weights and the RASC had tank transporters a-plenty. Thus, it was that one fine day, with Dutchy Holland at the tillers and a motley crew aboard, the ARV thundered up and along the hilly roads above Nazareth, neither designed to suit the other.

On arrival at the DC's residence, we were faced with six enormous cases, wood, packing, any one of which could have served as a post-war prefab. The mechanics of lifting and loading were straightforward: the highlight was being invited to lunch. My memory falters a little here but I seem to recall the Earl of Oxford being present. It has to be said that neither the cookhouse nor the Sgts Mess prepare the ordinary squaddie for dining with the aristocracy. I sometimes wonder just what our hosts made of the their guests, grubby overall clad, with clattering Sten guns and ammunition pouches stacked in the corner of the dining room. I feel we probably acquitted ourselves reasonably well.

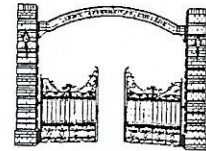
Some five weeks later, as we marched along the quayside at Haifa and onto the *Strathnaver*, homeward bound, a hundred or so yards further along stood . . . six large cases, wood, packing, no nearer home than when we had last seen them.

I wonder if they ever reached the UK?



REUNION 99

As recalled By Gordon Bonner (47B)



As 1999 marked the passage of 50 years since I enlisted as a craft apprentice on the 9th September 1949, I felt I should celebrate the occasion by attending my first reunion after graduating from Arborfield in September 1952. Having made the commitment to attend, as Peter Gibson had issued strict instructions not to appear at Arborfield before 1600hrs, I decided to visit relatives at Guildford enroute to Arborfield. Thus, late in the afternoon as I passed under the M3, crossed the A30 and picked up the A327, I entered familiar territory in a reflective mood. There was much to be recognized as I drove through Eversley, turned right into Sheerlands Road and made my first stop by the gate that I had entered all those years ago. Sheerlands Road was narrower than I remember and the gate seemed smaller somehow.

On arrival at the Beachley Hall, I was quickly listed, tagged and escorted to my room by a delightful female apprentice, who honestly was only a few months older than my eldest Granddaughter. I quickly slipped into the old routine as if I had never been away. I made my bed, unpacked my kit, applied a padlock to my locker, and went looking for John Cassells from my intake. John, apart from a few wrinkles, was easy to recognize as was Ernie Towser. So began a very enjoyable weekend. Over the next 48 hours I renewed many old acquaintances and made myself known to many others from the same mould of earlier and later times to my own. During that first evening's reception in the Sgts Mess, among many others I met the CO, the Adjutant and the RSM, Mr Emmerson - Coldstream Guards. Over the weekend I found the RSM to be interesting and easy to talk to. As an ex-boy, I personally was delighted to observe the College continuing the tradition of the Guards Division providing the School RSM. (Didn't he just demonstrate the 'patter' on parade Saturday Morning).

After lunch on Saturday, I, like many others went walkabout. With the old barrack square as a focal point it was easy to travel down memory lane and pinpoint where the cookhouse used to be, where K2 my old barrack room had stood and above all, when I stood in front of the Memorial Garden, it was quite easy to remember my personal involvement with that well remembered Icon, the Guardroom. As a persistent defaulter (322 days in 3 years) how many times did I 'bump' the Guardroom verandah under the watchful eye of Sgts Fred Silvers (KRRC) and Wally Perry (RTR). Talking of Guardrooms and defaulters, two tales spring to mind.

The first occurred in the spring of 1950. I was in 2 Div where, you will recall, we became entitled to the privilege of a free Sunday - you know, no church parade, allowed out of barracks, etc. As I had embarked on becoming school champion defaulter I reported to Ben Cook, the groundsman at the agricultural ground behind the fitters

shop. He instructed me to plant hundreds of cabbage plants, which I did. I worked with diligence all day. Late in the afternoon Ben appeared, took one look at the field and promptly hit me with a shovel. I don't blame him, because I had planted each cabbage upside down. I will draw a veil over the consequences, but it was worth 28 days just to see the expression on his face!

My second Guardroom tale concerns RSM McNally. I had been detailed for RSM's fatigues. It was winter, because I remember marching like a Guardsman, out of the gate, right turn up the road to the RSM's quarter. I knocked on the back door and that well known voice shouted, "Who's there?" I answered, "Defaulter SIR!" The door opened and out came boots, belt, gaiters, Sam Browne and pacestick. "Blanco that lot." So I did - boots, belt gaiters, Sam Browne and pacestick. Have you ever tried to blanco a Sam Browne? I did. I scrubbed it with half a house brick. I laid my offerings on the back step and fled. There was always one thing I admired about McNally - next morning on parade he was immaculate. I don't know how he did it. I, of course, received swift and just retribution.

Saturday evening's highlight was the Reunion Dinner. Good food and good company made for a memorable evening. I would also venture the opinion that the after-dinner speech made by Major General Peter Baldwin was one of the best I have ever heard.

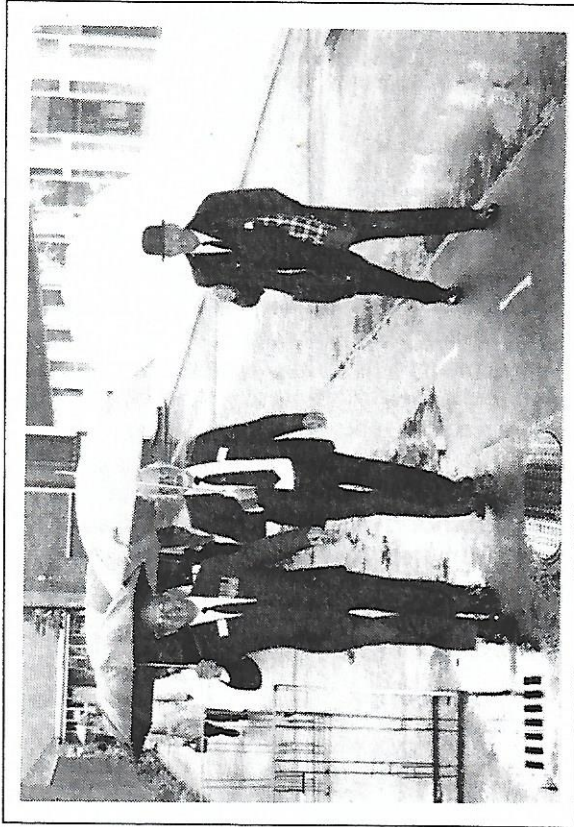
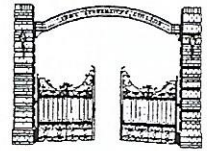
Sunday at breakfast, I must admit I felt rather fragile - must have been that damp glass I had the evening before, but the food fortified the inner man and gave me the will and strength to attend the Reunion Church Service. I enjoyed the Service because the padre used an old and familiar format. The recitation of the Creed, the proper Lords Prayer, plus two lessons and a sermon that joined together to give a structured framework to the service that was far more enjoyable than is the current fashion for 'happy, clappy socialise' that masquerades as modern worship.

And so to farewell coffee in the Sgts Mess. My thoughts regarding the weekend as a whole are: I'm glad I made the effort to attend and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. Without question, I shall be there next year God willing, as my Auntie Flo used to say.

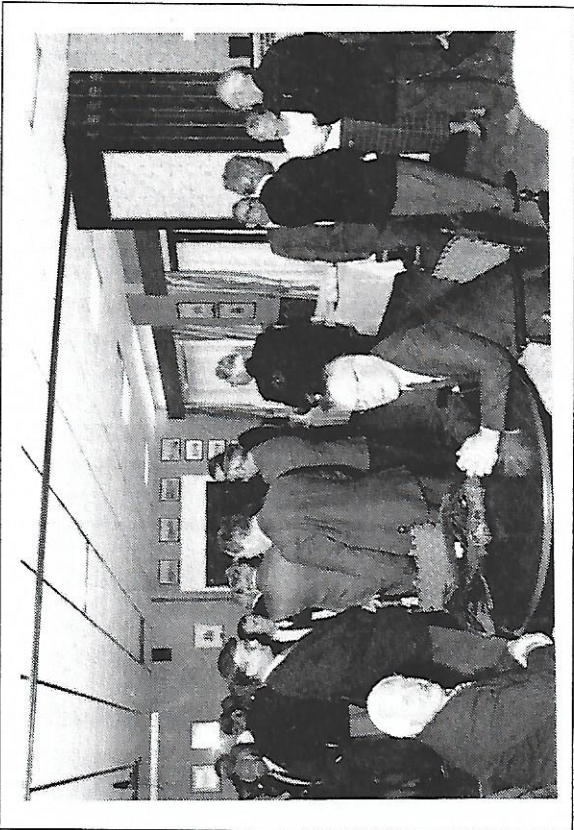
On a personal basis, I wish to thank the Permanent Staff and 'volunteer' apprentices who gave up their weekend to entertain us. The whole event was very well organized, demonstrating commitment and a capacity for hard work behind the scenes. Thank you all for your hospitality.



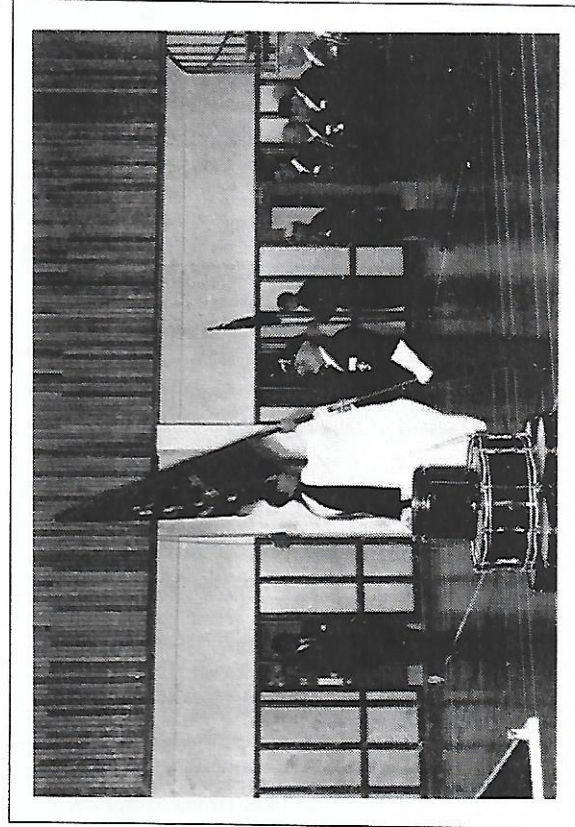
REUNION 99



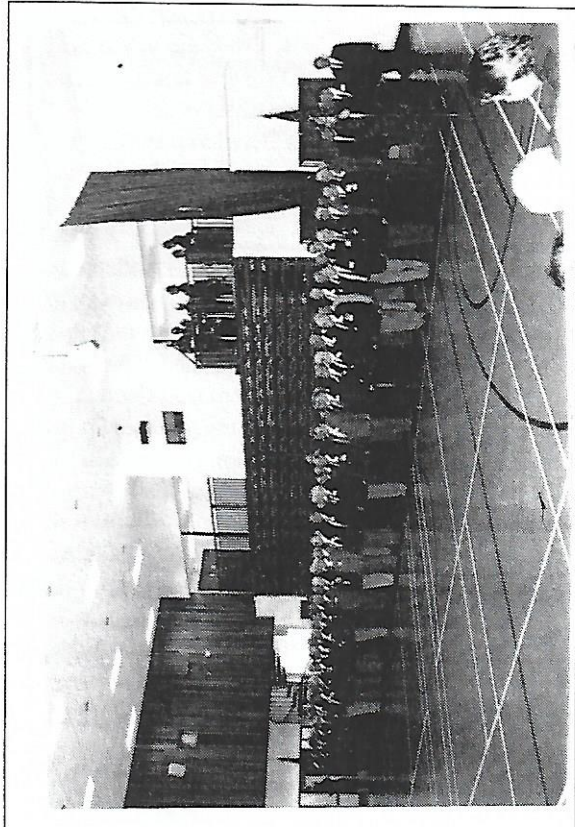
Wet weather again! Onward to the College gym.....(2)



Saturday morning - Time for coffee & re-acquaintance.....(1)



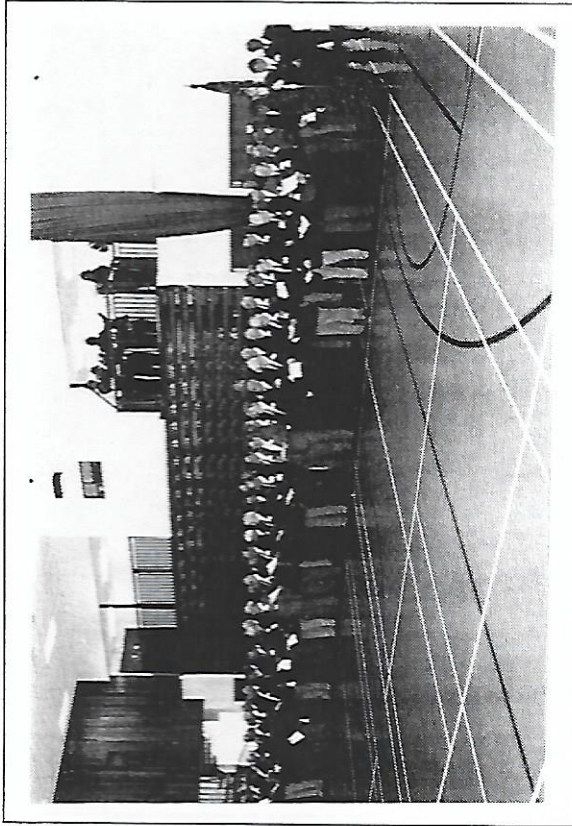
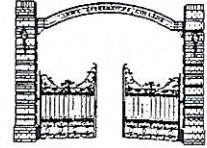
...and the AOBA Standard was presented.....(6)



