

O B A N



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

President - Brigadier R J Croucher ADC, MA, CEng, FIMechE, DEME(A)

Vice Presidents - Past Commandants

COMMITTEE

Chairman

Lt Colonel Jim Mitchell RE

Vice Chairman

Lt Col Terry Knee REME

Honorary Treasurer

Major(Retd) Mike Davis MBE (60B)

Honorary Secretary

Lt Colonel(Retd) Bill Cleasby (61C)

Assistant Honorary Secretary

Major(Retd) Mick T Harold (53B)

Honorary Membership Secretary

Colonel(Retd) Peter Gibson CEng, FIEE, FIMgt

Editor OBAN

Mr Brian Hornsey (54A)

Recruitment & Publicity Member

Mr David Schofield DMS MBA (65A)

Members

Captain James B Smith RLC

Warrant Officer I (RSM) W T Emmerson COLDSTREAM GUARDS

Staff Sergeant S E G Lawton REME

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 INFORMATION

Honorary Secretary
Lt Colonel(Retd) IWJ Cleasby
REME Museum
Isaac Newton Road
Arborfield
Berks RG2 9NJ
Tel: 0118 976 3227

E-mail:
reme-museum@gtmet.gov.uk

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Membership Secretary
Peter Gibson
35 The Avenue
ANDOVER
Hants SP10 3EP
Tel: 01962 887429
Fax: 01962 887376

E-mail:
peter_gibson@compuserve.com

OBAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Editor OBAN
Brian Hornsey
6 The Crofts
Hatch Warren
BASINGSTOKE
Hants RG22 4RF
Tel: 01256 816188
Fax: 01256 844134

E-mail:
brian@carrelet.prestel.co.uk

Arborfield Old Boys Association News

Table of Contents

OBAN - Issue 21

Arborfield Old Boys' Association	(i)
From the Editor <i>Brian Hornsey (54A)</i>	1
Regimental Sergeant Major's Message <i>WOI (RSM) W T Emmerson</i>	2
From the Honorary Secretary <i>Lt Col (Retd) Bill Cleasby</i>	3
From the Membership Secretary <i>Col (Retd) Peter Gibson</i>	3
Recruitment & Publicity Report <i>By Mr David Schofield (65A)</i>	4
My Introduction to Korea & 10 Infantry Workshops <i>By John Dutton (43A)</i>	5
In Korea With 16 Infantry Workshops <i>By Joe Adey (42A)</i>	10
In Japan With 5 Medium Workshops <i>By Joe Adey (42A)</i>	18
Journey to the Sharp End & 11 Infantry Workshops - April 1951 <i>By Duncan Binnie</i>	23
Movement of Infantry Workshops in Korea <i>Compiled by Brian Hornsey (54A)</i>	27
In Korea with 7 th RTR & 8 th KRI Hussars <i>By Brian Conway (42A)</i>	28
REME Museum Hosts Veterans of The Korean War <i>By Brigadier (Retd) Martyn Clark</i>	34
British Commonwealth Korean Base <i>Copy of Operational Order No. 1</i>	35
In Korea with The Middlesex Regiment <i>By Peter Simmonds (44A)</i>	36
Comradeship with The Gloucesters <i>By G M Thompson (45B)</i>	41
In Korea with The 5 th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards <i>By Roger Millard (46A)</i>	42
Letters to the Editor	44
Notices	52
<i>Members Resignations</i>	52
<i>New Members</i>	52
<i>Deceased</i>	52
Association Items For Sale	53

From The Editor

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

Acknowledgements. Printed by Printing Dept, SEAE Arborfield

Issue 21. A somewhat larger Issue this time to accommodate all the new articles about your experiences in the Korean War. I have been able to raid the Pictorial Archives in the Museum to supplement some of them and to include a review of the display put on at the Museum on 6 July this year.

As always, 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 - including, of course, the remaining unpublished essays of Alan Morton (51B), Eddie Broomfield (45A) and Brian Conway (42A). 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, sixties and seventies are beginning to contribute, but what about some contributions from the eighties and even the nineties? We even had an ex-apprentice of a 90s intake visit the Museum the other day - complete with her children - how times have changed! I am hoping she is going to join the AOBA!

If possible, please continue to send your contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows Word 6 version). If you are using a later version of Word or whatever, it is usually possible to use the *Save As..* function to also select the type of file in an older format, hopefully Word 6. If you don't have access to a computer or to someone who has, then of course I must accept clear, hand-written contributions - but manuscript contributions will go to the back of the queue (because I have to type them!). 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!

I repeat, 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 already contributed. By the time you will have read this I will have resigned from the Museum to 'get a proper job again' in engineering! I will have been replaced by Major (Retd) Charles Elsey, another ex-boy (not in the AOBA)! However, I intend to continue to edit the OBAN, time permitting.

Brian Hornsey (54A)

REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR'S MESSAGE

WO1 (RSM) WT Emerson COLDSTREAM GUARDS.

As you know the Commanding Officer will be leaving the College very soon and you will have read his last message in the previous O.B.A.N. Due to his very heavy schedule in his upcoming hand over it has passed to me to make a short comment on the state of the College. To place my comment in context let me take you back in time to 1976 when I joined the junior Army as a 16-year-old, and if that was not enough I entered the strange world of the Household Division.

I have now followed the footsteps of some famous Guardsmen and in the short 14 months I have spent at the College and My service of 23 years for Queen and country, I think I can make a fair and impartial comment, on the present state of the union.

During the short but very fast period I have been at the College many things have changed with the advancement of technology and yet another "name change". I have seen changes in the education plan and the new NVQ award in information technology, we have a cyber cafe and you can surf the net at your leisure. Something that most of the association already do, looking at the hits on the AOBA web site.

This advancement in technology can at times be a bit tricky for the older soldier, however for the modern Apprentice this is taken in their stride, like water off a duck's back. The basic skills and values that you learnt as a young soldier are still taught and enforced.

The days when your knees went weak at the thought of yet one more endurance run or those periods in the gym attempting to do some strange physical activity that the PTI said was good for you but your body told you it wasn't.

Restriction of privileges and guard duties still happen we still go to the ranges, clamber over assault courses and get wet and cold on exercise but the RSM doesn't have a coal shed anymore. We still expect the highest of standards so as to send only the best recruits to Phase two, trade schools and the future field Army.

Coming from the Brigade of Guards 'Drill' is close to my heart and on the last Reunion we managed to hold a parade outside and have a spot of marching. After a quick refresher it was good to see that those who were good at drill still had a spark about them and those who never knew their left from right were still as bad as ever

After a few choice words we were off and with Pipes & Drums leading the way, it was good to see the swagger, pride and honour still there from those on parade.

The College as you know has three Pass Off parades each year and the December's parade will be my fourth. It still makes my toes curl and the hairs on the back of my neck stand up when those young men and women march on parade after only 28 weeks of military training.

It is a credit to the training staff and all those involved with this great day to produce an event that the Apprentices and their family will remember for years, as you all remember yours.

I will depart the College next year I will have the good fortune though of attending my third reunion and look forward to many a drink and tale at the bar. The stories get better with time and stretched a little but it is always a pleasure to see such a fine gathering whether you are a (jeep) or not.

With the Commanding Officer moving onto pastures new, it's been a pleasure to serve with him and the College wishes him and his family well.

Gentlemen, the College is in safe and secure hands. The days of old may have gone and great men such as McNally, Sallis and Delgarno have passed on to the College in the sky. But traditions and standards still apply and the word Apprentice lives on, and does live on.



Colonel Jim 'Wined and Dined' at Hazebrouck

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Lt Col(Retd) Bill Cleasby

I would like to start off by thanking all those who kindly wrote in to congratulate the committee on the 2000 reunion. It is clear that a large number of you thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. We hope to repeat the formulae in 2001 so watch out for the application forms.

Your committee as usual is hard at it and working on a number of activities to enhance the standing of the AOBA. This includes obtaining charitable status for the association, producing a membership directory and continuing to develop the web-site. You will also be interested to hear that Peter Gripton (56B) has taken on the task of producing the definitive history of the College. This is in addition to the potted history of the College, which Peter is also in the process of updating.

As most of you are aware, the Commanding Officer of the College, Lt Colonel Jim Mitchell, is shortly departing Arborfield for pastures anew and is being replaced by Lt Colonel Derek McAvoy.

Your committee took the opportunity at the last Association meeting to dine out Colonel Jim in the appropriate style and on behalf of the AOBA thanked him for all his efforts and assistance during his tenure at the College.

In closing, a request for volunteers to help with the administration for the next reunion.

I can be contacted on 0118 9763227 and all offers will be considered. It is confirmed that the next reunion will be held over the weekend of 22 to 24th June 2001.

See you all next Summer

*Warm regards
Bill Cleasby*

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Col(Retd) Peter Gibson

Although I was unable to be present at Reunion 2000, I understand that all who attended had a wonderful time and missed me thoroughly! I can tell you, however, that Australia was not too unpleasant despite being there during their winter season. My trip was so rushed that I was unable to find time to contact any of our many Australian members, but next time I visit I shall make an effort to do so. I was only able to spend 2 weeks there but I can quite understand the attractions of the country.

Recruitment of new members is progressing well although we are still not attracting the number of younger members that we need. Significant numbers are joining through the Internet web site for which we are most grateful to David Schofield.

During the coming year I am going to target those ex-apprentices who are about to retire from the Army. Any ex-apprentices still serving can help with recruiting by encouraging others in their units to join

The percentage of members paying by Standing Order on their banks is increasing steadily – mainly because most new members opt for this method of payment. There are still those amongst you, however, who steadfastly refuse to sign a Standing Order – and then forget to send a cheque as well.

If you really do not want to initiate a Standing Order – and I cannot think why anyone should be concerned about doing so – why not send a cheque covering the next 5 years instead? (Subscriptions for 2001 should be sent to arrive before 31st March 2001). Every cheque received is additional unnecessary work for the Treasurer and myself.

You will probably be pleased to hear that the Membership Directory is ready to print. It has taken a long time to reach this stage and, as we are still searching for somebody to print it, I cannot estimate when we shall be ready to distribute the first copies.

As soon as you receive the first edition of the Directory, please check your entry and send me details of any corrections needed for the second edition.

Peter Gibson

**RECRUITMENT
&
PUBLICITY REPORT**

David Schofield (65A)

I hope everyone is enjoying our web site! From the comments and the number of visitors we are receiving I am confident we have found the right spot! I am writing this at the end of October and we have had over 18,000 hits - FANTASTIC!

I receive a lot of phone calls and e-mails about the site, a large number asking me how to get into it and how to move around once arrived. So for this report I thought I would both provide a little insight into the veils and myths of the 'net' and also update you with the latest changes and thought for development.

Most of us use either Internet Explorer or Netscape Online as our browser. There are, of course, other Internet browsers, but the procedures are the same. After you have logged-on it is important that you type our address exactly in the Address Bar as: -

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

Do not use UPPER CASE nor place any gaps - because if you do it won't work! Sometimes I get calls saying you have done this and still you cannot get in. Sorry, but you just have to be patient. The most common fault is that your Internet provider is busy - if you keep trying you will get in.

Once in you will be at the 'Splash Page' - frankly, this is just me showing off!! But this page does tell a new visitor what he can expect to find and if it's not what he is looking for he can move on without wasting a lot of his time down-loading pictures etc. Anyway, you want to visit the site so click your mouse anywhere over the image of our gates and you're in!!

Now you are in the main page you can visit any of the pages. All pages now have photographs as thumbnails so this shortens your uploading time. If you see a small picture you wish to look at, all you have to do is to click on it and wait for it to download.

At the moment you will have to use your browser's 'Back' icon to return to our site. If there are any pictures you want to nick for yourself, simply click the right-hand button on your mouse over the picture and your software will offer you the option of 'save

image as...' Decide where you want to save and as what. It's as easy as that!

I am pleased to report the History Page is developing. We now have a copy of the Blue Book (my thanks to Alec Powell (64C) and the time he spent on his scanner!) The RSM information is complete and I hope the Commandant's list will be finished by the time you are reading this.

A lot of people ring me asking about the Who's Who page. I am sorry this is taking longer than I expected, but now that I have found some database software we can use on the site, I can get on and do it. So look out for this over the next couple of months. When it is up and running you will need some passwords.

You will be presented with a small box saying you are about to enter a protected area. The User Name will be arborfield and the Password will be jeep.

Again you notice both are on lower case. THIS IS IMPORTANT. Once you are through this protection you will see a fairly standard database layout. Here you can search by name or year. So if you are looking for (say) Smith, simply enter this and you will be given all the Smiths. By entering (say) 1954 you will get all members from 1954. Easy eh? (I hope so!!)

You will still have to contact me for a telephone number, as we are not happy about putting the full details of our membership on the Internet even with a password protection. Still, let's see how we get on. I will try to get this on in the next couple of months so watch this space!!

I hope you enjoy our web site - I must say I am enjoying doing it. If you have any ideas for improvements please talk to me. Critique is always welcome (except on my spelling!)

David (Titch) Schofield (65A)

**MY INTRODUCTION TO KOREA
& 10 INFANTRY WORKSHOPS**
An edited extract from John Dutton's
forthcoming book:

The Forgotten Corps of the Forgotten War

In about September or October 1951, while serving in the Instrument Wing at 4 Training Battalion, Blackdown, I was drafted to the Depot at Arborfield. Living in married quarters with my family, it was an awkward time to leave because the battalion was about to move to Bordon, eventually to amalgamate with 6 Training Battalion to become SEME.

On arrival at the Depot I reported to the drafting company where I met CSM Scott, a well known member of the Corps and was allocated a barrack room full of senior NCOs, all destined for a place known as 'Port B'.

One soon became acquainted with one's barrack room buddies - names, trades, married or single etc. In our room there were 3 staff sergeant instrument artificers. We tried to determine why 3 instrument artificers were required (we had guessed by now that we were bound for Korea or Japan). Knowing that there were only 2 field workshops in Korea, each one supported by only 1 instrument artificer, we decided that perhaps they were about to set up a new advanced base and this was the reason there were 3 of us. As we were to later find out, we were completely wrong!

As the days moved on, we were issued with some strange items of kit - string vests, 'long johns', brown boots covered with dried up white wax and many sizes too large (explanations were to come later) a rifle and steel helmet - the rifle to be thoroughly degreased and cleaned. Next, a visit to the medical centre for the normal check up - all was well. Time dragged on, but eventually the call came and the journey started. I think Southampton was our port of departure.

Looking back, as this was not my first experience in a troopship, I must say I was fortunate - the ship was the *MV Georgic*, some 27,000 tons (*MV* is an abbreviation for *Motor Vessel*). She was Diesel powered, having 2 main engines each of 10 cylinders, each developing 1,000 hp. This allowed her to cruise at 22 knots. Berths were allocated amidships - mine was in a four berth cabin on A Deck, Starboard.

The next chore was to lodge my rifle with the Ship's Armoury (the same rifle that had been degreased and cleaned and was now to endure the ravages of salty sea air, ungreaed for 4 weeks!). Back to the cabin to stow your kit, then quickly on to the second class lounge, all senior NCOs that is. A ship is like a barracks; it runs on rules and regulations and with those go duties. The Ship's RSM was calling for volunteers to carry out various duties from a mixed compliment of regiments and corps comprising, the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, a complete Armoured Regiment and some

28 REME senior NCOs, plus an unknown quantity of REs, RSigs, RA, ACC, RMP and many more other ranks.

During the allocation of duties, REME had kept a low profile at the back of the lounge until there seemed to be only one duty to go - Ship's Police. We, as one, volunteered! The Ship's Police were to report to the Master at Arms (warrant officers in merchant navy uniforms). An explanation of our duties followed.

From 2300 hrs to 0600hrs daily, we would take it in turn to search every nook and cranny that the ship possessed, accompanied by a Master at Arms. He carried a *tell-tale* clock that was punched at each position on deck as our walk progressed. It took 1 hour to walk the route from below the bridge to the chain locker, down through the engine decks to the bilges and back. The rest of the day was ours, except when in port, when gangway duties were needed.

The ship had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar during the night. As far as we knew, it had not stopped, but as we came on duty and went for breakfast, it was noticeable that a considerable number of extra passengers had appeared that had not been seen before, mainly female. At breakfast we asked the steward why this was so - simple - they had been taken sea sick and had been confined to their cabins until now. They were mainly *en route* to the Far East (Singapore & Hong Kong) as families joining their men folk.

The family cabins were situated on the port side. Soldiers cabins were situated on the starboard side, officers forward and senior NCOs (in order from Staff Sergeant to Warrant Officer) midships to aft, such that all the males were on one side down the length of the ship and all females on the other. The *MV Georgic* was constructed such that it had no bulkheads along its length. By standing at either end, one could enjoy an uninterrupted view of the entire length, so any movement on A Deck could be observed. You can imagine the sights!

As we progressed through the mediterranean, the 5th DGs thought it was time to practice live firing with their machine guns. The Masters at Arms were not amused, because they wished to fire from the poop deck at the stern, where the Masters at Arms, who have been on duty all night, sleep. An urgent compromise had to be reached. Suddenly it was resolved. The calibre of all the ammunition on board did not match the machine guns, so all was to be postponed until we reached Port Said and it could be changed.

The first meal of the day always seemed to herald the particular interest for the day ahead. A walk out to the main deck after a wash and brush up, having stood down from night duty, was the usual morning ritual. This morning over the stern, we could discern the upper super-structure of a ship on the horizon, but as it was too far away to identify we decided to have breakfast - there would be plenty of time afterwards. We arrived back on deck just in time to see what had been a smudge in the distance was now alongside us

moving at speed. We were cruising at 20 knots and this ship (an Aircraft Carrier) was leaving us in its wake! It carried a full deck cargo of trucks, buses, jeeps, ambulances and some aircraft. *HMS Warrior* passed us quite close to, its crew and passengers lining the deck. We shouted across the water to each other. Then she was gone. The next sighting was in the harbour at port Said, where we came alongside.

There was no time for shore leave; ammunition was changed and mail picked up and we moved out to join the convoy forming up to sail through the Suez Canal. *HMS Warrior* was to lead and we were to bring up her stern, followed by a sprinkling of other merchant shipping. That day the Canal administration staff was on strike, so the Royal navy was in charge. The convoy moved into the Canal. Before long, we were left behind because the speed of the convoy was far in excess of the canal set limits. On reaching Suez at the lower end of the canal where it joins the Red Sea, *HMS Warrior* was nowhere to be seen!

Stops were made at Aden and Columbo (Ceylon) both allowing time for a few hours shore leave. At Aden while on gangplank duty, I was suddenly thrown on to my back by a right cross to the jaw, delivered by one of the lads returning from shore leave - he was dead drunk! However, he was grabbed and slung into the brig, pending a court marshal in Singapore, for striking a senior rank. I am glad to say it was cancelled; he was on his way to Korea as well.

The stop at Columbo also had its incidents. Having returned to the ship, after roll call one soldier was logged as missing. The RAF shore police eventually found him, well over the limit in a mosque. I was not on duty, but watched from the head of the gangplank as the Police launch came alongside. He was held by 2 members of the shore patrol. In a flash he stepped forward for the gangplank, the patrol let go, he missed his footing and fell into the water - the patrol grabbed him again just as the water reached his chin, heaved him up and put him back on the gangplank. He walked up those steps as sober as a judge!

On our way to Singapore the weather worsened. All forward storm hatches had to be closed against breaking waves and spray up to 80 feet breaking over the bridge. Furniture fixtures on the forward deck were smashed and washed overboard.