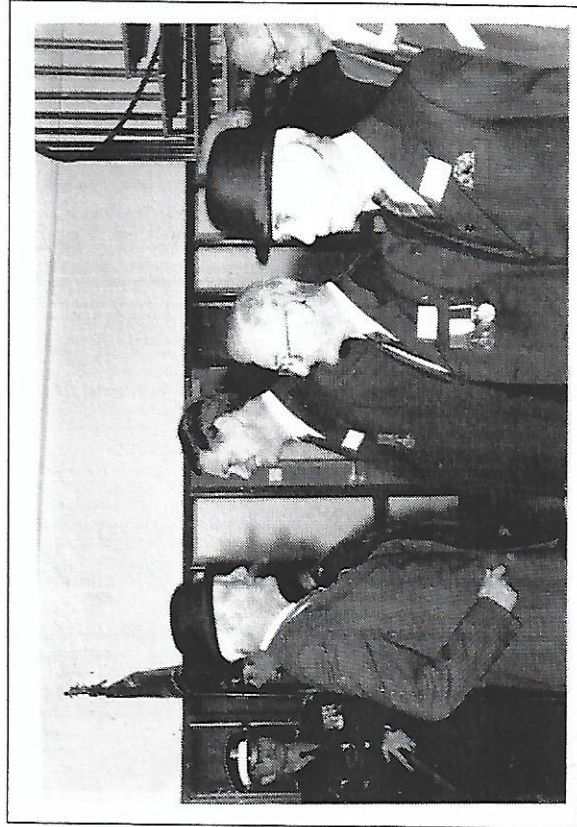
We formed up on parade.....(5)



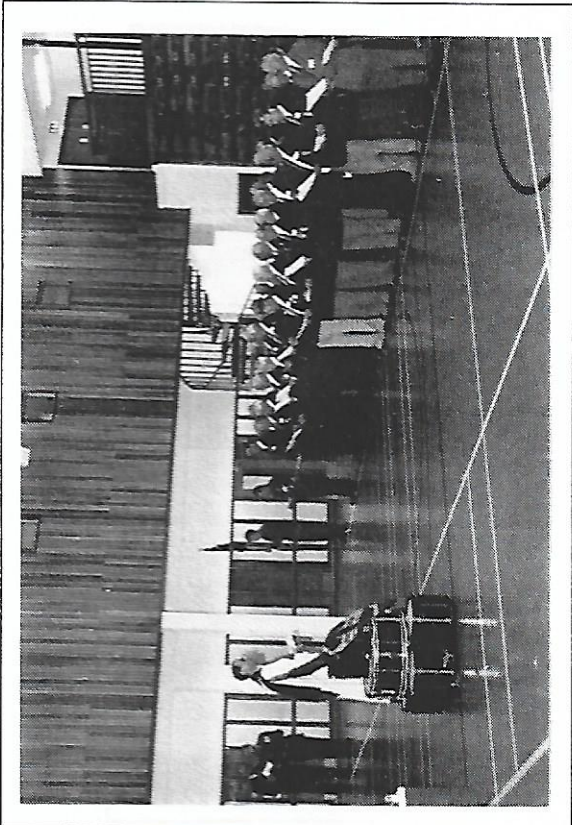
REUNION 99



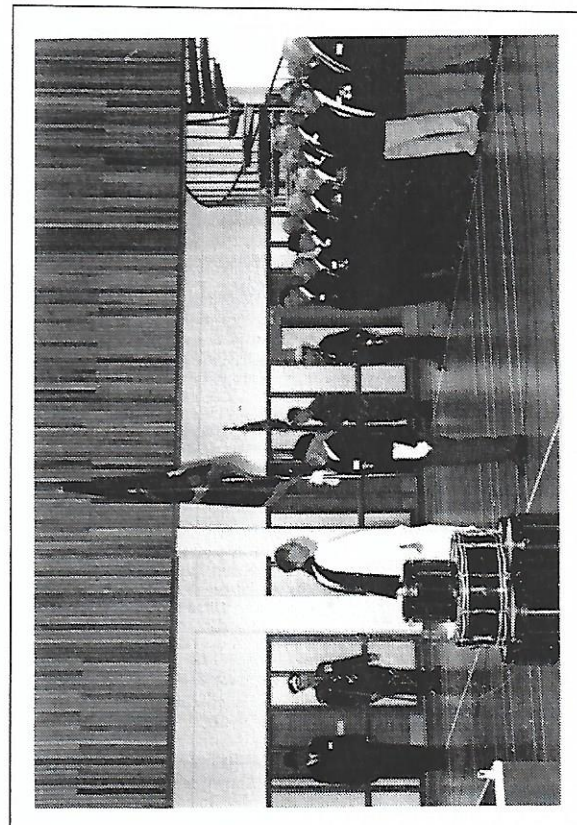
.....with Hymns accompanied by the REME Band. (10)



Maj Gen(Retd) Peter Baldwin (42A) reviewed the parade...(14)



The Association Chaplain lead the Drum Head Service.....(8)



Trevor Guest received the AOBA Standard.....(11)



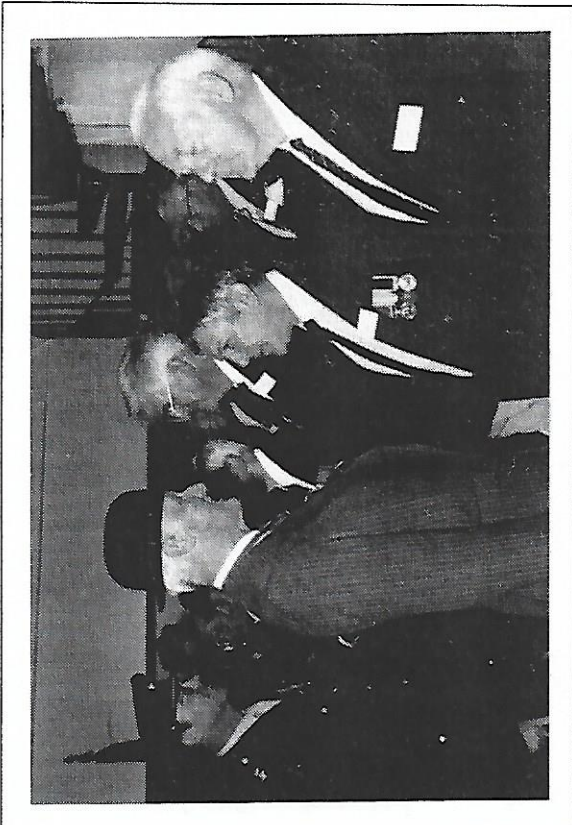
REUNION 99



.....in speaking to.....(18)



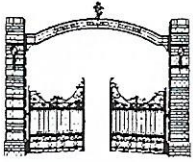
.....even Intake 49A!.....(20)



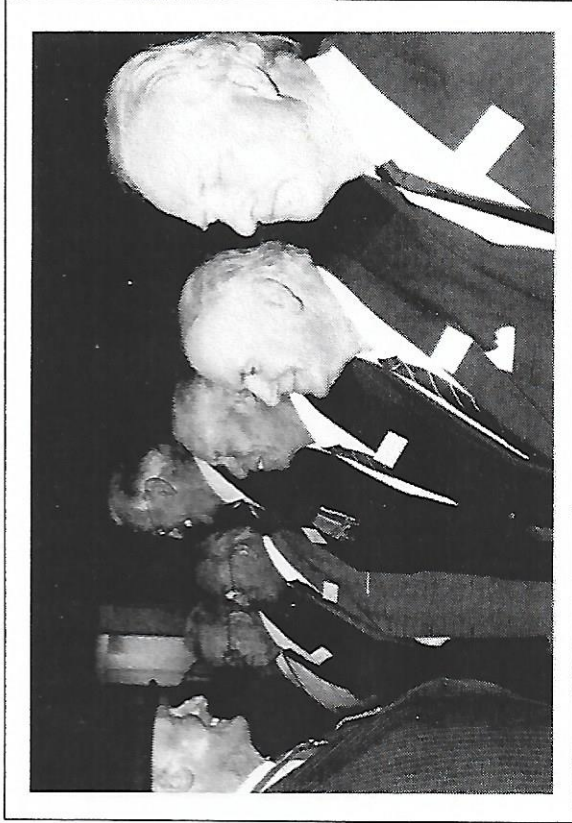
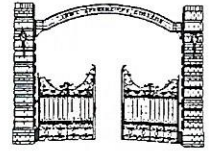
...and he took great interest.....(16)



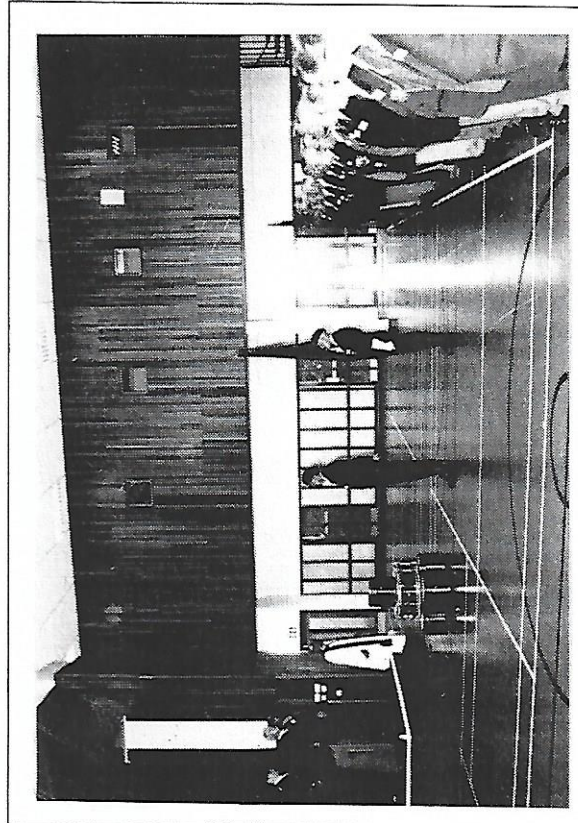
.....various members.....(19)



REUNION 99



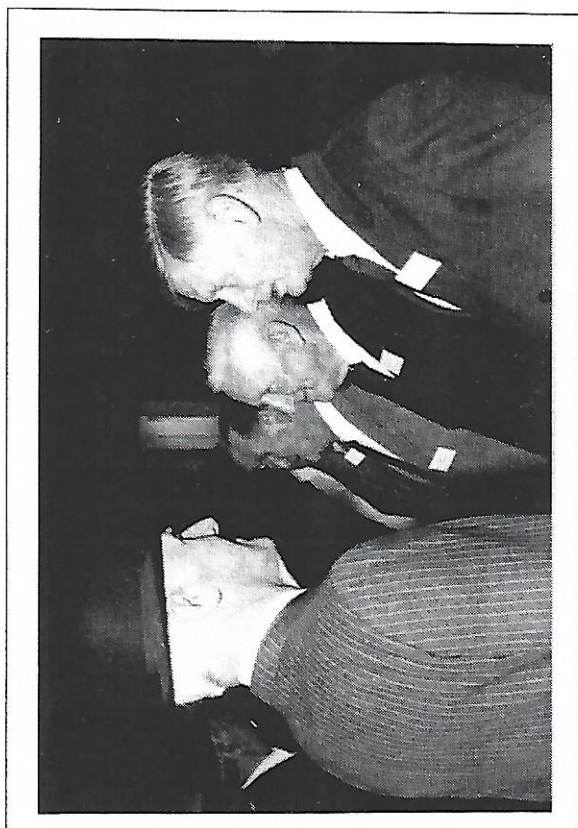
.....on parade to.....'please speak to me'.....(41)



Peter Baldwin (42A) then addressed.....(46)



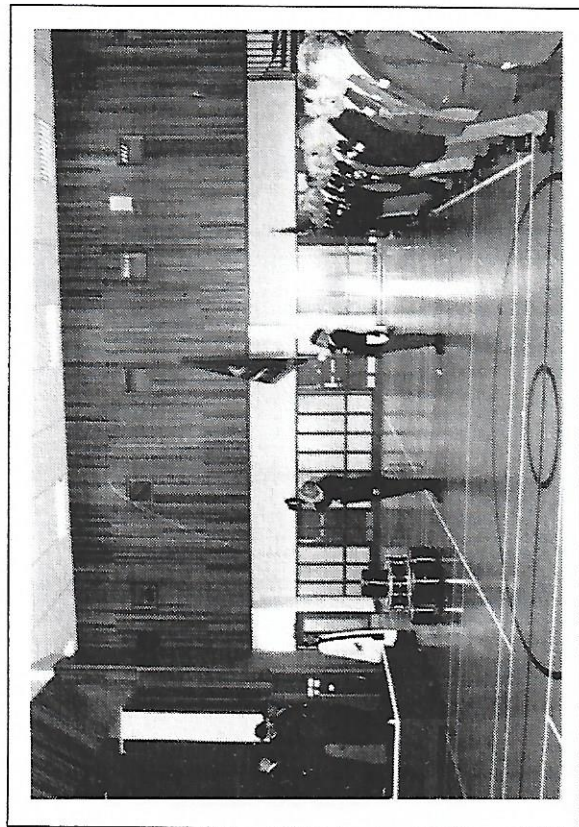
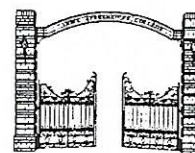
.....from the youngest?.....(36)



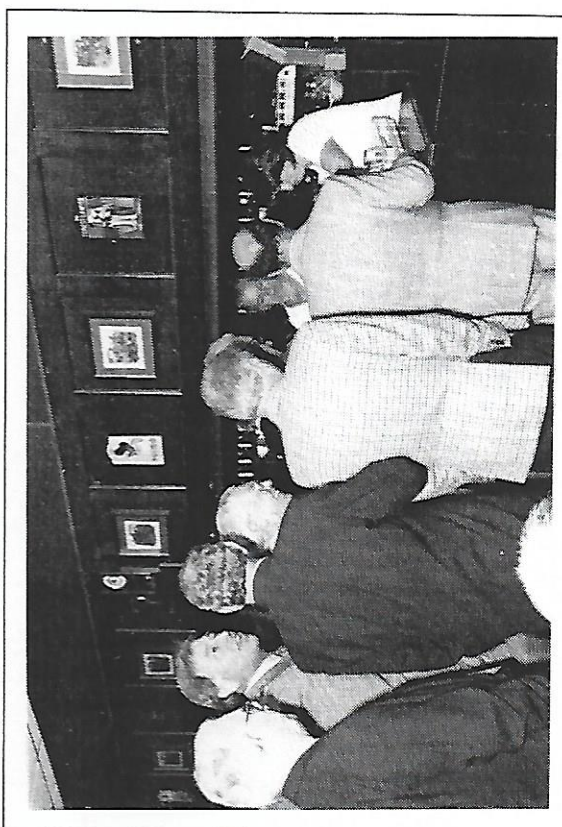
.....until last man Bill Weedon (54B).....(45)