On one of my duty days in the evening in Singapore, returning from a walk (I had walked down onto the jetty - now clear of ships, to stretch my legs) I noticed that the side of the ship's hull was severely buckled. Back on board I asked a Master at Arms what had happened to cause this. The ship had been bombed during the war; a bomb had dropped down one of its funnels, blowing it off and she had been breached, hence the 'wavy' sides. She was eventually refloated having been repaired with hundreds of tons of concrete poured into the hull to reinforce the keel - and here she is.

While in Singapore we also enjoyed the pleasures of the then

brand new *Britannia Club*. I was told that it had been (partially?) funded by Billy Butlin of holiday camp fame. It stood opposite the *Raffles Hotel* on the seaward side of the East Coast road.

On to the last leg now, the families are becoming excited, even though there are still 4 or 5 days sailing ahead. After travelling half way round the World we eventually arrived at Hong Kong. A Regimental Band was playing on the jetty to greet us, with husbands searching anxiously for their loved ones. Those going on to Korea and Japan were allowed a few hours shore leave before the last leg of their journey started. When the families left, the ships atmosphere felt as if it had gone into mourning; the social life had gone.

The ship sailed again, escorted by a New Zealand frigate, for Korea. As we neared Formosa the frigate positioned itself between us and the mainland to act as a shield and we were ordered to douse all lights as a precaution. However, we sailed on without incident.

On approaching the southern tip of Korea, we picked up a pilot to guide us into Pusan. A reception party welcomed us, consisting of the president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee and many of the Army commanders, supported by an American military band doing its party piece. The 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards together with its own REME support disembarked, so only us tail end support troops were left on board.

It was to take us another 24 hours at sea to reach Kure, Japan. The draught of the ship was too deep to navigate the inland sea, so we had to sail right round the southern tip of Japan. At last land was sighted; the ship started to loose way, eventually picking up another pilot to take us into Kure harbour. Once he was picked up, instead of maintaining a steady speed, we accelerated.

For those of you who have never sailed into Kure harbour, the width of the waterway is such that a cricket ball thrown, from the incoming ship, could reach the shore on either side. The waterway, as well as being narrow, was dotted with numerous small islands which our pilot had no difficulty in negotiating without slowing the ship - one minute you were looking at the shore line and the next you were looking at the surrounding hills as the ship heeled over. We were very relieved to reach the safety of the very large Kure harbour! We hove to at one of the massive buoys in mid harbour, using steel cables to secure the ship. Engines were stopped - we had arrived!

Suddenly there was an almighty crack - a steel cable had snapped! We drifted away very quickly on water as smooth as a duck pond (we were later told there was a very strong under-current). The engines were started and the ship was brought back to the buoy. This time this 27,000 ton monster was secured by its own anchor chains, fore and aft. While waiting patiently to disembark we idly watched 2 giant barges being manoeuvred alongside. Suddenly, just like a

jack-in-the-box, their covers were thrown back and hundreds of Japanese women poured out, armed with cleaning materials, across to our ship and immediately started cleaning furiously, washing the ship from stem to stern, in preparation for its repaint and return journey. The date? 3 December 1951.

The shore line at Kure was totally demolished, the building mainly of metal sheets were completely wrecked giving the appearance of just one large rust patch. Amongst this debris vehicles were being drawn up to take us to a small village outside Kure called Hiro, where the Reinforcement Base depot (JRBD) was situated. Here, some of us were re-equipped and then sent on their way. Others (including myself) were to stay a few days longer.

Slowly, our numbers diminished as posting were allocated. Some of us just transferred across the road to 3 Advance Base Workshop. While waiting for my posting, I visited this workshop out of curiosity to find some of those who had accompanied me from UK - in particular, a sergeant fitter. I found he had his own shop with a number of very competent (he said) Japanese civilians working on the floor. I remember him saying as I left, "I will get them a decent place to work - cannot have people working on the floor."

The days passed, it was now 23 December 1951. Those of our draft who had not yet been posted thought it was now unlikely to happen at this time of the year. They couldn't have been more wrong. I was posted to 10 Infantry Workshop supporting 29 Brigade. We had handed in our weapons and steel helmets and I cannot remember being re-issued with anything of importance at this time. It was back to Kure harbour on to a small ancient ship with a single-piston steam-driven engine of very questionable state, the *Wosang* or *Esang*, originally built in the UK during the 1920s.

We sailed through the Japanese inland sea back to Pusan to come alongside after a trip of some 24 hours. The next 24 hours saw us all board a train to take us on a rough - very rough and cold - oh so very cold journey. This was our introduction to the next 18 months. We clambered off on reaching our destination, glad to move about a bit. Bedford QLs were drawn up in readiness for our departure to various units around the Brigades. I remember going through a cutting in a hillside, taking a sharp turn to the left to be confronted by a sign proclaiming that this was 10 Infantry Workshop REME, Tac sign 89. We had finally arrived!

It was not a good day to arrive; it being Boxing Day 1951. The inhabitants must have had a hectic Christmas day, because no one had yet resurfaced. Those on guard directed me to the Sergeants Mess, a large marquee. I dumped my kit and entered through the flap - no one was about. I went back outside, gathered my kit and re-entered. I must have disturbed the bar sergeant as he was suddenly standing behind the bar. I cannot remember his name, but we introduced ourselves and he filled me in about aspects of the unit. As for a bed, bunk etc., he could not help. Later, as others

appeared and we all became acquainted I met Staff Sergeant Jock Lamont, who had been on our draft, but had come direct from the ship to Korea. I was very shortly to relieve him and he had to leave for home - I never did find out the reason. I did meet him again years later to find he had been invalided out of the services.

That first very cold day in my new unit was very casual - no one seemed to have much interest in my arrival. I spent Boxing Day night in the mess and had to wait for stragglers to leave before I could retire for the night, because my first bed was a 6-foot GS fold-flat table-top in the Mess tent under the top ridge pole that was bedecked with fairy lights. Once the lights were switched off the bar *sergeant* and myself could settle down for the night.

I don't know why I woke up from a reasonably restful sleep, but I did, comfortably tucked up in my sleeping bags, lying on my back. The first thought that struck me was that the fairy lights had been switched on. I lay idly thinking for a few seconds or minutes watching the lights flicker - then realisation struck. They were not lights, they were flames running right along the ridge pole - the marquee was on fire and the barman and I were inside!

I woke the bar sergeant from a deep sleep, who struggled awake with some difficulty, both of us to dress (too cold at this time of year not to). By this time the roof was well alight, decisions had to be made quickly. The water in the fire buckets, the sand bucket and fire extinguishers were all frozen solid; we couldn't have reached the height of the flames anyway.

The sergeant made the first move by jumping on to the bar top, taking his jackknife and slashing the burning section of the roof away from that not yet alight. I pulled the flaming sections away from the bar end and as they fell to the ground pulled them away into a clearing. By the time dawn broke, the marquee was reduced to 2 uprights and a ridge pole (all severely scorched) and the end section which housed the bar, the stock and 2 very tired, dirty, cold and homeless Mess members!

Gradually other members of the Mess arrived expecting breakfast, only to be utterly surprised - their jaws dropped and the same repeated question was on every one's lips, "What happened?" By this time the 'authorities' had been appraised of the situation, ASM Jack Sinton, CSM Jock Mullhern and AQMS Bill Saunders. By that afternoon all the burnt sections had been replaced and the Mess was back in one piece - at least the bar sergeant and myself had a bedroom for another night - a peaceful we hoped!

28 December 1951, my first full day in the workshop. I went down after breakfast to A & G (Armament & General) where the Instrument section was located. This was to be my responsibility for the foreseeable future. Here I met Jock Lamont who suggested a tour of the estate to meet some of the inmates: the OC, Major Rogers, Captain Ewing AO,

Captain MC Dix WO, Captain CW Nicholson RAOC, Lieutenant Rose MTO, Lieutenant Spittle AWO, ASM Jack Stinton, ASM Sam Dixon, AQMS Bill Saunders, CSM Jock Mulherne, CQMS Fred Bishop and a lot more. The initial complement I met were all Z reservists and most of them were about to leave us - we, from the *MV Georgic*, were their first regular replacements.

The Instrument shop at this time was in the charge of Jock Lamont with a small staff consisting of 'Nobby' Clarkson, Corporal 'Kit' Hardy (all ex-apprentices) and Jock Imroy (a watchmaker).

We were to witness another fire before the old year ran out. It was the Admin truck this time (the cause still unknown). This vehicle had contained all the important admin paperwork for the unit, including pay rolls. Once the fire had been put out and the extent of the damage ascertained, the CSM (and this was highly comical to us) was seen hurriedly running around the unit pleading with each man he encountered to re-sign for their pay. One or two tried to convince him that they had never been paid in the first place - but you don't try that one on with CSM Mulherne and expect a quiet life!

By now I had started to think about my own comfort and welfare, a subject sadly neglected and not supplied. While considering all this, a message arrived for me to report to the Workshop Officer, Captain Dix. After an introductory handshake, he asked me what I knew about electrical work and I replied that it was 'sufficient'. That was enough for him - I was to take control of the Electrician's shop and he wished me good luck!

It was now New Years Eve 1951/52, time for a bit of merry making. The officers had been invited to the Sergeants Mess for an evening of 'elbow bending'. In the Mess (having been saved from the earlier fire) was a piano and amongst the members was a very talented player, AQMS (Guns) Phil Rawlins - he could play anything you wished - no music sheet needed!

We all sang with gusto, became more and more thirsty as we sang and the drinks were free! Too much profit had been made behind the bar so the CO decreed that it should be reduced and this was the way to do it. He and myself tried our best to help the situation by concentrating hard on the brandy and when this was exhausted it was on to cherry brandy - never again!