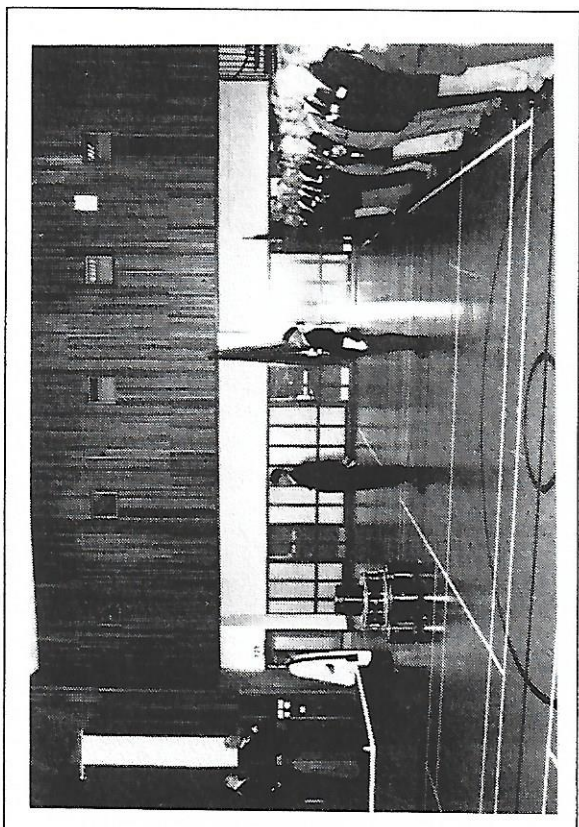
REUNION 99



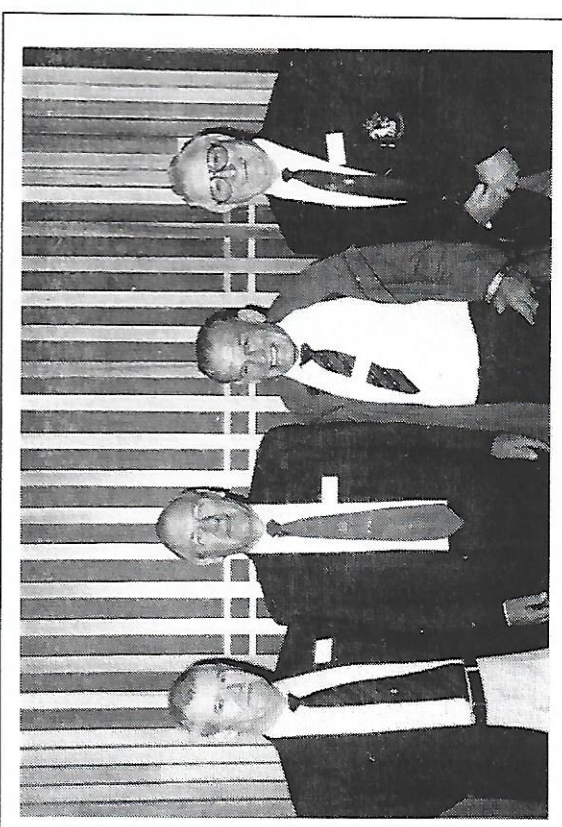
...before permission was granted to dismiss the parade. (48)



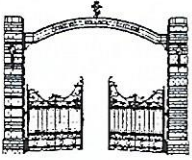
Sgts' Mess: Getting served.....(56)



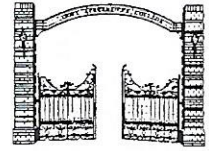
.....the Association.....(47)



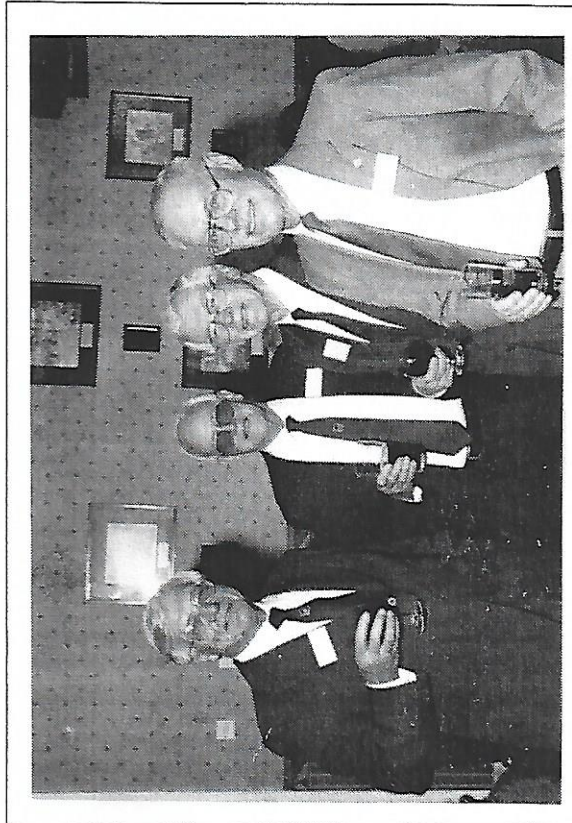
The 'Fortyniners'.....(52)



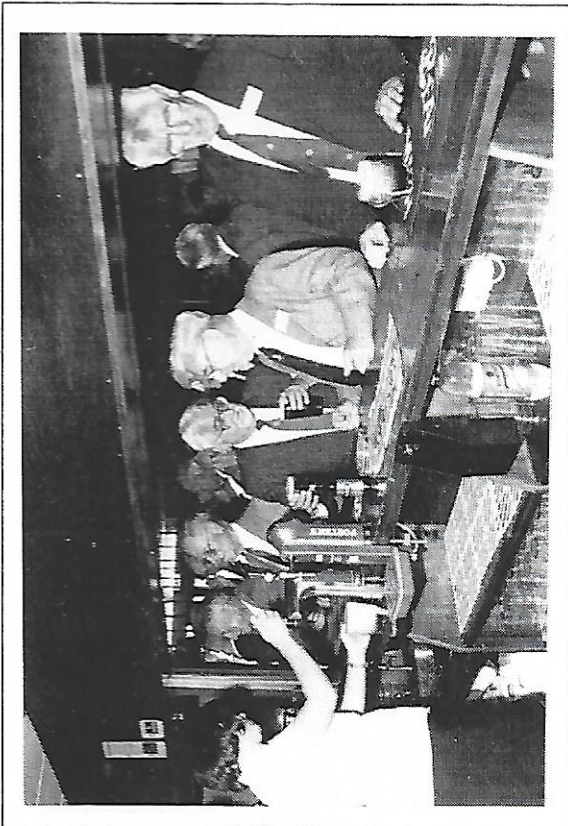
REUNION 99



Sgts' Mess: Intake 55B..... (59)



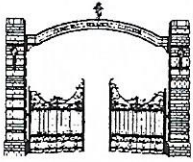
Sgts' Mess: Charles Ashdown and his Intake (42A & B)....(61)



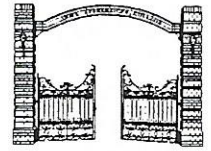
Sgts' Mess: always requires patience!.....(57)



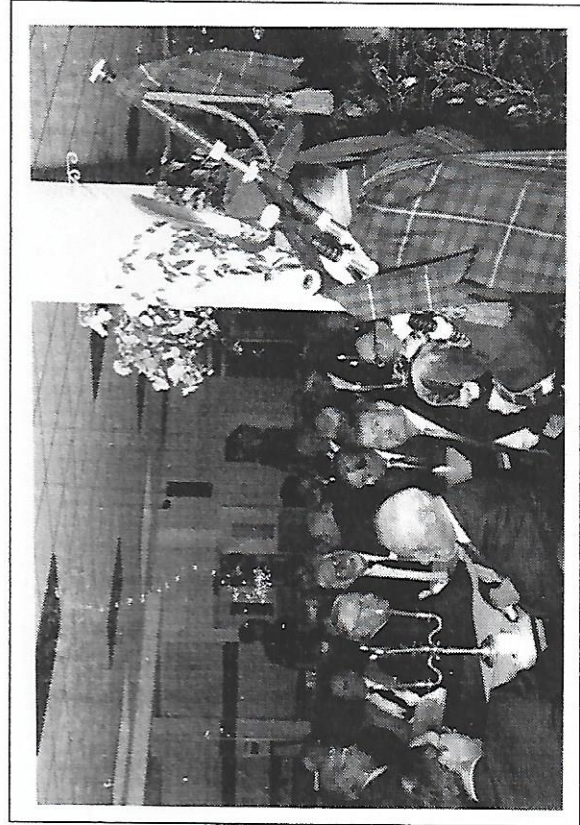
Sgts' Mess: Could this be our youngest member?.....(60)



REUNION 99



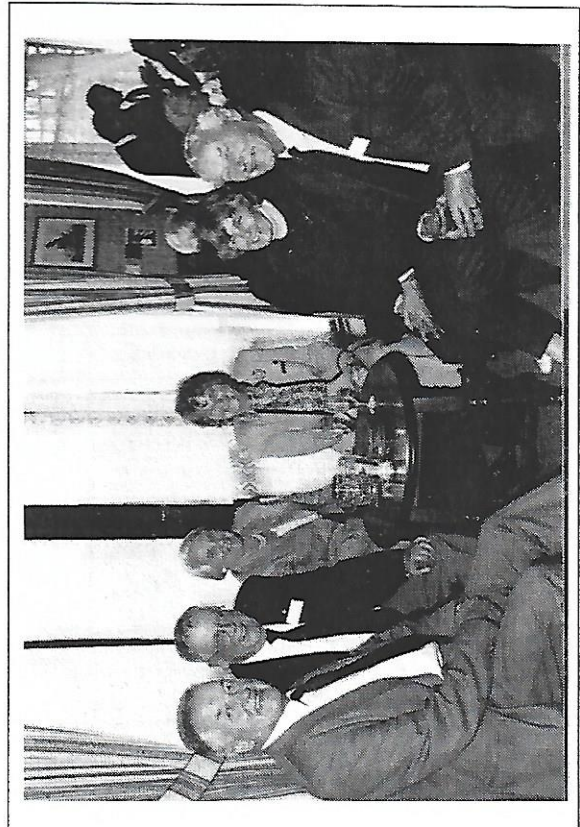
Sgts' Mess: Trevor Guest finds time to laugh.....(65)



And so to dinner: The piper entertains.....(79)



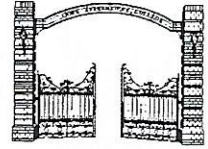
Sgts' Mess: The Editor and his Intake 54A.....(62)



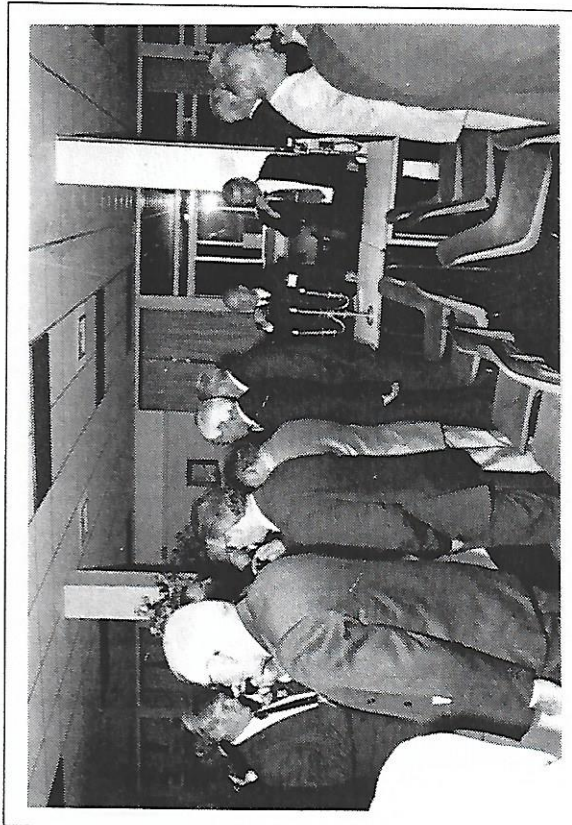
Sgts' Mess: A bunch of loyal ladies.....(66)



REUNION 99



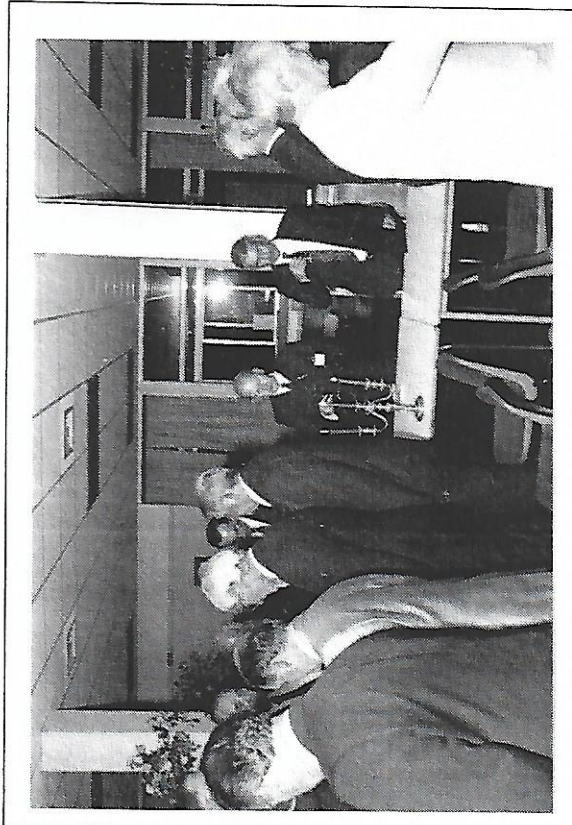
The Dinner: Intake 50B at table.....(72)