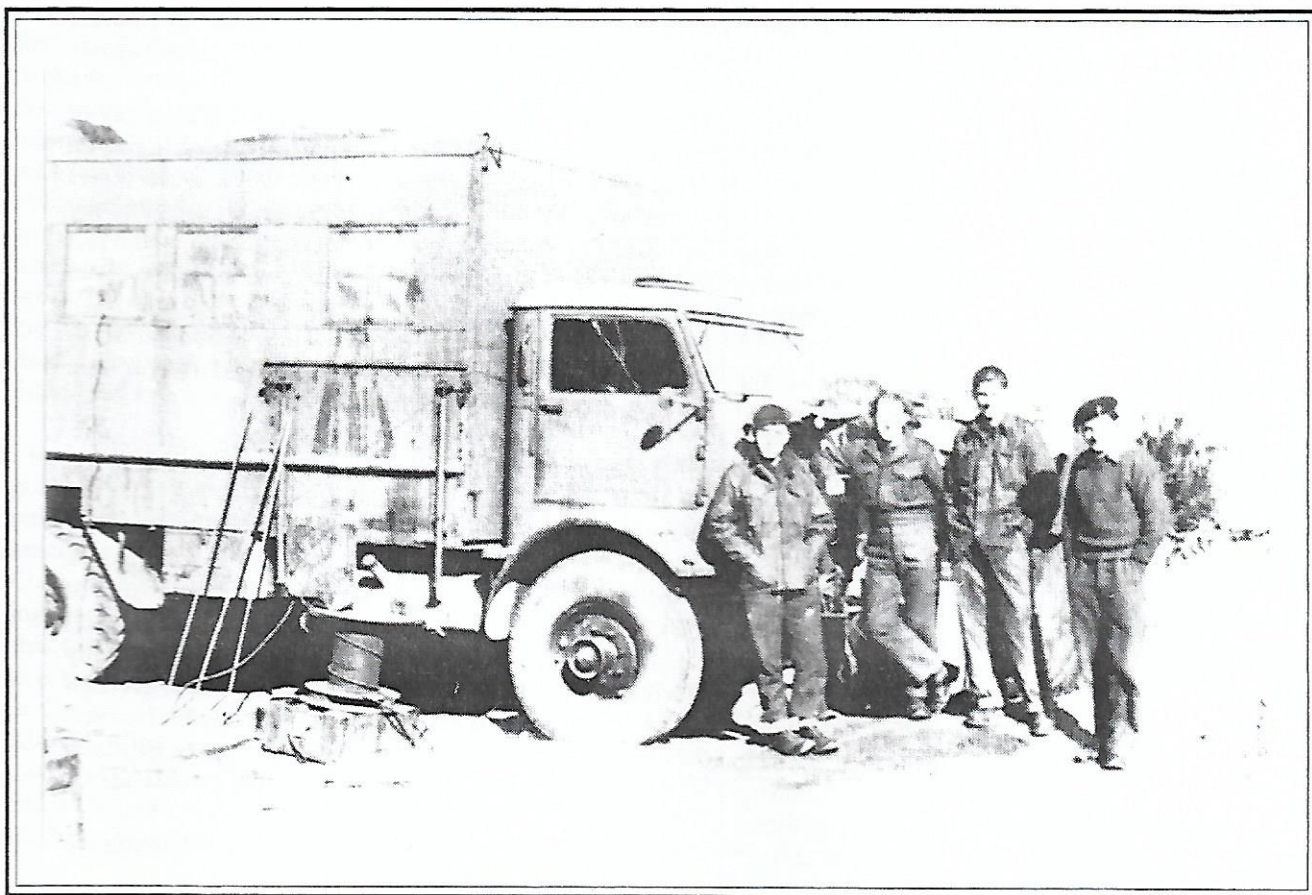
The tale is told that I had wandered off to my bed which was a luxury - a tent erected over a dugout with a space heater for company. I had turned the heater up at about four in the morning and dropped onto my pit, fully clothed.

A kind hearted soul had checked on me later - all he could see was a large glowing object through the smoke; he turned the heater off and went on his way. I eventually came to, frozen stiff at some ungodly hour, climbed into my sleeping

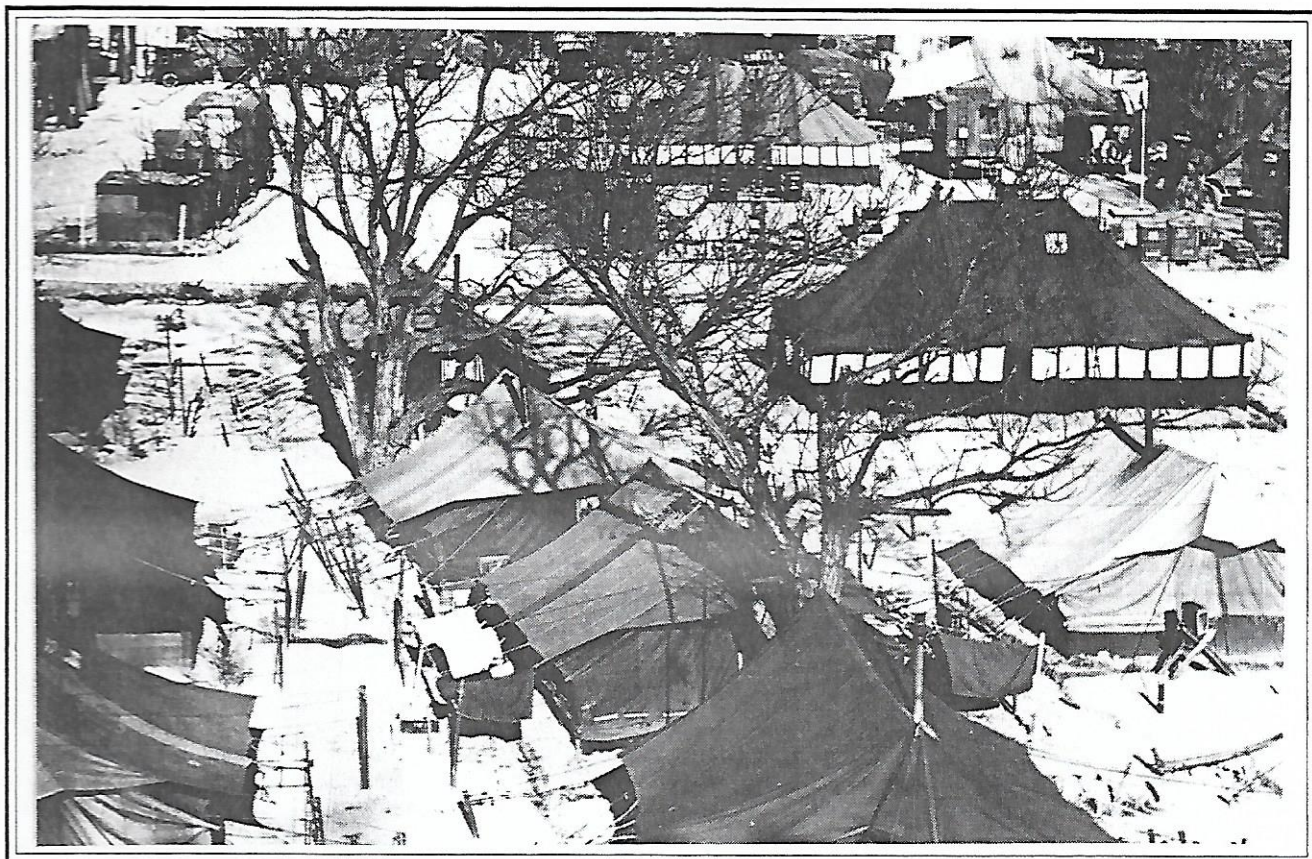


S/Sgt Dutton in the centre of the Imjin River -
Winter 52/53

bags and did not surface until 1700hrs that afternoon. New Years Day was all but over - I had missed it! Now it was time to forget about play and seriously think about starting my working life with 10 Infantry Workshops.



My Instrument Section in Tokchon - 1952



10 Infantry Workshop - 1954

IN KOREA WITH 16 INFANTRY WORKSHOPS

By Joe Adey (42A)

Having completed the Artificer Course in December 1950 with 6 weeks military training at Arborfield, I remained at the Depot for about 3 weeks awaiting a draft to the Far East.

On the 4 January 1951 I sailed from Southampton on the 'Empire Trooper', having been told that I was being posted to Singapore. The crossing of the Bay of Biscay on The Empire Trooper was a pretty horrific experience for anyone who was not a good sailor! She was an ex-German banana boat and it was said that she carried six hundred tons of scrap-iron in her hold to stabilise her! I found myself to be one amongst about 15 artificers being posted to the Far East but the majority of the troops consisted of a battalion of The Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