The Dinner: ...then toasted the Colonels-in-Chief.....(74)



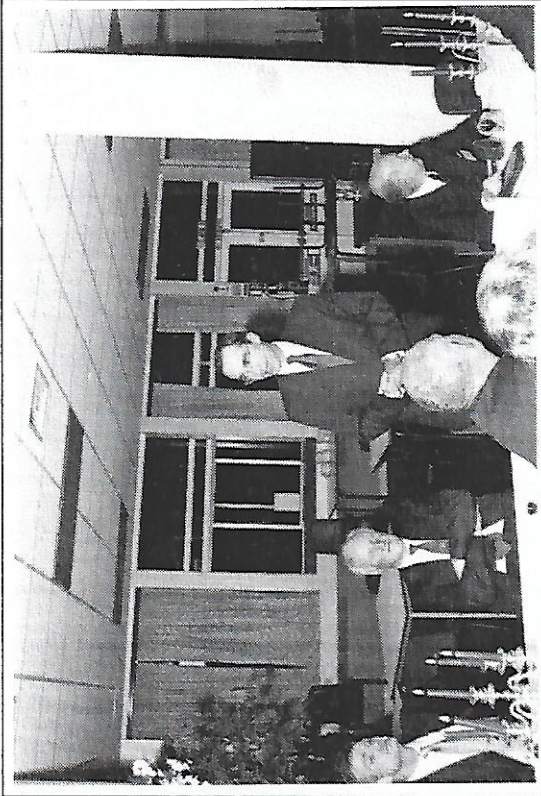
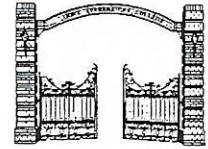
The Dinner: Gerry Malone and Intake 47A.....(71)



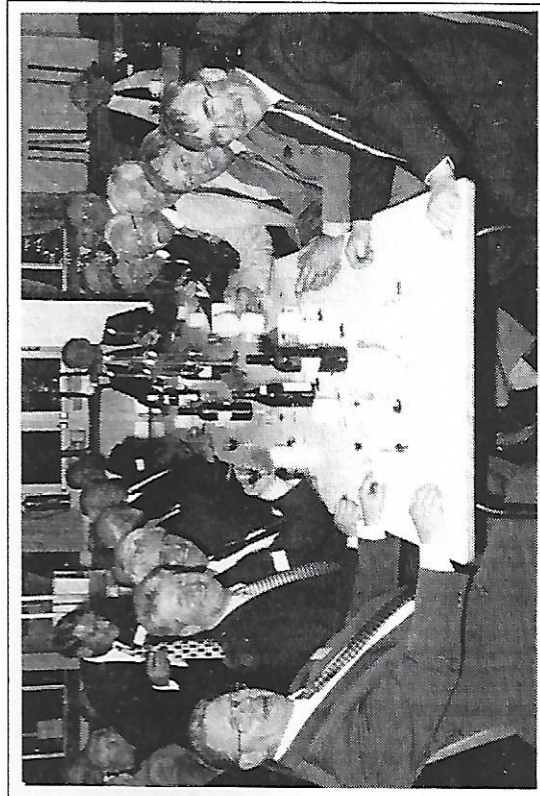
The Dinner: Members toasted the Queen.....(73)



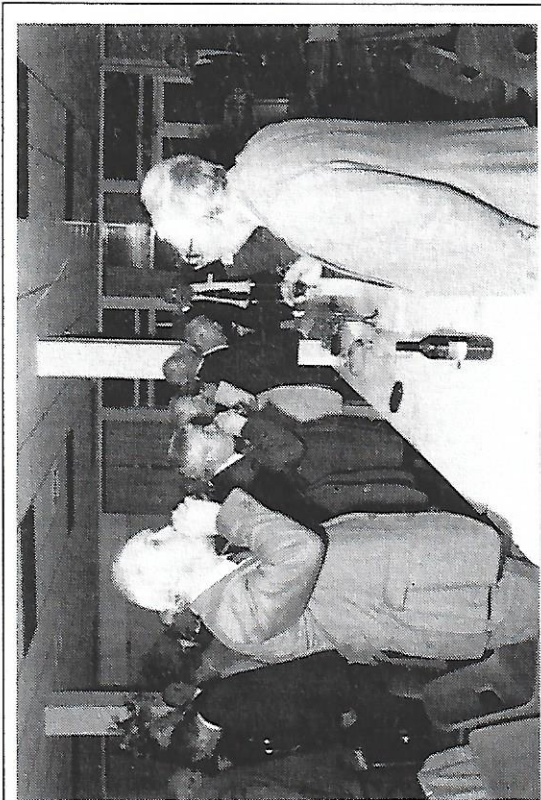
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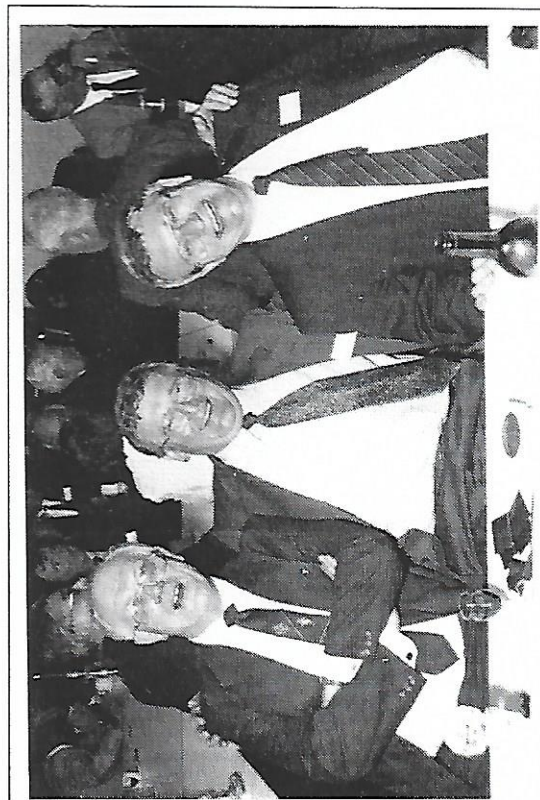
The Dinner: The Commanding Officer gave his speech....(75)



The Dinner:was had by all!(84)



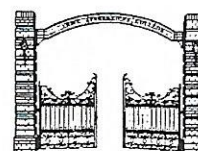
The Dinner: ...and finally, absent friends.....(76)



The Dinner: And a good time.....(86)



REUNION 99



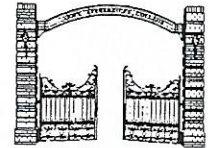
Intakes 49A & B - 50th Anniversary



Intakes 39A/B - 60th Anniversary



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ATTENDANCE LIST

37	Morton MBE	Alan	51B	1016	Cresswell	Dougie	42A	1500	Howes	John	55B
49	Sobolewski	Joe	48A	1021	Edgecock	Len	46A	1501	Caine	Peter	44A
53	Shrubsole	Bernard	49A	1025	Frazer	Frank	42C	1509	Millard	Roger	46A
58	Todd	John	52A	1027	Goodwin	Graham	51B	1510	Donnithorne	Norman	43A
78	Hayhurst	Carl	53A	1032	Hodgkins	Arthur	53B	1518	Barrett	Alan	45B
90	Horwood	John	43C	1036	Kay	Neville	46B	1520	Cameron	George	41A
				1044	Maughan	Ray	39B	1523	Loy	John	39B
				1056	Pursglove	Gerry	39A	1526	Cleasby	Bill	61C
				1063	Silby	Jim	38B	1529	Mussell	Dick	63C
102	Pusey	Bill	46A	1081	Wilson	Paul	42A	1541	Cooper	Gary	85A
110	Marshall	George	46B	1088	McGrillen	Bob	46B	1551	Traves	Roger	57A
164	Hornsey	Brian	54A	1089	Giles	Ken	42B	1565	Barrett	David	52B
170	Pennington	Joe	54A	1091	Parnell	Phil	46B	1577	Winchester	Alan	42A
171	Rainey	John	54A								
176	Stone	Brian	54A								
179	Trill	Howard	54A	1102	Ashdown	Charles	42A	1600	Smith	Peter	51B
191	Bailey	Bob	54A	1103	Footner	Wally	39A	1603	Hughes	Tony	50A
				1155	Maloney	Alan	58B	1625	Hunter	Tony	53B
				1157	Dangerfield	Les	39C	1627	Tivy	Vic	44B
256	Gibson	Bill	52A	1162	Allcock	Mike	42C	1628	Hodson	Frank	46B
				1191	Smithson	John	46B	1633	Harold	George	46A
								1634	Sainsbury	Arthur	39B
333	Farrell	Denis	54B					1647	Poulton	Len	44A
339	Roberts	Mike	54B	1248	Smith	Bill	39A	1660	Wood	Dudley	47B
351	Weedon	Bill	54B	1264	Wright	Norman	46A	1662	Thompson	Tommo	45B
381	Marshall	Denis	46B	1267	Hudson	Paul	58A	1665	Walker	John	50B
398	Kehoe	Bill	42B	1269	Bax	Alex	44A	1674	Tucker	Allan	39B
				1272	Pritchard	Alan	42C				
				1273	Carew	Roger	47B				
408	Costanzo	Michael	53B	1274	Jenner	Ken	44A	1720	Schofield	David	65A
448	Lee	John	55A	1275	Fleck	George	51B	1730	Webb	Alan	51B
				1286	Dickinson	Lew	45B	1732	Wintle	John	39C
525	Howorth TD	Ray	55B	1291	Moir	John	39A	1733	Worboys	Keith	39B
531	Smith	Ken	55B	1296	Bonner	Gordon	49B	1743	Patterson	Pat	44A
555	Gibby	Peter	55B					1747	Dann	Bob	42B
557	Knox	Geoff	55B	1321	Guy	Tony	43A	1752	Hutchins	Brian	61B
567	Reynolds	John	55B	1324	Streeter	George	39B	1766	Fitzpatrick	John	55B
568	Naylor	David	55A	1325	Styles	Peter	39B	1768	Harold	Mick	53B
				1335	Grint	Dave	64A	1770	Cordeux	Guy	47A
650	Gripton	Pete	56B	1338	Doughty	Ray	61B	1771	Blackman	Ray	39B
670	Howlett	David	56B	1342	Stephenson	Bill	39A	1772	Bendall	Jeff	64A
				1354	Wheatland	Derek	57B	1778	Castell	Bob	64A
709	Brown	Charlie	56B	1357	Ward	Ron	42C	1781	Surtees	Joe	PS
718	Houghton	John	56B	1364	Roberts	Ernest	39B	1782	Surtees	Bill	65B
720	Urwin	Syd	56B					1784	Baker	Jim	46B
758	Glossop	Brian	57A	1405	Adams	Bryan	42C	1787	Surtees	Dave	76C
784	Tate	Bill	44B	1407	Keen	Eric	47B	1792	Edwards	Eddie	46B
787	Fale	Ivor	38B	1429	Ludford	Archie	38B	1797	Hind	Eddie	52A
				1435	Macdonald	Jim	43A				
1000	Adey GM	Joe	42A	1437	Hunt	Curly	PS	1811	Hughes	Spike	45B
1002	Anderson	Ken	58A	1443	Oliver	George	45A	1830	Church	Peter	57B
1008	Bentley	Len	42C	1479	Cross	David	42C	1842	Thornton	Charlie	50B
				1480	Mardon	Alan	42A	1847	Davis MBE	Mike	60B
				1496	James	Jim	61B	1848	Ferns	David	44B
								1871	Wiggins	Paul	58A

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Congratulations to Charles Ashdown from North Carolina for winning the Essay Competition and to Bob Castell who came a very close second. All entries will be published in due course - it would be of great assistance to the editor, however, if entrants 3 to 6 could follow up their essays with the text on disk.

On receiving his prize, Charles said something to the effect, "While writing my essays (he has subsequently sent in a Part II), my wife said that I was a silly old fart and that wasn't it about time I stopped writing all this old rubbish!" But I won!

The runners-up were:

2. Bob Castell: The Learning Curve (disk supplied).
3. Brian Conway: Memories - The Army Apprentice & Permanent Staff, 1953 - 57 & 1960 - 67.
4. Alan Morton: The Life of Alan (not Brian).
5. Peter Gibby: Wally's Disastrous Pay Parade.
6. Eddie Broomfield: A Typical Day in the Life of a Young Apprentice.

- Ed

DEFINING EXPERIENCES I

By Charles Ashdown (42A)

General

I note (in reading the AOBA newsletter) that most of the letters and articles from members tend to dwell on experiences at the School. This is only to be expected since they are related to memories of that place and of their comrades and also since they tend to bear, on what I believe are the defining experiences during that period of their lives.

When we joined the School we were very young and extremely malleable. We learned (sometimes willingly) the elements of soldiering, physical fitness, personal hygiene, trade and educational subjects, team dynamics and tradecraft skills.

To some of these experiences were, and are considered of little value and have been discarded. To many others, myself included, these experiences have remained throughout our lives, shaping our careers whether in the Service or out.

I would like to provide several defining experiences during my subsequent life where my training and experience at the School was the prime mover in giving me the wherewithal for a successful career.

Aldershot 1945

I was stationed at 13 Command Workshops in Aldershot from early 1945 to August when I was detailed for an overseas draft to the Far East. I am not particularly proud of the person I was then (18 years old). I was fond of taking short cuts, I was arrogant and prickly and I was certainly inclined to leave responsibility to others, although in retrospect it seems that most of the ex-boys who were with me were very similar. We were, I need hardly add, not very well considered by the officers and NCOs of the Workshops.

On weekdays we worked from 0700 hrs to 1900 hrs, Monday to Friday, and on Saturdays we usually did regimental training from 0800 hrs to 1200 hrs. We would all be wishing for the morning to pass quickly, so we could rush off on a 36-hour pass on Saturday afternoon. One such morning we were being drilled in platoons and the group I was with was being instructed by a Staff Sergeant. Unfortunately, he was particularly inept at drill, probably because he was a conscript. Each time he made a mistake the ex-boys broke into laughter which he was too inexperienced and intimidated to oppose.

The CSM seeing this, moved to the platoon from the rear and thumped me on the shoulder and said, "You think you are so smart, then get out there and drill this mob". I left the ranks and of course, having had three years experience in the Army I demonstrated that as far as drill was concerned I was competent to move the platoon in an efficient and military manner.

The CSM watched this for a few minutes and ordered me to halt the platoon and stand them at ease. He then told me to go and wait in the Orderly Room. A little while later he came in and went to see the CO. When he came out he said to me that he disliked smart alics, but he felt that I had potential as an NCO and he would propose me for Lance Corporal, and did I want that.

I thought about it for about a minute and realized that here was an opportunity, even if the job offered was pretty rough and with little initial reward, so I accepted. The CO agreed with the CSM and I was appointed to the rank.

My erstwhile comrades and ex-boys tried to take advantage of my position and although my authority was limited it did include signing off 36-hour passes, so that I was able to command a little respect. In any event I persevered and held the position until I was drafted.

I learned from this that one of the elements taught to me at Arborfield was readily useable even though I had not been a boy NCO. I also learned it was better to be in charge (even with limited authority) than as a member of those commanded.

From this period I also started to take responsibility for my actions and although I had a long way to go I never really looked back thereafter. This I believe was a defining experience in my life.

Malaya 1947

After being posted to India, (with the Indian Army) for a year I was posted to the 4th Indian Mobile Workshop Company with its HQ in Malacca (now Melaka Malaysia). I was sent, now being a Sergeant, to take charge of a workshop detachment at Batu-Pahat down the coast from Malacca. This detachment on a disused airfield was responsible to maintain and preserve about two thousand WWII era

vehicles, which were waiting either for disposal or to be moved to another country.

The CO (a wartime soldier) told me that as a regular soldier I should be pleased to get the job, even though I had had no NCO training, little trade experience and was only 20 years old. His comment was, "You'll soon learn - you will have to!" A daunting opening.

My staff at the detachment consisted of a Havildar (equivalent to a Sergeant), two Naiks (Corporals) and ten Sepoys (Privates) as my trained IEME tradesmen. I also had five LEPs (Locally Enlisted Personnel) who had rudimentary trade capability. Finally, had allotted to me about 200 JSP (Japanese Surrendered Personnel). They were supervised by NCOs and POs of their Army and navy. Their leader who reported to me was a native of Northern Japan - Hokkaido, and a Petty Officer. He had some English and therefore could receive instructions for the employment of the JSP. I should say here that he towered over all of us since he was 6ft 2in tall and of imposing build.

I should explain that the JSP were being held in the countries where they had surrendered so that careful (and lengthy) investigations could be conducted to find the war criminals among them.

I had been instructed by the CO that I was to accept no nonsense from the JSP, and to insist on them being employed in strictly menial labour. I (and most others) believed this to be their just due because of the brutal behaviour and atrocities committed by Japanese Imperial Forces during the war. I was issued with a .38 calibre Smith and Wesson revolver and a quantity of ammunition to enable me to keep order, if that should prove necessary.

All seemed in order when I arrived, but soon turned difficult. After about two weeks orders arrived that the IEME personnel were to be repatriated to India as the British Indian Army was being stood down and Independence was to follow. In any event within a few weeks I had only one Naik left.

It occurred to me in considering a way out of my dilemma that a country such as Japan having fought a war with modern weapons must have been supported by reasonably trained technical support. I obtained a list from the War Crimes Branch in Lahore of my JSP and discovered that many of the men were skilled tradesmen according to their service records. In tandem with the JSP leader, PO Watanabe, we replaced the IEME personnel with JSP.

It quickly became clear that the JSP were more gifted than their Indian counterparts and the LEP. They were especially good at finding extemporaneous solutions to the chronic condition of few spare parts we were experiencing, being at the far end of the supply chain. Most of the vehicles we were looking after were of U S or Canadian manufacture and virtually no parts were coming from those sources. Because of the willingness to work and the good spirit of the JSP we

were able to continue moving the vehicles in a serviceable condition to their ultimate destinations. I must also say that the CO agreed with my approach notwithstanding the earlier instructions he had given me.

What did I learn from this and what element of training at Arborfield played a part in my success/ Well, first if you were going to gain an objective then you could not afford to take a slavish approach to rules, regulations and instructions. You had to improvise! Was this taught at Arborfield? I like to think that the team dynamics expounded at the School led to a frame of mind where elasticity was nearly as important as obedience to lawful commands, so long as the ultimate objective was always kept in mind. The other thing that I learned was that no matter what colour their skin or country of origin, all of these men were good and bad, swift and slow, intelligent and stupid and all needed continuous leadership to achieve the objective (and success).

Vignettes Of Malaya

In connection with my time of duty in Batu Pahat some humorous should be noted. When I arrived there, the existing cook and his help were Indian Army and the cuisine was necessarily Indian in nature. Curry was the main ingredient with rice a close second. Our meat arrived on the hoof and the cook, who was also a butcher was skilled in the dispatch and treatment of the product.

Unfortunately, when the Indians departed for repatriation, it appeared that no replacements were available for the cook (or butcher). I hired a local ethnic Chinese civilian who assured me he could cook anything. With the help of the JSP we found the kitchen helpers for the new cook. It was funny to hear the Chinese cook berating the Japanese helpers in 'pigeon' English, but they eventually settled into a mode of fairly successful cookery.

At about this time the military authorities (in Singapore) noted that I was English and was entitled to Caucasian food. Apparently, I could choose to remain on the Indian Army scale or opt for British food. I chose the latter and it transpired that my ration allowance was sometimes British or Australian, but always packaged food, mostly having been some number of years in storage! This led to somewhat weird discussions with the Chinese cook about how to cook whatever had recently appeared in the ration deliveries.

Eventually, one day, he appeared in my office (complete with cleaver) shouting about the impossibility of cooking 'can labbit'! After calming him down it transpired that the material causing the complaint was a pretty poisonous product of Australia, i.e., canned rabbit. We eventually bought pigs and chickens and I believe (but never investigated) he fed the worst of the packaged and tinned products (including bacon) to the pigs. Suffice it to say, my cuisine became much more palatable and even tasty. Out proximity to the Malacca Straits enabled us to obtain fresh sea food as well.

Another area which sometimes causes friction and disturbances was the administrative arrangement for the JSP, particularly in matters of discipline. The Japanese Army in particular believed in stern discipline enforced by corporal punishment (and worse). On the advice of my superiors I forbade corporal punishment which caused some upset among the JSP NCOs. PO Watanabe invariably held a morning muster parade of the JSP at 0700 hrs. After calling the roll they carried out drill calisthenics with much shouting and strenuous movement. Then the PO would make administrative announcements followed by a declaration of the daily 'watch' phrase (basically an exhortation to achieve some objective that day). All those on parade would rise to their feet, raise their arms heavenwards and bellow the 'watch' phrase. Then they would, being considered now ready for work, double off in files to their assigned work places. Motivation, Japanese style, but seemingly very effective since the results always seemed to be what was desired.

Two questions are often addressed to me when I recount these episodes.

(a) Did I ever have occasion to draw or use my revolver? No. In fact the Japanese person assigned to me as a cleaner eventually took on the chore of keeping the weapon clean and oiled. He was so enthusiastic about the job that he took to polishing the ammunition, which must give you some idea of the state of security at the site!

(b) Why did the CO pick a very young almost inexperienced NCO to run the detachment? Well, he really had little choice. At the time (1947) not only was the Indian Army repatriating its personnel, but both the British and Indian Armies were demobilizing at a very fast rate, so that although the work in progress had to continue, the staff available was shrinking fast.

It should be noted here that the guerrilla warfare had started in Malaya at the time I am talking about, but luckily, we at Batu Pahat were unaffected by the emergency.

UN Operations (1976 & 1978/80)

I have been fortunate enough to have served twice in UN Operations during my career. Both occasions were very interesting and fruitful. The first time was a six month tour with UNEF II (United Nations Emergency Force No. 2) HQ in Ismailia Egypt from May to November 1976.

The second was with UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization) with its HQ in Jerusalem, and was from May 1979 until July 1980, both times being as a major LORE (Land Ordnance Engineers) of the CF (Canadian Forces).

UNEF II. This organization was put in place after the 'Yom Kippur' war by the United Nations Security Council, to enforce the separation of Israeli and Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsular. The force consisted of:

- (a) UNEF II HQ Ismailia,
- (b) FINBATT Abu Zenima (an Enhanced Finnish Infantry Battalion),
- (c) INDBATT Wadi Reina (an Enhanced Indonesian Infantry Battalion),
- (d) GHANBATT Mitla (a Ghanian Infantry Battalion),
- (e) SWEDBATT Balusa (an Enhanced Swedish Infantry Battalion),
- (f) AUSTAIR Ismailia (a RAAF flight of helicopters),
- (g) POLLOG Ismailia & EL Tasa (a Polish Army logistics group consisting of water purification combat engineers, transport and hospital units),
- (h) CANLOG Ismailia & EL Tasa (a Canadian Forces Logistics group consisting of supply, maintenance, finance, transport and air transport units).

The force numbered about 5000 military, a considerable group of UN civilians and many locally employed Egyptian personnel. It was commanded by a Swedish Lieutenant General Liljestrand in 1976, who was also a Deputy Under Secretary General to enable him to have diplomatic standing. The Security Council renewed the six monthly mandates from October 1973 until March 1979 when the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty was signed at Camp David in the USA, and the requirement for the Force ceased.

Each of the four infantry battalions patrolled and guarded an area within the buffer zone which was an irregularly shaped zone stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the tip of the Sinai Peninsular in the Red Sea (Ras Mohammed).

When the peace keeping duties commenced, very large areas were mined and the rubble (and dead) of the 1973 war were everywhere. With the aid of the Polish Army engineers and contingents of each battalion, the areas were gradually cleared and enforcement of the Terms of Disengagement of the Armistice Agreement were carried out. Since these terms were perforce ambiguous (in order to get agreement in the Security Council) many problems arose in dealing with both the Israelis and Egyptians which required continuous diplomatic negotiations. None of this was helped by the nature of the diverse and disparate contingents of the Force, with many different languages, military styles and training, as well as profound differences in culture, politics and religion. Nevertheless, function we did and reasonably

successfully.

You may wonder what was my defining experience in the six months of my tour as S O Maintenance at UNEF HQ? Perhaps it is true to say that I developed even more patience with my fellow members. I also found that extreme precision was required in my relations with the operating side of the Force. Did I learn this at the School? Well, no, but the mind-set first set in place there developed over the years and enabled me to operate in the UN milieu.

Does this sound pompous? Perhaps it is, but in the semi-diplomatic state of things in the UNEF, and with the separated Powers, pomposity, prevarication and ambiguity were often the precursors of remedial and determined actions to enforce the Terms of Disengagement.

UNTSO. UNTSO has been in existence ever since 1948 and continues to operate to this day. The organization is under the direct control of the UN Secretary General (rather than an Under Secretary General) and consists of a HQ at Government House, just outside the Old City of Jerusalem, and contingents of military officers of many of the countries belonging to the UN. The organization is authorized to employ 220 officers to carry out duties as United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) anywhere the Secretary General designates their employment. These include personnel from Russia (Soviet Union), France, USA, and Great Britain, although as member nations of the Security Council their nationals are not permitted to carry out patrol or OP duties.

The Secretary general has (over time) sent UNMOs to Palestine, Pakistan/India, Cyprus, Egypt, Yemen, Angola, Namibia, Syria, Lebanon, Bosnia and Cambodia to name a few. In general, however, UNMOs are mainly employed in Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt providing observer functions to the UN Forces deployed there. These are (and were) UNEF I, UNEF II, UNDoF, UNIFIL and UNFICYP. The military officers are usually of Major or Captain rank (or equivalent) with an occasional Lieutenant Colonel thrown in. They may be from the contributing country Army, Air Force or Navy, but should be staff trained. The basic tour is six months unaccompanied, or one year accompanied, with an option to sign for further tours, with the mutual agreement of the UN and providing country.

So what are the duties of an UNMO? The pre-eminent employment is as an observer manning an observation point (OP) between the lines marking the area of disengagement of the hostile forces. By observation, patrolling and enforced inspection of hostile units, the UNMOs determine if the terms of the truce are being observed. To preserve the important function of neutrality and therefore credibility with the warring parties, then teams on a patrol or OP must always consist of UNMOs from different countries. Since UNTSO does not provide either rations or quarters, every UNMO is given a UN allowance to find his own off duty quarters (assisted by allowances from his own country).

Although the organization provided a portable caravan at each OP site, together with a bomb shelter and water, fuel and means of cooking, food storage and water heating, it is incumbent on the individual teams to keep house and cook while there. The OP tours last from three days (at some sites) to seven days (at others). Therefore, the UNMO must tote sufficient food and personal supplies to last himself during the tour.

To avoid troubles with two or three team members fending for themselves, the usual routine is for each person to take a day at a time and do all the cooking and cleaning for the group. This leads to some quite remarkable culinary efforts by the various nationals, anxious to appear capable of pleasing the others. This helps to explain the unofficial motto of UNMOs, which is, *Looking, Cooking Ducking & Weaving*; the last two relating to the occasional hostile reception given UNMOs when encountering one of the warring parties doing something they shouldn't. Of course, UNMOs have been killed and wounded since the inception of UNTSO, since they are not withdrawn in the event of recurrence of hostile action. It must be said, however, that the vast majority of us have never seen anything more hostile than grim looks or outright contempt when conducting our duties.

I was assigned to Observer Group Golan in 1979 and from its HQ in Tiberius on Lake Galilee I carried out patrols and inspections on the Golan Heights for a period of a year. I thoroughly enjoyed it not only for the military experience, but also for the opportunity to visit all around Israel, Syria and Egypt. Lake Galilee is 300 feet below sea level and the Golan Height which overlook it, are from 300 to 1500 feet above sea level. During the year I crossed over the River Jordan at least a hundred times and, of course, visited many locations where Jesus was said to have lived and preached.