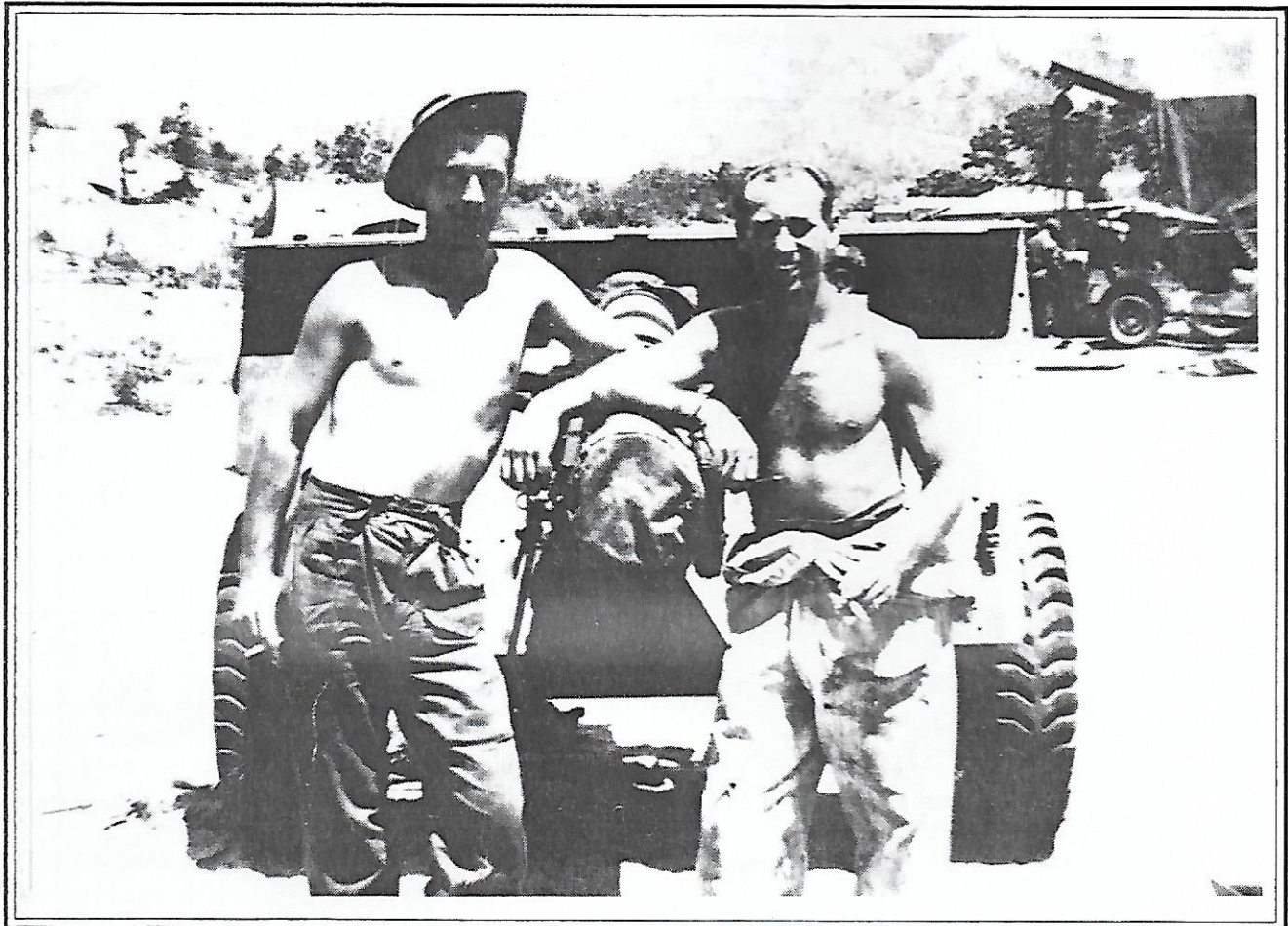
The senior NCOs were able to use the second class dining room and lounge, but on the first night out the lounge was so crowded that it was difficult to get a drink. The following morning the weather was so bad that the dining rooms became a shambles at breakfast time as crockery crashed

from the tables. Not many turned up for breakfast so those of us that did were able to have our fill of bacon and eggs!

That day it was my birthday, 5 January and after a day of trying to bring some comfort to grey faced souls hanging on to the rail wrapped in greatcoats, I and half a dozen others were able to have the lounge to ourselves to celebrate my birthday. The situation on board was aggravated by the fact that we were carrying quite a few wives with children, who were going out to Singapore to join their husbands. We REME types were detailed off to assist in looking after the children during the rough weather as some of the wives were too ill to cope with them all day.

A S/Sgt named 'Scouse' Crawford and I were detailed to run the children's play room so we had a lot of fun with the youngsters on the slide etc. We were also given a troop deck to look after, G Deck Forward, which was the bottom deck in the bows. The troop deck accommodation consisted of rows of double bunks and the troops on our deck were young national servicemen in the Medical Corps. As with my previous trip through the Mediterranean, we had to get them out of their bunks and make them clean up themselves and their living spaces. It was a pretty rotten place to be if you were not a good sailor and none of these boys were.

After calling at Malta and Port Said we sailed through the



Joe Adey & Titch Fry at Uijongbu Cemetery - 1951

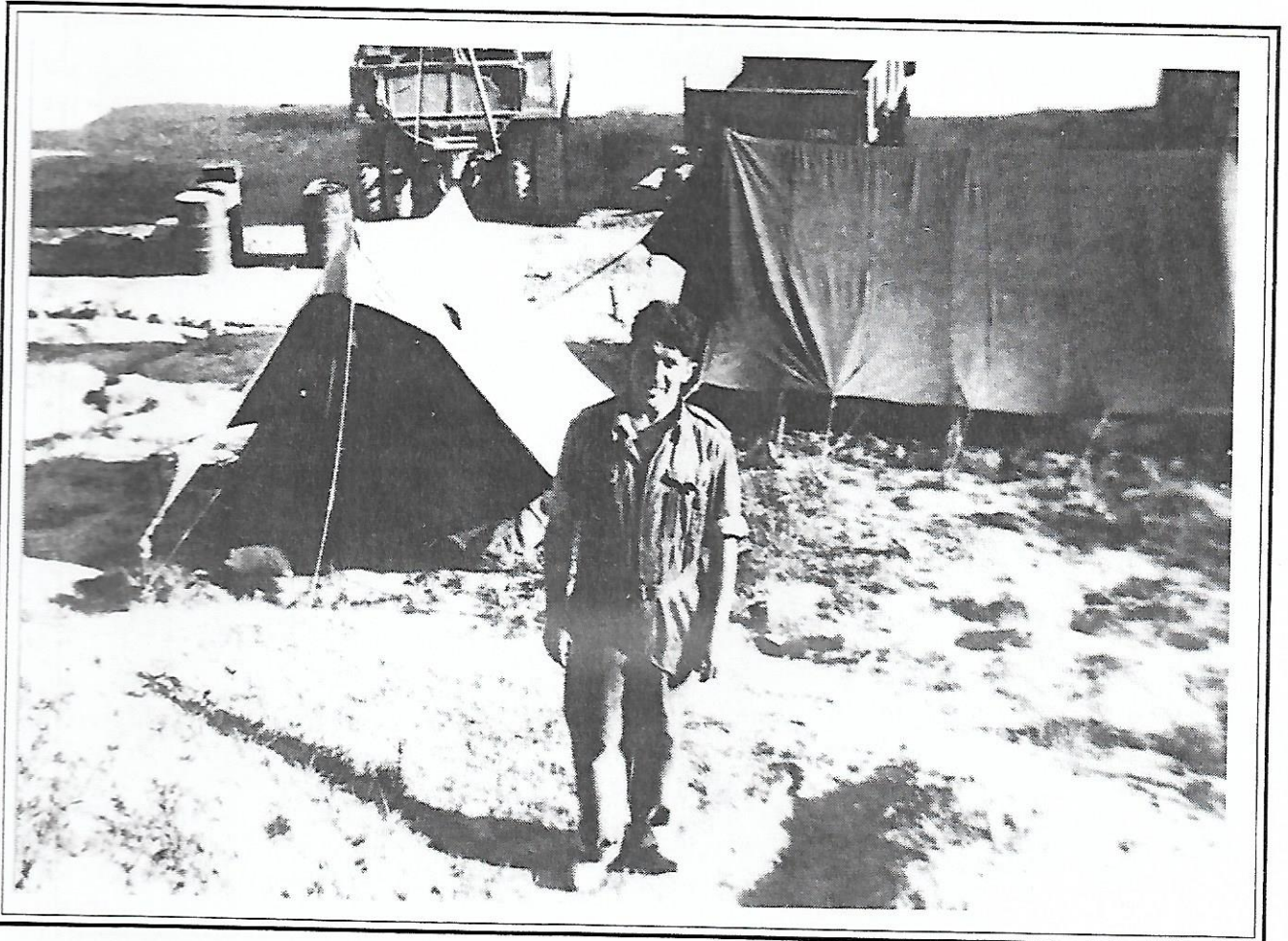
Suez Canal and made a stop at Suez Port, where I saw my first small sharks. At night, under the floodlights on the dockside, I watched them scavenging on the bits and pieces that were floating around the hull of the ship. The next morning we sailed down through the Red Sea to Aden where we again stopped for a few hours, before moving on into the Indian Ocean. On leaving Aden, all troops on board had to spend part of each day undergoing instruction in weapon training and taking part in physical training, tug-of-war etc. As an Artificer Weapons, I was given the job of instructing the men of the KOYLI on the Bren gun. Having recently finished my course I could strip and assemble a Bren blindfolded and I soon had the infantry lads doing the same.

I was also an instructor for the live firing of rifle and Sten gun from the stern of the ship. A target was towed from the stern of the ship on the end of a hundred yard line, bouncing around in the wake of the ship. The day before we reached Colombo we instructors were allowed to use up the remaining ammunition and after shooting the towed target to destruction we had some fun firing at empty beer cans thrown over the stern. Soon we were sailing into the port of Colombo in Ceylon, now known as Shri Lanka, where we were allowed ashore for a few hours and I did a short tour of the town by rickshaw. On arrival in Singapore we disembarked and were taken to Rowcroft Lines, the camp which housed the REME personnel who worked at 40 Base Workshops.

About thirty people, including Scouse Crawford and myself, were then told that we would be going on to Hong Kong in ten days time. We went on parade with the rest of the workshop personnel the next morning and were told to fall in at the back of the parade. When the RSM marched on parade he told us to fall out and get lost for the next ten days, which we promptly did!

It was the period when Chinese New Year is celebrated so Scouse Crawford and I had a whale of time, lounging around the swimming pool at the Salvation Army Club during the day and touring the haunts of the Happy World and The Great World by night. These Worlds were like large entertainment centres or funfaires, with night clubs of a sort, where taxi dancers were employed to dance with the patrons. It was quite a civilised way of running things I thought. After ten days we found ourselves embarking on a small aircraft carrier named 'HMS Warrior' which was being used by the Royal Navy to carry supplies of military equipment and aircraft to Korea.