In early 1980 I was re-assigned (in a routine way) to Observer Group Egypt, since I had signed up for an additional year with UNTSO. Unfortunately, my wife became sick and was repatriated to Canada to recuperate. I, however, had to remain and serve out my term. The main area of duty was of course, still the Sinai Desert where, because of the Israeli/Egyptian Peace Treaty, the Armistice line was to move in stages from a point mid-way across the peninsular to the old Palestine/Egypt border.

Since the UNEF has been disbanded, the function of moving this border fell on UNTSO. The task was not particularly dangerous, just arduous. We were provided with completely accurate maps derived from satellite pictures and sent to us by the U S agencies. To trace out specific lines of borders we carried out continuous patrols where we relied on the maps, compasses and dead reckoning. I am eternally grateful for the map reading classes that I experienced at the ATS, in pursuing my 2nd Class Certificate of Education, for the basic knowledge to find my way. The hazards included soft sand, hard pan, sand storms, old minefields and eventually the Sinai mountains! Glory be to God we were never *truly* lost

at any time. After a few months of this duty, I also became sick (at age 53) and was repatriated to Canada.

There were many experiences of UNTSO which were particularly memorable, but I will only note two for the purpose of revealing the types of things that exceeded the others in being noteworthy.

The first experience was on the Golan Heights when a Swedish officer and I had to carry out an inspection of an Israeli tank park located in the area immediately adjacent to the Area of Separation. The protocols specified that no artillery pieces with over 17 km range were to be located in the location. The Israeli officer in charge of the park reported ten tanks. We inspected the vehicles. I immediately noticed that there were nine Centurions and one M109. I spoke to my Swedish companion and asked what he saw, since our report had to be agreed to by both of us. He said that he saw ten tanks, but agreed that one was different to the others. I had him look in each of the driver's hatches for the identification and he had to agree that there were nine centurions and one M109, but he didn't see that the latter was an artillery howitzer, with a conventional range of 17 km that could achieve up to 21 km with semi-guided ammunition. We agreed to disagree and the Israelis were off the hook. This was an example of the workings of the UN and of its occasional failings.

The second experience was more interesting from a personal point of view. It was during the Sinai portion of my tour. It happened near a place called Bir Gif-Gofa (there was virtually nothing there but the UN portable shelter alongside the former MSR across the Sinai to Ismailia), and I was the cook and bottle washer for the day. The other two UNMOs had left on a patrol and I was taking my ease on a chair outside in the late morning, having finished my chores. I noticed a small figure trudging steadily across the desert toward s my position.

With my binoculars I determined that the figure was a small female Bedouin Arab. After a few more minutes she came by me and I asked (in mime) if she wanted a drink. She intimated that she had to move on, so I gave her a chocolate bar from my stores. I guess she was eight or ten years old and very slight, but seemingly healthy even if her clothes and person were obviously filthy. She then set off again and I noticed that her route appeared to be a straight line toward an oasis (perhaps 20 km away) not visible from where we were. How she navigated I do not know, but she certainly seemed to know exactly where she was going.

About half an hour later, a group of about ten females and young boys appeared driving a flock of sheep and goats and a pair of camels along the self-same route as the young girl. The camels were obviously carrying the tents and equipment of the group. Although we exchanged greetings they ploughed steadily on the same route as the little girl, even though no trace of her passing showed.

About an hour later a man on a horse appeared and he stopped at our outpost and joined me in having coffee. He could speak a little English and so I asked him who the group was. It transpired that they were his family and his entire estate moving on to find fodder for his animals. I asked him how he navigated through the featureless desert.

It seemed that they could all recognize instantly by the position of the sun, the scent in the air, the direction of the winds (at different times through the day) and by certain invisible land marks, where they were and the direction of their destination. I then asked about the little girl and why she was on her own out front. His answer floored me (and made me very angry). She was the pathfinder because she encountered mines of enemy tribes she would be the sacrifice, and since she was female she was expendable! We parted company and I was barely able to be civil with him. Upon reflection, I realized that I was guilty of using my western standards of behaviour with a man who was just able to survive in a hostile environment and *could not* be held accountable to my values.

My time with UNTSO was the high point of my military career and I value my experiences there. I believe my training at Arborfield and subsequent experiences and instruction enhanced the somewhat wobbly man-child who emerged from the School, to progress to the mature man who I became in later years.

Funnies from the Series 1, OBAN 2 (July 1957)

There was a young lady from Wantage
Of whom the Town Clerk took advantage
Said the Borough Surveyor:
"Indeed you must pay 'er
You've totally altered her frontage."

There was a young belle of old Natchez
Whose garments were always in patchez
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes
She drawled, "When Ah itchez, Ah scratchez."

Little Willie from his mirror
Licked the mercury right off.
Thinking, in his childish error,
It would cure the whooping cough.

At his funeral his mother
Smartly said to Mrs Brown:
"Twas a chilly day for Willie
When the mercury went down."

Teacher: "Now Sandra, tell us what you know about
Queen Elizebeth I."
Sandra: "Queen Elizebeth I, was known as the Virgin
Queen. As a Queen she was a great success."

1939 AND ALL THAT
Part 1 - One Way Ticket

By Joe Griffith (May39)

Holding the King's shilling, three days ration money and three days pay, about fifteen shillings - an unbelievable sum of money for a school boy in pre-war England - alone I stood on Stockport railway station. It was May 22, 1939. Self consciously wearing my first long trousers I awaited the arrival of the recruiting Sergeant. He had arranged to see me off on to the Reading train. This would take me to join the Army Technical School (Boys), Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Arborfield. With relief I spotted him in his blue uniform, red sash and be-medalled chest. With a silver topped stick in hand he pushed through the crowd towards me.

"Are you ready?" he asked anxiously, appraising me with a keen eye. "Is your father here?" he added sharply.

Hesitantly and a bit abashed I stammered, "Oh er-well, he couldn't leave his shop this morning. Though I think my aunt will be here to say goodbye," I quickly offered as an excuse when a look of annoyance crossed his face.

"Oh well, never mind," he said sadly and rather quietly. "but make sure to drop me a card and let me know how you are getting on."

I nodded in reply. "And remember about sport. You must take it up - you'll get on quicker."

That was a worry to me; a country bumkin and not very good at any form of sport. Was I damned from the start? Then I was off. I saw the face of my Aunt Anny looking for me as the carriage moved down the platform. She waved desperately as I disappeared from view. Little did I know that this was not only the start of the longest railway journey I had yet experienced, but the beginning of an adventure that was to last the next thirty years.

"Can yer lend us a shilling, mate?"

The words penetrated my confused mind. A powerfully built ugly sort of a bloke stood at my elbow as I stood on the hot concrete road looking for the dining hall. It was my first day at the school.

"A'll let yer have it back termorrer."

Thinking this fellow might wield some influence around the place, I compliantly took the shilling from my sparsley lined pocket and meekly gave it to him. Every time I saw him after that I looked anxiously in his direction, but he appeared not to know me. Sadly and slowly the realisation dawned on me; I had been 'caught'. It was my first experience with the 'smart guys'. It didn't happen again.

The dinner arrangements appeared very homely and inviting. The 'messing' tables were covered with white enamel tops which gave the appearance of white table cloths. At breakfast time there were flowers on each table, boxes of cornflakes, jugs of milk and bowls of sugar. I remember it looked very civilised. Unfortunately, the boys were not. The biggest and toughest got the most. The first to get there piled whole boxes of cornflakes on to their own plates and poured the milk on until it overflowed. It became like a rugby scrum. In no time at all, the decks were cleared. The food was all gone. Those at the back got nothing. As a result of this, the system was changed and we formed long queues at the serving hatch.

"I'se no sir, but 'a' can meck you dance," the bull-necked drill sergeant screamed at me.

Quivering with outrage, his pugnacious face glowered down into mine. My heart contracted with fear. With averted eyes I stood still and quiet.

"Griffith, Sir", I'd answered when he'd bawled, "NAME?" at me.

The rest of the drill squad looked uncomfortable. What next? He faced our squad. The fingers of his right hand toyed with the end of a paystick held tightley under his arm. Stocky and powerfully built, he engaged each member of the squad in a challenging stare.

"Sergeant. Got it? Sergeant, that's what I am. Sergeant Arthur, South Wales Borderers. Do'n you ever forget it", he mouthed expressively in a thick Welsh accent.

The black asphalt burned hot under our inadequate civvy shoes as he flogged us up and down the vast square under the fierce summer sun. For three months our callow, untidy bunch marched. Quick time, slow time, mark time, open order, close order, by the left, by the right, left wheel, right wheel; these incessant commands pounded our fearful minds and reluctant

limbs. The first fortnight was the worst. My new long trousers were quickly shredded around the bottoms. No kit was issued for several weeks and we drilled in civilian clothes. There was no respite.

"What's the Commandant's name, the Adjutant's, the Company Commander's?"

Standing at ease during a sweaty ten minute break, we were often interrogated by 'Ben' Cook, the rubicande, moustached Regimental Sergeant Major, Grenadier Guards. He made unscheduled visits to gruffly examine our knowledge of the prominent members of the school's Hierarchy. Like well behaved puppets we chanted in unison their names, ranks, regiments, honours and awards. To get it wrong incurred the wrath of Sergeant Arthur, ever watchful and brooding over his squad. For punishment, he doubled us around the oak tree, shimmering in the heat at the distant end of the square.

Mainly an undernourished crowd of skinny, pimply faced youths from working class backgrounds was transformed into a group of fit muscular young men with gleaming teeth and short hair. Three hefty meals a day. The Royal Army Dental Corps and busy barbers played their part.

About this time, A and B Companies were taken on an outing to the Scots Guards' depot at Windsor, under the supervision of Ben Cook. Colonel was obviously satisfied that we were ready for exposure to public view. Compared to the immaculate Guards, we felt a ragged lot. Notwithstanding, they viewed us with good humoured tolerance. With the massive ramparts of Windsor Castle in the background and their band playing, we marched through the streets of Windsor, self consciously following them - it was a day to remember.

Many tales have been told about Ben Cook. He was shrewd, large and jovial, a disciplinarian resplendent in knee length puttees, gleaming Sam Browne belt and red banded cap. We held him in awe and great respect.

One freezing cold morning, the School was lined up on the edge of the parade ground. We awaited his gruff bark, "ONN PAYD", to call us on to the markers. The parade ground was covered with a thick layer of snow. Suddenly, a snow ball hit me in the back of my neck. Without thinking, I hurled one back in reply.

"Come out the boy who threw that snowball!"

Ben's hoarse rasp boomed out from across the other side. Eight hundred boys looked at each other. My guilt-ridden conscience was too strong. I just knew he was looking straight at me. With dumb determination, like someone about to commit Hari Kari, I took that first fatal step out of the ranks and marched towards Ben. Behind me I could sense them all relaxing to breathe easy.

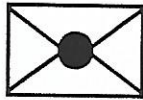
In his long purple greatcoat, he towered over me, his face ruddy and grim. Out of the corner of his mouth he growled, "Pick up a snowball." With nervous alacrity I scraped some snow together and held it out towards him. His quick brown eyes twinkled with wicked humour. "Now," he said, "eat it." Without hesitation I pushed the gravelly mixture into my mouth, relieved that I was not about to be escorted to the Guard Room. However, the eating was not so simple, as the snow froze in my hand. Ben, impatient with my slow masticatory process, anxious to get on with the parade, signalled me with his pace stick to go behind him and finish it off. Craftily, I dropped it and hoped he wouldn't notice. In vain! From the corner of his mouth, in his inimitable style, came the rasping, "Pick it up, pick it up."

He was always way ahead of us with all our schemes and tricks, the malingerers and the dodgers, appearing among them when least expected. The furtive smokers were his special targets and many of those he caught sickly 'enjoyed' smoking his thick black twist for their pains, instead of the usual fourteens days confined to barracks. I don't think he made any deals.

My brother Denis, who joined the School after I left, told me stories of Ben (then promoted to Lieutenant Cook, the agricultural officer) and his horse Gilbert. I am sure that by now every member of the AOBA is familiar with every story.

Other disciplinarians were not so benignly thought of by the boys. I have today, vividly in my mind the anguish and chagrin on the face of a young apprentice, seconds late to join his squad after a NAAFI break, the top pocket of his overalls stuffed with two bob's worth of chocolate bars - his weekly wage. He was ferociously accosted by a malevolent CSM, who took his treasure and crunched it under his polished boots. A silent collective groan of horror passed through our squad, as we stared, fascinated at this obscene execution of a weekly joy. That was 1939 - I don't think it would happen today.

LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR



*✉ Andrew G. Dickson (66B) writes from
Australia*

Every time the OBAN arrives in the mail I get enthused to put pen to paper so to speak. Time seems to slip by and I have the thing sat on my desk here at home for months and then the next one arrives and so it goes on. It is not like I ignore it, I read it from cover to cover the day it arrives.

The question marks above are gaps in my memory and I am not even sure I got the companies right.

There is one omission from this group, my brother in law, Bob James, also A Coy. Bob had the bunk in B3 and for some obscure reason never seemed to be able to get up in the morning. It was always up to me to nearly beat his door down before he managed to surface. The night before this photograph was taken we had attempted to drink most of the whisky in Reading and in my rush to make sure I was 'on parade' I forgot Bob. He has never forgiven me.

I spent time at 71 Workshops in Detmold, 654 Squadron in



The Air Techs of Intake 67A

The photograph above shows the Air Techs of Intake 67A. I was actually 66B but was relegated twice, so I passed out with Intake 67A. However, I still managed to become A/CSM of A Company. Some names I remember on the photograph are as follows:

Back Row (L - R): Pete Gunter - C Coy, ? - B Coy, Al Davies - A Coy, ? - D Coy, Woppy Smith - C Coy

Front Row (L to R): Paul Smith - D Coy, Les Meech (A/CSM) - B Coy, Andrew Dickson (me) - A Coy.

Herford, 655 Squadron back in Detmold and finally 45 Commando - Montforterbeek Flight in Abroath.

I did two tours of Northern Ireland, the first in 1971 based at Long Kesh with 655 and again at Long Kesh in 1974 with 45 Commando. I have a group photograph of the second tour somewhere with more history attached to it.

(I was on vacation in the UK some year's back and visited the museum at Middle Wallop and saw the citation and medal Bill Scarrett won during one of these tours. He was

flying Scout XV 132 at the time and got shot up in bandit country somewhere. None of us tech's thought Bill could fly straight anyway and wondered what really happened. I guess we will never know).

When I joined the AAS, 10 May 1966, we still wore the old cap-badge and school belt, (light and darker blue if I remember). We must have been the last intake under the AAS banner because I seem to remember parading and being issued with all the new stuff.

We lived in the small building at the top of the parade ground between J Block and the Sgts Mess. (I have seen it labeled a Permanent Staff accommodation block recently somewhere. From memory, 66B was well over 200 boys and I can still see some of the more notorious in my mind's eye. I come across very few these days but my brother in law and I swap war stories from time to time. Funny stories?

The 1966 World Cup final was on TV the day we passed out of J Coy. That whole week was a blur. I can remember walking back up to J Block across the square when somebody scored a goal in one of the lead up matches. I swear I thought I was at Wembley. The roar from all sides was just like being there. I don't remember exactly how but I did skive off some of the passing out festivities and got to watch the whole final on TV.

I can recall being on guard duty one night, I must have been in 5 or 6 div. There was a swim meet somewhere and the team had to get up really early, 4.00am or so, to get transport to go where ever they were going. After waking them, I went and sat on my bed in A6 and fell asleep. I woke up at 6.45. I hadn't woken the duty cook or any of the duty staff in the companies and consequently the whole college was late for the RSM's parade that Wednesday morning. I was sent for later and had to explain to RSM McMahon what had happened. I can tell you it was not the most pleasant 5 minutes or so of my short army life. I must say, he was a gentleman and I escaped with a caution, not a charge was laid.

Another time I was walking into the guardroom to book back in after being into Reading. I passed an officer coming down the steps and immediately threw up a smart salute only to have it totally ignored. This troubled me at the time but I was so 'drilled' I didn't think much more of it.

Years later, I mean 20 years later, I realised why my salute wasn't returned. I was in civvies. I bet that officer has had a chuckle or two at my expense since.

I hope this is of some interest. I have a copy of the photograph so don't need it returned.

(Thanks for the photo, Andrew, it will go into the Museum archives - Ed)

PD Edwards (42A) writes from Australia

I have been meaning to write for some time, reference the article by Ken Burren in OBAN 13 about the workshops in Palestine 1946. I was at Khurdani Swamps, No 4 Sub Workshops, 3 Base Workshops from summer 1946 to evacuation in 1948, spending the last few months as MT Cpl. I can vaguely remember Ken, as he should remember the blowing up of Acre prison when I was wounded on my way back from Haifa and spent a long while in hospital recovering.

I find the articles very interesting. Our minds wander after so long! I had to write also because Harold Price (42A) has also got it wrong. I attach a photocopy of a telegram as proof. 3 Base Workshops was at Haifa. No 1 Sub and No 2 Sub were at Base. No 3 Sub was in the old games buildings at Tel Aviv and No 4 was between Kyriat Moskin and Acre. I hope this clears it all up. *(I am more confused than ever! - Ed)*.

I met my wife at Arborfield in 1945 when I was doing my conversion course to VM/AFV and now that she is recovering from a serious illness I should have more time to write a resume of my career

Harry Shaw (J38) writes

In reply to Nick Webber's letter on Page 23 of OBAN17, with reference to the Bren story, when the School was finally demolished I enlisted the contractors who were very helpful. I have to tell you that no artifacts of interest were discovered apart from sweet papers etc., - certainly no weapons of any description. I supervised this operation personally, hoping to make some progress! Don't forget the Canadians had the place in 1944 waiting to go to France.

I well remember some ten Tors walks as I was on the permanent staff for some years. We used to go down to Dartmoor for training in the winter. I am now retired and spend my life 'walking the dog', doing church work etc.

Paddy O'Brien (39A) writes

California here we come!

It all began in late May 1939 in the days when letters were handed to a man on horseback to await the reply the following season: I once grew 6 inches between letters. To continue, Arthur Sainsbury and I decided to go in search of diversion and at the same time to shake the camphor from our new uniforms. I was 4 foot 9 inches tall, 6 stone in weight and built like a hockey stick with the wood scraped clean. Rain never reached me until the following day.

Arthur was taller, but like me had to jump twice to create a shadow. We were an odd pair and I now cringe when I reflect

on our audacity and the spectacle we presented - me in my trousers which went from my neck to my boots in a concertina fashion as they narrowed to 12 inches. They were World War One trousers and were meant to be lashed to the ankles by puttees, long since obsolete and replaced by varicose veins!

My jacket was large enough for a second occupant; I could walk 6 feet before the jacket moved. A periscope came with the jacket. I'll not dwell on the hat, but thank the lord for my ears!

We were in high spirits as we reached the guardroom and were confronted by a full length mirror which asked, 'Are you a credit to your unit?' Arthur stroked his chin and mused aloud, "I could knock 'em dead with a moustache", and there was I hardly able to raise an eyebrow.

We slipped past the main gate and here we were on the brink of throwing the fashion world into confused uproar. We were unfamiliar with the area, so set out blindly and before you could say Goofy Hacker we found ourselves in the California area. A passing old lady asked me if it was student's rag day, then a dog barked and ran through a hedge. We followed but stayed on this side of the hedge as music started up. We peeked through and the place was teeming with nudists, dancing! Arthur said it was a fertility dance.

I often wondered if Arthur came from a satanic sect and was biding his time to take over B Company. Fertility dancing had not reached Ireland at this time - we were still trying to come to grips with the foxtrot. Later, with the introduction of the condom the fertility came into its own and you couldn't see dust for high jinks. However, it turned out that the dance in question was the hockey-kokey.

A large lady with the complexion of a road mender danced towards our spy hole, exhibiting a full frontal which set me wondering if this was indeed the difference between Catholics and Protestants. As the music tempo hotted up she suddenly seemed to erupt and with a flick of her upper half hoisted her protuberances over her shoulder.

An old man, who should have been ashamed of himself and should really have been in his garden throwing sticks at cats, got himself all tangled up when putting his left leg in when he should have been turning about. He fell in a heap and was carried to the side lines. Just as a substitute was about to take his place, an angry voice from behind us bellowed, "What the bl---y hell goes on here?"

It was 'Chesty' Jackson out PTI. He doubled us back to camp where we had our first encounter with Ben Cook. He lashed into us, called us white slavers etc., etc. Then he asked for location of this colony. In my mind's eye, I tried to imagine Ben doing the hockey-kokey in the nude, but it was difficult. He admonished us and as it was our first offence we were put on cookhouse fatigues.

I have never ventured back to the colony but felt that the

experience did me some good for I read somewhere that a youthful interest in nudity might well provide the ultimate answer to the teenage pimple enigma.

✍ David Barrett (52B) writes

I do realize that I come across at times, a whisper eccentric and could be getting to the forgetful age or even 'senior moments'. However, having read my way through OBAN17 I am totally confused. On page one, I am labelled as belonging to intake 56B, page fifteen as 562B and again on page eighteen as 562B? I begin to feel like Doctor Who and his re-incarnations. But, if you do have contact with the man above, and I am due for a replay at Arborfield again on 9 September 2562 - there are a few small changes I'd like to suggest

To those discerning readers and whoever could be remotely interested, I was abandoned on the doorstep of the AAS on 9 September 1952, almost forty-seven years ago.

I remain sir, your most obedient servant, David E Barrett 52B (fifteetwobee) - exactly as it says on the tin!

(Apologies David, couldn't read your writing! - Ed)

✍ Ken Anderson (58A) writes

I enclose a floppy disk with images in several formats of the Army Apprentices School cap badge circa late 50s, early 60s. I scanned the image from a cover of the school magazine. As a matter of interest, does anyone know the whereabouts of the large wall mounted version of the badge which used to be in the old Sergeants Mess at the school?

I served on the permanent staff in the late 60s and it was certainly there then. At the same time that I was on the permanent staff, so was WOI(ASM) John Pewsey who, as an apprentice, helped construct the wall-mounted version which was about 3 feet high.

(I thank you, Ken, on behalf of Howard Trill, the back cover is now enhanced with another badge. - Ed)

✍ Denys Goldfinch, Secretary of the
BSXBA in New Zealand writes

Many thanks for the copies of OBAN, we file these in our archives for future reference. I continually get questions on how the College is going and what is boy service these days - not just from ex-boys. I must add, we had quite an impact on the rest of the arm.

I am also very pleased to see that the New Zealand element get more than their fair share of the coverage and we are always very pleased to see any ex-boy who finds himself in 'Godzone'.

✍ *Trevor O'Callaghan (42C) writes*

In reply to the editor's question to my letter in OBAN 17 re: Tripoli, the REME workshop was in Tripoli, the racing circuit was about 12 miles outside. I cannot remember the name or number of the workshop, even though I visited it about 2 days a week. The vehicle park was 595 and there was also a small workshop in the racing circuit pits.

I have written to the editor of the Mazarati magazine requesting information, but to date the editor has been unsuccessful.

(Can anyone else expand on this area? - Ed)

✍ *Eggy Eggleton (52B) writes*

In furtherance of my reply in OBAN 13 to Brian Conway's (42A) letter in issue 12, I checked my Certificate of Service and I joined the GSC for three years before being transferred to REME.

With reference to the Editor's article (page 12 OBAN 16) I was a boy NCO who was not outstanding at sport and not interested in my trade. Only my bunk in F3 and drill which I enjoyed. On leaving boys school CSM Brady advised me to go 'regimental'. I had been forced into a trade I did not want and was only interested in demob. I was not an enthusiastic soldier, a happy go lucky Craftsman, a could not careless L/Cpl and a stropky substantive Cpl who pushed his luck to the limit much to the chagrin of WOs and Sgts. In my Certificate of Service it states, 'inclined to be a bit indifferent on occasions. My Christian name is spelt wrong on the first page and on the other pages my surname is spelt wrong.

With reference to your article 'ED' in issue 16 I was a boy N.C.O. who was not outstanding at sport and not interested in my trade. Only my bunk in F3 and drill which I enjoyed. On leaving boys school C.S.M. Brady advised me to go Regimental. I had been forced into a trade I did not want and was only interested in demob. I was not an enthusiastic soldier, a happy go lucky Cfn., a could not careless L/Cpl and a stropky substantive Cpl who pushed his luck to the limit much to the chagrin of W.O.'s and Sgt's. In my Certificate of Service it states 'inclined to be a bit indifferent on occasions. My Christian name is spelt wrong on the first page and on the other pages my surname is spelt wrong.

With reference to the map of the old school circa 1959, there are a number of changes to our time there (1952-55. Stephen-son Road was always called Education Rd and the huts 33,34 & 35 were educational classrooms. There were no buildings

on the square. Q25 was a Tels Workshop, 22,23 & 24 Tels classrooms and Q26 the Armourers Shop. All Company Offices plus the MO were on the road called Nuffield. The Padre & Pay Office were not there. The CO's office was Regimental HQ and the living spiders were A & B for A Coy, C & D for B Coy, H & J for C Coy. K & E for D Coy, F & G for H.Q. Coy.

There was no Junior Coy; all 'jeeps' went into HQ Coy for six months, where they learnt drill, general fitting and education. After this they were selected for a trade and went into the Companies. The boy NCOs in HQ Company were detached from their own Companies including an A/CSM plus a A/Sgt, A/Cpl & A/L/Cpl to each drill squad. The L/Cpls were usually promoted in 3 Div and stopped in HQ till 6 Div. when they returned to their Companies - except Intake 52B - we had spend 6 Div in HQ.

The school had no boy RSM or S/Sgts. The boy CSM wore a crown in a wreath on top of the three black on red stripes.(KRRRC pattern). D Company was formed while we were at the School. Also, when we were at the school over 30 different Units were represented by the permanent staff.; their cap badges being displayed in a glass case on the side of the guard room.

All 'other denominations' (ODs) did not attend church parade on a Wednesday morning, so we were able to watch the permanent staff drill parades. This was quite funny as the light infantry never stood to attention, all movements were from the 'stand at ease' position and they never sloped arms, marched very fast or ran. 'Donkey wallopers' (cavalry) did not do rifle drill (they tended to bend rifles getting inside turrets) and of course the Educational Corps were too intelligent to be able to drill.

On Sundays the ODs went to church before the C of Es in the camp hall and it was boy NCOs who commanded this parade as well as the RCs. The Burmese apprentices did their own thing. When we arrived, Fred Silvers (the Provo Sergeant) was on sick leave as he had been stabbed by the Provo Corporal.

✍ *Tony (Skiver) Ivens (54A) writes from Australia*

Reunion 99. Further to my letter in OBAN 17, I have been let down badly and to say that I am disappointed at not being able to come to the Reunion this year is an understatement! It was one of the few times I have depended upon someone else and will not do it again. However, I now intend to spend 10 or 12 weeks over in the old country instead of the eight I was to have spent this year, so I still have something to look forward to.

A week has gone by since I first started this letter and I have worked it out that it would take me 200 years to write highlights of my life story. Well, you said (editor) you would

re-write my last letter from my scrawlings and you certainly did - well written mate! I have decided, if you concur, to scrawl down some memories and thoughts and if you want to ever put them together as an article, please do. It won't ever be that great novel, but some amusement might be gained - I was always a 'little sod' and never took myself or other people too seriously.

Please give my kind regards to all the lads I know - I will be doing my best to get over next year.

(Skiver, firstly, about your article - I re-write them all the time, so no problems. Secondly, perhaps we could arrange some sort of get together when you come over - anyone else in 54A interested? - Ed)

✍️ *Doug Boucher (43A) writes*

I had a very long chat with David Barrett and he has printed for me a copy of his cartoon drawing published in OBAN 17 in A1 size. The increase in size really allows you to see all the detail and his sense of humour is marvellous.

As one who cannot draw, I find the skill and workmanship displayed quite incredible and such a good laugh as well as being accurate. I'm glad it was included in the Newsletter and I hope he can be persuaded to do some more. I also hope he gets lots of orders - it's the best buy and laugh I have had for a long time!