Four days later we entered Hong Kong harbour and among the Royal Navy ships anchored there was the 'Morecambe Bay', a frigate on her first commission, with my younger brother on board. On disembarking, several of us were put onto a truck and driven off up to the 'New Territories', to 16 Infantry Workshops REME near a village called Sek Kong.



SSgt Ian Main at Uijongbu Cemetery - 1951

The route took us along the coast for the first few miles with magnificent views across the harbour to Hong Kong island, then inland through little smelly villages via a raised road past paddy fields and shrimp ponds. The all-pervading smell was something which took a lot of getting used to,

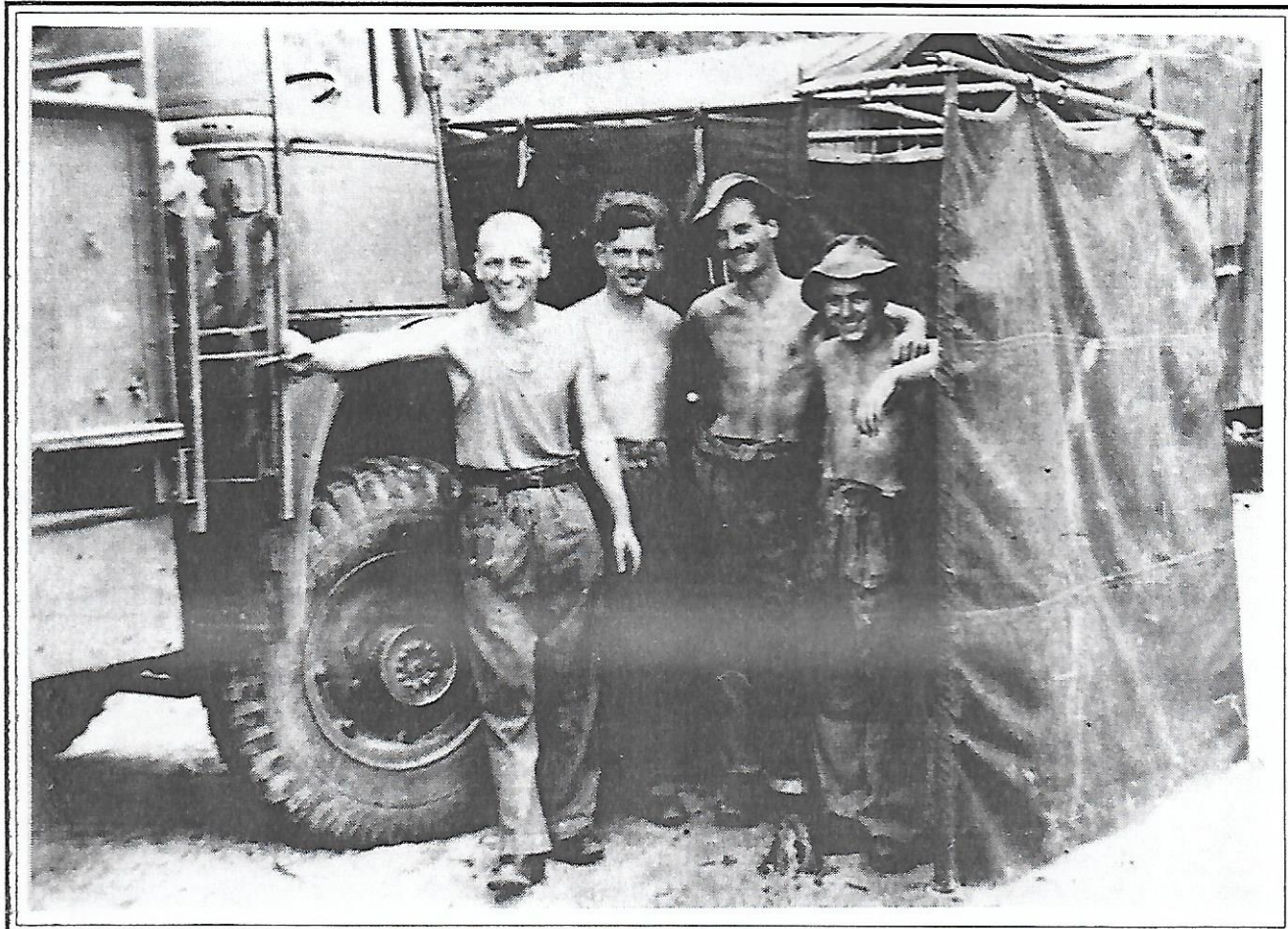
I managed to get a message to my brother to meet up with me at the Fleet Club in Wanchai, on the Island, on that first Saturday afternoon. I was put into the gun shop to work with a WOII Alexander (Alec, the elder), who was an ex-Chepstow and ex-Duke of Yorks School boy, and a great guy to know. I soon settled down to the quiet life of Sek Kong and the Education Corps Sgt. and I trained up a couple of schools of bridge players. Apart from drinking, there was little else to do at Sek Kong, so we played bridge most evenings during the week and headed down into Kowloon and Hong Kong at the weekends.

In March 1951 we were told that we would be moving up to Korea in May, to relieve 11 Infantry Workshops. Before that we had a few people posted in to make up our numbers and these included Norman (Darkie) Pritchard, an ex E Coy lad and Johnny Doig, the armourer who was in the rifle team with me at Bovington. This livened up the Mess a little and we had a lot of fun locally before moving up to Korea. About four miles from Sek Kong was the village of Yuen Long where there were a couple of dance halls which were offi-

cially 'out of bounds'. We started to go there on Thursday evenings and the only way to get there was on the carrier of a bicycle pedalled by a Chinaman. There were usually four of us and after a few beers we would race each other back to camp, with the Chinamen on the carriers!

It was soon my turn to move up to Korea in the first group of the main party, numbering about 25, with Johnny Doig and I as the only two senior NCO's in the party. We were taken down to Kai Tak airport in Kowloon and issued with a packed lunch of very good quality, provided by 'The Dairy Farm', of Kowloon. We then boarded a Dakota (DC3) of the Royal Australian Air Force, sitting in canvas bucket seats along the side of the fuselage. Our first stop was at an American air base on the island of Okinawa, a pretty sight from the air with its surrounding coral reefs. We were allowed off of the aircraft while it refuelled, and enjoyed a cup of coffee and a chat with a couple of American pilots in their canteen.

Our next stop was at a combined American/Australian air base on the island of Iwakuni, in the Inland Sea of Japan, not far from the port of Kure. Here we stopped overnight, and went for a few beers in the biggest WOs & Sgts Mess I have ever come across, with over 700 members! Yanks and Aussies made us most welcome and insisted on buying the beer.



WOII Alexander (left) & SSgt Adey (left 3)-Uijongbu Cemetery

The next evening at about 10pm we boarded a American Air Force Globemaster, just about the biggest transport aircraft of the time. The plane was loaded with all sorts of stores which were stacked down one side of the fuselage and lightly held in place with ropes. This left just enough room for us to sit in the bucket seats along the left hand side and Johnny Doig and I sitting together, were not too happy with our position right opposite a pile of heavy steel tank drive sprockets. To get aboard this huge aircraft we had to climb a twelve foot steel ladder and as we lined up below it there was much comment when a lady in a white Red Cross dress went up in front of us and was given a seat at the front of the plane. It later emerged that this lady was the wife of a Captain in one of the British infantry battalions fighting in Korea. She had flown out to Japan and then persuaded the American pilot of our plane to give her a lift over to Seoul, where her husband managed to meet up with her for five days leave. The Daily Mirror got hold of the story and there was much outrage expressed in the UK.

A couple of hours later we were landing safely at Kimpo Main airport near Seoul and as we disembarked we could see a whole stream of transports, coming in one behind the other like taxis into a station yard. At the bottom of the ladder an American Top Sergeant was waiting to hand each of us a metal chain to put our Identity Discs on, at the same time saying, "Welcome to the Asshole of the World!" Little did I realise how apt that description was at the time.

We loaded our kit onto an American 6x4 truck, which had the words 'The Forty-niners' painted across the front and which was driven by a black American soldier and headed north along dirt roads. It was while we were being driven along in the darkness that several of us got rid of our old fashioned steel helmets because they were so heavy and cumbersome.

About 30 miles north of Seoul we pulled off the road into what was now 16 Infantry Workshops REME, supporting 28 Infantry Brigade. To my delight I was welcomed by Ian (Jock) Main, whom I had not seen since my Artificer course and who had slept in the bed next to me in E4 at Arborfield. Alec had told him I was coming up from Hong Kong and as his tent mate had already left he had kept the space for me. This was most fortunate for me as Jock had obtained an American tent, which was about 8 ft x 6ft with walls about 3 feet high, an absolute luxury suite! Most of the workshop personnel had the small 2 man bivouac tents, known as Pup Tents, with walls about 6 inches high, although a few were able to live in their vehicles. Jock had been posted to 11 Infantry Workshops on the completion of his Artificer course and had now been transferred to 16 Inf to complete his 18 month Korean tour.

The next morning Jock showed me around the workshop area and I found that we were located in the middle of a Korean cemetery near a village called Uijongbu (pronounced Wee Jong Bu), which before the war must have been a pretty spot. A clear stream flowed down from the mountains, passing

through the cemetery via two waterfalls, each with a drop of about 8 feet and these falls were used as the unit showers. It was said that the Koreans buried their dead in a sitting position, which accounted for the circular mounds about 3 feet high and 4 feet across. I had one of these mounds immediately beside my camp bed with just the thickness of the tent wall between us, but he didn't cause me any trouble!!

When I arrived at Uijongbu, the unit had no mess tents, so all meals were eaten under the shelter of a couple of canvas sheets slung between trees and poles. The only place to gather for a drink in the evenings was in our tent, which could take eight comfortably, sitting 4 on each camp bed. The Adjutant used to collect beer and spirits from the British railhead and we were all allowed as much Japanese Asahi beer as we wanted. In addition, the officers and senior ranks were allowed as much spirits as they wanted, except Scotch Whisky, which was rationed to one bottle per man per month. Jock and I each kept a crate of gin under our camp bed for bartering with the Americans as the only thing they were able to get officially was Coca-Cola and ice-cream. With the Americans around in such force there was a thriving black market between them and the Commonwealth forces.

The legal tender for Commonwealth troops except the Canadians, was the British Armed Forces Script, known as BAFS, which was in funits and the American forces used dollar script. The dollar script was the premium currency and everyone changed their BAFS into dollars when possible. It was also possible to get the post NCO to buy English Postal Orders from the Brigade Post Office, which could then be sent home to the UK.

The senior NCOs of 10 Inf Wksps in 29 Infantry Brigade, who were mostly reservists called up for the Korean war, were said to make about £1000 each in a 18 month tour. Every now and again the Americans would attempt to catch out the big time black marketeers by calling in all the dollar script and issuing a new series. Our friends in the Canadian RCME workshops would let us know when this was about to happen and we would send our dollar script over to them to be exchanged. We did not operate on the civilian black market but bartered mainly for warm American clothing or weapons. Most of our dollar script was saved to change into real dollars when we went on R&R leave to Tokyo.

In the workshops I found that I would be spending the majority of my time repairing the 25 pounder field guns of the 16 New Zealand Field Regiment, whose guns were in an unbelievable state. No modifications had been carried out to them since they were returned to New Zealand from the Middle East at the end of World War II. They had so many cracks in the trails and saddles which had been welded and re-welded, that they looked ready for the scrap heap. However, these guns would still fire and were very accurate if the sights were in good order. When we were being instructed on the 25 pdr sight at Blackdown, the instructor reckoned that this was the most difficult sight we would come across and that the inventor went mad! I was to spend 90% of my

time stripping and re-building these sights while I was in Korea.

I took this job on because I was the only Artificer Weapons in the workshops, apart from Alec, and he had the whole of the Armament & General Section to run. Once one of these sights was beyond the limits of adjustment the only thing that could be done with it was to carry out a Base Repair as replacement sights were not available. I found that the parts required to carry out a base overhaul were available, so I set out to overhaul the sight on each gun as it came into the workshop. My personal vehicle for which I was responsible, as far as maintenance and driving were concerned, was a very old Albion 4 x 4 Machinery Lorry. In the back of the vehicle there was a 6 inch lathe, a small shaping machine, power metal saw, arc welding generator, grindstones etc. I soon became very expert at carrying out these sight overhauls and built quite a reputation with the Kiwi Gunners. They reckoned that when an infantry patrol called for covering fire, they could drop high explosive rounds to within 25 yards of the patrol.

In July 1951, the Commonwealth Division was formed from the British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and Indian units who had previously been operating as independent units or formations. Within days we were issued with three large marquees, one for the Officers Mess, one for Senior NCOs and one for the other ranks. This made life much more

comfortable as far as eating and drinking was concerned. About that time I also had a tricky job dumped on me by the CREME of the division.

The Field Bakery bread production had slowed almost to a halt due to worn bearings in the piece of machinery known as the 'The Thrower Upper'. The bakery was located in some tin roofed buildings on the outskirts of Seoul, and I was told that the ovens would be shut down from midnight on Friday until midnight on Saturday. During that period I was to repair the machine in order that the Divisional Commander could have fresh rolls on Monday morning!

I arrived at the bakery with a fitter promptly at midnight to find the interior of the building like a hothouse and reeking of hot vegetable oil. To cut a long story short we had to drill out a three inch long taper pin from the shaft, plug and redrill the shaft and manufacture and fit a new bronze bush. These machines had been made in 1900 and the metal was extremely hard. It took us several hours, stripped to the waste, stinking of vegetable oil, to drill out the offending pin and remove the shaft and bush. We then had to drive up to the workshops, manufacture a new bush on the lathe, fill and re-drill the shaft and make a new taper pin. We just made it as far as time was concerned but I suggested to the OC that the Bakery equipment should be replaced with something a bit more up-to-date!



Titch Fry, Ian Main, George Alexander-Uijongbu Cemetery 1951

From the time I arrived in Korea in early May 1951 the personnel had been continually changing as people completed their overseas tour and returned to the UK or were posted elsewhere. During this time a high percentage of the senior NCO's posted in were ex E Company boys, among them being, Mick Graham and Jumbo Rainer, so that at one stage there were about eight of us in the one unit. We also had an Australian detachment with our workshops which consisted of an ASM, a S/Sgt and a couple of Craftsmen. The S/Sgt was a punchy little fellow who used to get well stoned when the whisky ration was delivered. One evening he walked into the Mess tent at about 7:30pm, dressed in a greatcoat which almost reached his ankles, a big Aussie bush hat and carrying a .303 rifle with an 18 inch bayonet fitted to the end of it, and demanding that we go out and get some prisoners!

Jock Main, Mick Graham, Darkie Pritchard and myself got into our various types of combat kit, mostly purchased from the Yanks, picked up our weapons from under our beds and piled into a Chinese copy of the Willys Jeep, which the Aussie detachment owned. We drove north through Gloucester Valley, so named after the gallant action by that regiment in April 1951, and crossed over the Imjin River by means of the pontoon bridge at Pintail Crossing. On arriving at the Australian battalion positions our Aussie S/Sgt sought out his mates in a well protected bunker and we settled down to a couple of hours chatting and drinking the beer we had taken with us. Getting back to the workshops was a bit hairy, with us being full of beer and the dirt road being lined with wire at intervals, carrying minefield warning signs.

Gloucester Valley brings to mind the fact that Major Farrar-Hockley was the Adjutant of the Gloucesters at the time of the action and was taken prisoner by the Chinese, as was most of the battalion. I was to meet Farrar-Hockley many years later, at a commemoration service for the Korean casualties, in St Pauls Cathedral but by then he was a Major General. Five miles up the Main Supply Route (MSR) was the location of a Norwegian mobile field hospital (MASH) with the capability of being able to carry out most types of surgery, including brain operations. Johnny Doig got to know a couple of the male orderlies from this outfit so one evening we put a few beers into a truck and went to visit them. To our surprise, they introduced us to a couple of female nurses who joined us for a drink in the back of a 6x4 truck fitted out with tables and chairs.

During the evening one of the girls produced a guitar and proceeded to play and sing some of the popular songs of the day, much to our delight. Before leaving, we invited them down to the workshops one evening and the young lady agreed to bring her guitar with her.

On the agreed date, Johnny Doig went up to the MASH to fetch our guests back to the workshops. We had told Jock Main and Darkie Pritchard what was on, so they and a few regular drinkers were in the Mess tent with me when Johnny walked in. Within about ten minutes the Mess was crowded

to capacity including the non-drinkers and the Officer Commanding with his other four officers, who had asked if they might be invited in! The attraction of course was the sight of two white women, an unheard of sight in our graveyard. A few songs and a lot of chat boosted the moral of all present.

In late August 1951, Johnny Doig and I were drawn to go on 5 days R&R leave to Tokyo. With our pockets full of dollars we went down to Kimpo Main to catch our flight to Tokyo. We were detailed off with other Commonwealth troops into plane loads and sat around on the grass in the sunshine to wait for our turn. Most of the Americans in nearby queues got the cards out and started gambling while they waited their turn. A few days later we heard that an American had lost all his money while waiting for his plane and promptly shot himself dead. On arriving at the Tokyo leave centre, we were booked in and processed. This meant stripping off all our clothing, going through the showers and being issued with a complete fresh outfit of clothing, before being allocated a room.

That first afternoon we decided that we wanted to go to the big Post Exchange (PX) at Yokohama to see if there was anything we fancied to send home. We went by train around the bay and were soon at the PX, where we each bought a pair of brown leather boots. The boots were ankle length, with a zip and a small pocket on the outside and lined with goatskin. I also bought a solid silver cigarette case engraved with a rickshaw which I still have to this day.

The following day we met a couple of nice girls, the parents of one of whom owned a Rice House (small guest house) so Johnny and I moved in there for the remaining four nights of our leave. Each morning we would go to the public baths in the Ginza (equivalent to London's West End) where the young lady attendants would give us a hot bath, followed by a short spell in the steam box and finishing up with a full massage and a bottle of cold beer. From there we went into the Barbers shop, where we would have a shave and a head massage. After a good breakfast we would be fit to hit the town for another twentyfour hours! The two girls took us around and showed us the sights of Tokyo so that we saw much more than we would have done if we had been wandering around on our own.

At the end of our 5 days leave we had a final hot shower and a few stiff drinks before being ferried out to the airport. We were quite upset at the sight of Mount Fuji receding into the distance. Back at Kimpo Main, we were put onto a Forty-niners truck once more and taken up to the workshop location. When the truck pulled up, we found Alec waiting with some of the lads and they bundled us onto stretchers and carried us through the workshop area to our tents.

The following day, the Workshop Officer, Captain Harry Wey, asked me if I had enjoyed my leave in Tokyo and when I replied in the affirmative, he said that while I was away he had received a signal asking if we might have a Artificer Weapons who would like a posting to Japan. It appeared that

Jock Doherty, who was on No 1 Gun course, had made a mess of a gun he was working on in 5 Medium Workshops at Kure and wanted to get out of the place. When I said I would swap with Doherty, Harry Wey sent off a signal to that effect and I waited to hear if I was to be lucky.

In October 1951, the workshops was ordered to move forward some 10 miles to a new position before the winter set in. The new location was just a bare open space surrounded by paddy fields, but not far from the new railhead. We loaded all our kit and equipment onto our vehicles and I would guess that every vehicle was carrying at least a ton more than it was designed to carry. As my Albion was the oldest vehicle in the unit, I was put at the head of the convoy with Alec as my co-driver. We set off and after a few miles, one of the fairly modern Fords behind me broke down and held up the column.