(David has already drawn some accompanying cartoons for another member's article which will be published sometime in the future. I have a feeling he may be playing around with another subject to caricature. - Ed)

✍️ *Don Smith (42A) writes*

With reference to the photos shown on Page 13 of OBAN 13, I can confirm that it is ADC Wheatley, my late brother-in-law, being presented with the Commandant's Cup. Where and when and from whom I do not know. Apart from RSM McNally's hat here are some other clues.

Tony and I were of Intake 42A and both in C Company. The 1942 sports day was therefore too early for such an award and I believe that Tony's promotion to Boy L/Cpl was during the first half of 1943, but may have been later that year. During the winter of 1943 he travelled weekly to Reading by bus to attend evening classes and I feel that he was awarded the cup early in 1944, the presentation being made on the sports day.

Came the spring of 1944 and the School was dispersed with the telemechs going to Greenford with Sgt Evans (SWB) and

Cpl Hunter (KOSB) to keep control. We worked there through the summer, during which time we handed in our SD uniforms and drew BD. My recollection is that we were mustered on 28-8-44 and shortly afterwards were sent to Warley Barracks to learn how to march etc. Tony had been selected to attend a course at Woolwich Polytechnic and stayed behind at Greenford and was still there when a flying bomb hit the workshop.

I assume that the Woolwich course started in October or November and it seems likely that he returned to Arborfield after the bombing and before the move to Woolwich. If this is so, can it account for: the RSM's dress, Tony's SD without a belt, the fact that he is wearing ATS, the possibility of a sports day being held during 1944 when marquees were erected (I don't remember them in 1942 nor 1943), and the non-recognition of the lady presenting the cup? This all fits in with the points made by Brian Conway and if Tony had borrowed the SD for the presentation it would account for the lack of L/Cpl stripe and GC stripe. At Woolwich they wore civilian clothing.

A few more words about Tony for those who seem to remember him well. It happened that I lived near Woolwich and went to the lodgings to meet up with those on the course (I recall 7 of us at the time) and invited Tony home for a cup of tea. It was then that he met my sister Pam and they married in June 1947. For those who remember her, she now lives in France, not too far from her eldest son - the second son followed Tony into electronics and the youngest is a missionary in Africa. Tony later went to Trieste and Austria with the Forces Broadcasting Services and when that ceased, came back to the electronics school at Arborfield as an instructor, living at Wokingham. I hope these notes throw a little more light on the subject.

(Arthur 'Chip' Tomlinson - what have you started? No doubt we will be hearing from Brian in due course - Ed)

✍️ *Peter Langley (Intake 41) writes*

Thank you Brian for another excellent issue. Looking at the photos on Pages 4 & 5 of OBAN 17, I am reminded again how 'rent-a-snap' they are (no offence to those pictured). It could almost be some of the '41 intake! We didn't have berets of course - or those funny cap badges! Ammo boots crashing into tarmac. Yes, and have you ever met an old soldier who has not had back trouble of some sort? Dennis Elshaw's piece rings very true: I particularly like the anecdotes about the unfortunate stammerer and the soapy cheese episode.

Photos 10, 11 & 12 on page 9 of OBAN 17: the bugler I remember most was 'Badgie' Hodson (or Hodgson) and yes, he was RAOC. He was also a very good middle distance runner. I think I remember Colonel White, and oh! the fun

we had standing to attention on those vertical barrack room floors!

Dick Wade is nearer my time so yes, also very familiar. He has Ben bang to rights! Don't remember the Morris truck, but then we armourers were not suppose to sully our delicate selves with such as vehicles and engines! You think I'm joking? Not so. 'Turkey' Cooper, our drill Sgt, told us we were the pick of the bunch.

"You," he said, "will learn a proper trade. Vehicle mechanics? All they do is assemble engines and then run 'em in!" - or words to that effect.

I suppose, given that era, there was a smidgeon of truth in it: we made all our own tools without recourse to a lathe, for instance. I still have an odd shaped punch, whose function has long been consigned to the dustbin of my Short Lee-Enfield memory: I used it only the other day! And that tin cylinder we made: still in use. It contains warding files and various punches.

Even closer are those '42 jeeps, Messrs Conway, Hutchinson and Adey. How did Montgomery come to have so many references in the mag? Surely he *was* something big in SE Command. Why else did he come to the School? I recall his achieving fame by making his junior officers lead a fags- and booze-free existence - probably women-free too - along with invigorating early morning exercise. We thought it was a good idea: why shouldn't they suffer as we did?

'Bandy' Nel? I met him in Palestine, '48-ish. He was reluctant to discuss his time at the School. 'Trumpy' Towler became D Coy CSM and I remember his brother, a man who objected to swearing. 'Buzzy' was his favourite cuss word.

Bryan Adams reminds me that when the School closed in '44, our training was truncated and we were despatched to far flung places as grown up soldiers. I, too, went to 13 Command Wksps with several others. Parsons Barracks is still there Bryan - saw it a few months ago. I remember a nasty accident in the main workshop (we armourers were in the old Victorian Ordnance Depot) when someone got shoved, by a tank, against a groin-height grindstone. Would that have been the A/T Clarke you mention? I am intrigued by your recollections of the Sports Day in 1943. Was that the time it was held on the field behind the gym? I shall send for issue 13 without delay!

I note the paeans of praise for RSM McNally. Can this be the same McNally who arrived to take over from Ben Cook, a coarse man, devoid of charisma and commanding no respect that I was ever aware of? A man better known for turning up drunk, with Ben, to watch Saturday afternoon football matches? It is to his credit that he metamorphosed into someone who was, evidently, regarded with respect and even affection. John Houghton speaks of 'the RSM' in 1961. He was surely long since a plain Mister by then.

I have gone on longer than I intended, so I shall close, with

congratulations to David Barrett, as probably the only survivor from the '562 intake. Oh - and on his brilliant cartoons!

(Will I ever live this error this down? - Ed)

Prince Philip Hall, REME Museum of Technology

As reported in the *Daily Telegraph* for Saturday 23 October, under **Court and Social, Court Circular**: The Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief, this morning opened The Prince Philip Hall at the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Museum of Technology and subsequently attended a Lunch at the West Court Officer's Mess, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire.

We, as members of the Museum staff, had worked steadily over the previous weeks, preparing the vehicles in their various settings, some of which had almost reached full 'diorama' standard. Unfortunately, given the time scale, it was not possible to complete the displays to their final standard, but nevertheless they looked pretty good.

The vehicles were restored by our Vehicles Curator, Roger Jones who is based at SEME Bordon and it was he who was instrumental in transferring the restored vehicles to Arborfield - some in running order and some without engines, but all were transported by low loader.

Meanwhile, the Arborfield based staff with the help of 'volunteer' soldiers awaiting the start of their courses at SEAE, concentrated on preparing the area within the Hall, organising the painting of the floor, setting up the stands and mounting the large display photographs, prepared by David Lane of ATSA, to complement the various vehicle locations, some shown in jungle surroundings, some in desert conditions, some in woodland, some with their interiors lit up and one on a sandy beach. An educational area at one end of the Hall, intended for research visitors such as school parties, had to be carpeted and provided with computer terminal points. Gradually the display began to take shape

On 22 October at 1145 am, Prince Philip entered the Hall and gave his speech (which was also briefly covered by Meridian TV later that evening). Approximately 80 invited visitors, comprising a number of senior officers and senior heads of industry, attended the opening and later had lunch at West Court - some also returned in the afternoon to view the main part of the Museum.

This, of course, prepared the Hall for the following day, when members of the Arborfield Old Boys Association could take advantage and visit the Hall to feed on a little nostalgia. It now remains for the staff to continue to improve the displays over the next few months to their own satisfaction.

- Ed

DONATIONS

The Committee are most grateful for the following donations which have been received since the publication of OBAN Issue 16					
D C Martin	38B	£10.00	W J Jobber	43B	£15.00
G C Pursglove	39A	£5.00	D McKay	44A	£5.00
I A Metcalfe	39B	£2.00	F W Sands	45B	£3.00
A S H Sainsbury	39B	£5.00	G A Harold	46A	£10.00
K J Burren	42A	£5.00	M J Parsons	46B	£5.00
R J Hutchinson	42A	£5.00	E G Keen	47B	£24.00
A G Winchester	42A	£5.00	D M Wood	47B	£5.00
L C Bendall	42B	£5.00	I D Hume	49A	£1.00
R F Diggins	42B	£5.00	G G Bonner	49B	£19.00
N H Dalhousie	43A	£10.00	J Massie	55A	£20.00
			E Rhodes	PS	£5.00
			Should any donations have been missed off this list, the Committee apologise and express their thanks.		

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 reactivated 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 members will be published in future OBANs. If any member has any information which might help the Membership Secretary to locate somebody please let him know.				
Aberdeen J P	54A	Farmelo K J	55A	
Azzopardi C	54B	Gallagher J	39B	
Bevan M P	54B	Houston J	77B	
Crabb M J J	53B	Kambanis P M	78B	
Douglas M	54A	Lackey W T C	???	
		Logue W	54B	
		Myall W A	54B	
		Nattress C R	55A	
		Osborne R	54A	
		Robbins D	47B	
		Stevenson H	39C	
		Tait K	77B	
		Vaughan D I	78C	
		Wilkie I R	78B	

RESIGNATIONS

The following members have resigned from the Association in recent months:			
J P Ainge	95A	D Dalby	95A
		P E Fenner	95A
		E G Hackett	56A

DECEASED

It is with sadness and deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following:
 Major(Retd) Stan Rycroft MBE died 8 May 1999,
 (as reported in The Craftsman, September 1999)

Members whose deaths have been notified or discovered since publication of OBAN 17.

R D Smallman (39C) died 13 May 1999

K C Clark (42A) died 4 June 1999

J W Hewitt (39B) died during June 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/ArmyApprentices 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.

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

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, SO31 1ZE. Tel No. 01489 885389.

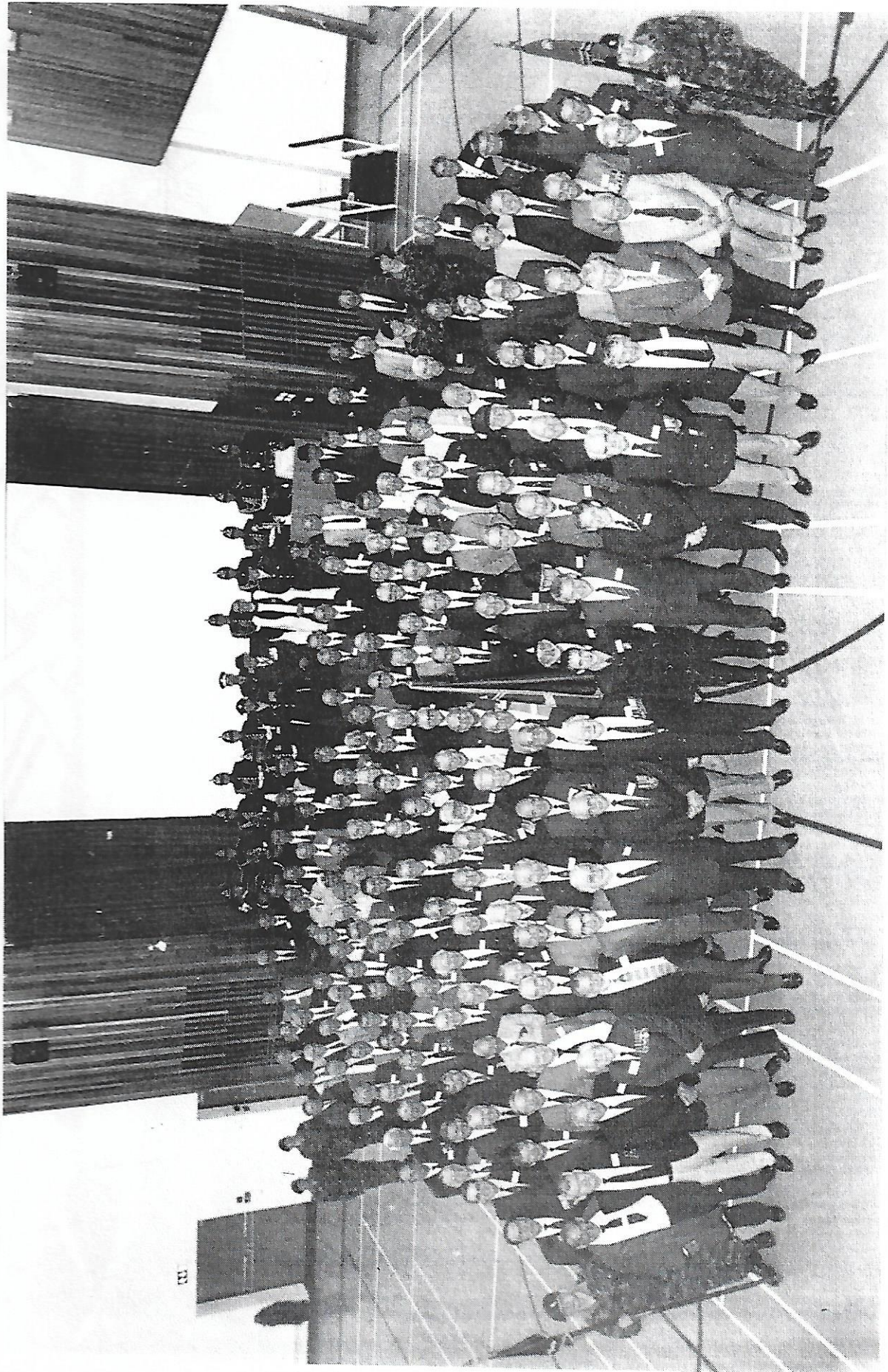
Cartoon Sheets. Copies of the cartoon shown in OBAN 17 (or any others drawn for articles by David Barrett) can be ordered in black & white on original size on 80gsm paper, each individually signed in red (to avoid any accidental copying). Where smaller cartoons on sheets of different sizes and paper/card thickness are required, the price will differ. 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.

THE CRAFTSMAN

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REUNION 99 - GROUP PHOTOGRAPH