The MSR was just a dirt road with barely room for oncoming vehicles to pass and we had to drive with all headlights on due to the thick dust cloud. The oncoming traffic was mostly American 6 x 4 trucks and they liked to hug the centre of the road, for fear of falling off of the soft shoulder into the paddy. After waiting five minutes, Harry Wey told me to drive on and said the rest of the column would catch up with us before we reached the new location. Off we went and arriving at our new site, we had our tents up and were having a wash by the time the rest arrived.

Shortly before that, at the beginning of October 1951, I was ordered to go up to the 16 New Zealand Artillery Regt to carry out a routine examination of their guns and I went off up through Gloucester Valley, where the two abandoned Centurion tanks were still sitting in the paddy field. These two tanks had become stuck in the mud during the Chinese action against the Gloucesters and the Chinese had nothing heavy enough to recover them.

I based myself at the New Zealand LAD and got started on the job of examining the first of the 24 guns. It was a fairly slow process due to the fact that the guns would go into action while I was working and I would have to wait for the barrels to cool down before I could measure them. When things were quiet, from the top of the low ridge in front of the Kiwi guns, we could see the Chinese troops walking around.

On the afternoon of the third day I came across a barrel which had a dangerous crack in the chamber and I ordered the gun to be taken out of action. That same evening I was told that I was required back at the workshops by the following day. When I got back, Harry Wey sent for me and said that the OC of the RNZEME LAD had reported me for drinking excessively while I was with them. I replied that the charge was rubbish because while I was with them the only drink I could get was a ration of two cans per day. I also pointed out that I had examined eleven guns in two and a half days, which was not bad going, considering the time I had to wait for barrels to cool down. I asked that the OC of the LAD should go in front of the CREME with me and repeat the

charge in front of him.

The CREME had recently taken a photograph of me working on a sight at the side of the machinery wagon. A couple of days later the barrel I had taken out of action arrived back in the workshops and within half an hour CREME arrived to have a look at it. I demonstrated the depth of the crack by pushing a 0.004 inch feeler gauge into it and told the CREME what a terrible general state the guns were in. He asked me if I thought the whole lot should be replaced and I said, "Yes", and my saying that had condemned a complete regiment of 24 guns as 'Beyond Local Repair'. Harry Wey told me to forget about the charges made by the OC of the LAD and that was that.

I think that the Kiwi OC LAD was so upset that I had come along and found a gun in a dangerous condition that he dreamed up the charges to get rid of me before I should discover any more in a like state. I should mention here, that on the evening of the day that I left the Kiwi gunners to return to the workshops, the Chinese launched an attack on the positions held by the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, the action in which Private Bill Speakman won a Victoria Cross. It was also the first time that the Chinese artillery had dropped rounds on the New Zealanders gunners.

A few weeks later 12 replacement guns arrived from Singapore and we were told that another 12 were on route from New Zealand. The guns from Singapore had been overhauled at some time, by 40 Base Workshops REME but we had to strip and re-pack all the buffer and recuperator systems and overhaul many of the sights, before they could be taken out on a calibration shoot. While we were working on these guns we heard that the ship carrying the replacements from New Zealand had run aground on a reef somewhere in the Pacific.

In between whiles I used to help Johnny Doig by test firing the Vickers Heavy Machine Guns that he had repaired. At Uijongbu we used to fire them into the bank of the stream which ran through the cemetery, at a range of about 30 yards. One day we were blasting away into the bank, when much to our surprise a skeleton came tumbling out of the earth and fell into the stream! Everyone in the unit worked six days a week but we did not all have the same day off and in that way there was always someone manning each repair section.

The only way we could keep account of the days of the week was by flying the REME flag up side down on Sundays! On our day off Johnny Doig and I would sometimes go out over the hillsides trying to shoot grouse. The weapon we used was an American carbine, to which we had fitted a muzzle brake, in an effort to reduce the shock of recoil. We had some near misses but it is pretty difficult to hit a flying bird with a carbine.

Of course, living in field conditions, we mostly used the well known 'thunderbox'. When we received our mess tent we positioned a Thunderbox a few yards to the rear of the tent, for the use of mess members. Shortly after, the ASM and the

RAOC WOII decided that they wanted their own toilet facilities and had one manufactured, complete with overhead cover. All this was much to the amusement of the mess members, but one evening when we had just received our whisky ration, which we always drank, we set fire to their private facilities and danced round it while it turned to ashes! There was an alternative to the thunderbox and that was a metal Auger, about 3 feet long, with which you could quickly drill a deep hole 6 inches in diameter. This method was not recommended for use in the pouring rain.

We had little trouble from enemy aircraft as the Chinese Migs never ventured below the 64th Parallel but we were pestered to some degree by a fellow we knew as 'Bed-check Charlie'. This was a light bi-plane which used to come over just after dusk and drop light explosives on anything the pilot could spot. I never heard of any casualties being caused by this fellow but when I was up with the gunners they would sometimes set up Bren guns on hilltops to try and catch him out, to no avail.

In August we had been issued with the British pattern sleeping bag, which was like a straight padded sack, open at one end. We thought they were pretty useless and Jock and I only used them as a light mattress on our camp beds. We each had an American sleeping bag which were excellent. The inner bag was woollen material, like an army blanket, and zipped up from toe to nose. The outer was made of waterproofed nylon and filled with pure duck down. The whole thing was shaped like a Mummy case and when the outer was zipped up the only part of the body showing was your nose. They were so warm that when the temperature dropped, we could put our wet laundry at the bottom of the bag, to dry while we slept, rather than have it freeze solid.

As winter approached, the Brigade Commander asked the workshops to come up with some ideas for producing some sort of heating for the troops in the line, particularly as the war had settled down to pretty static trench warfare. All sorts of ideas were tried, all based on the old army system of sand and petrol, from a Trench Heater made from a 90mm shell case, to a Bunker Heater designed by Alec and I and manufactured mainly from a 25pdr charge box. This was a steel box about 18 inches square and 8 inches deep, with a hinged lid at the top in which the 25pdr charge bags were transported. Charge bags contain the cordite which propels the shell from the barrel.

We cut a brass 25pdr shell case about 1 inch from the base, then cut a circular hole in the base of the charge box, and brazed the cartridge case base into the bottom of the box. A small diameter copper petrol pipe was fed through a small hole in the side of the box and brazed in position. A normal vehicle petrol tap was fitted into the copper fuel pipe to control the flow rate of the fuel, which was fed by gravity from a 20 litre jerican. A handful of sand was placed in the base of the shell case and the fuel turned on to give a steady drip of petrol onto the sand. A lighted match thrown in by lifting the lid got the thing started and as the part of the fuel

pipe inside the box got hot the petrol vaporised, producing a fierce heat. In a short time the top of the box would reach a dull red heat if the tap was opened more than a little. The thing was finished off with a chimney made of tin cans, brazed together and into the top of the box. I made one for our tent, as we had the room for it and it fitted nicely at the end of the tent, between our camp beds. It seems quite amazing, looking back, that we could lay there sleeping with this petrol burning away a few inches from our heads. These heaters were so good, that we made one for the guard tent and the guard were able to cook their supper on it.

Choson (*sometimes spelt Chosen*) commonly known as Korea, was a pretty barren and desolate place in those days, having been fought over from end to end a couple of times. It was a land of paddy fields and harsh grey granite hills, covered with low scrub. Outside of the cities the roads were dirt and in dry weather the dust kicked up by the traffic was terrible.

The war had become a pretty static business, with both sides well dug in, roughly along the line of the original border between North and South Korea. Thus, I was not too unhappy when in late November, Jock Doherty arrived from Kure and I said farewell to all the lads. I had to travel down to Pusan by train to catch the ship to Kure. Most of the troops on the train were American, with a small number of Commonwealth lads in one compartment. Apparently there was still a small number of North Koreans operating as guerrillas in the hills between Seoul and Pusan and all the American troops carried arms. In the space at the end of each carriage was a box of ammunition for use in the event of attack but as the Americans used a different size of ammunition to us, I guess it was thought to be pointless for us to carry arms!

At Pusan we boarded this 'grotty' little troopship and set off on the overnight trip to Kure. While on board, we heard a rumour that there was some sort of hunt going on for drugs. At that time there was quite a lot of drug smuggling going on between Japan and Korea, mainly by and for the American negro troops. It was said that the authorities new that drugs had been put aboard when the ship left Japan and that they had not gone ashore in Pusan.

Consequently, when we tied up at Kure, it took hours to disembark as they wanted to prevent the drugs from being taken ashore again. Every man had to pass through a large customs shed where dozens of Japanese customs officers were paired off with military policemen. We had to show every item we were carrying and they went through it with a fine tooth comb, even squeezing out tooth paste and tasting Paracetamol tablets I was carrying.

**IN JAPAN WITH
5 MEDIUM WORKSHOPS
- to become part of
British Commonwealth Base Workshops**

By Joe Adey (42A)

Having embarked on the little troopship at Pusan, Korea, we arrived overnight at Kure, Japan. Disembarkation was delayed by some hours, because the authorities believed that drugs had been smuggled aboard and each soldier's kit was thoroughly searched in turn before being allowed to land.

5 Medium Workshops REME was located in a suburb of Kure called Hiro and not far from the Japan Re-enforcement Base Depot (JRBD). The workshops NCOs shared a Mess with a Australian ordnance unit and most of the Aussies had been in Japan for about six years. The Mess and accommodation was very plush but the best thing of all was the running hot water!

The first evening I sank a few beers with a big Aussie while he filled me in on the local situation. I then went upstairs to my room, undressed and went into the showers. I then turned on the hot water, sat on the floor and went to sleep for three

hours. I can still feel that lovely hot water pouring over me. I had been allocated a large room, shared with a Aussie S/Sgt who was rarely ever there, as he lived out with his Japanese girl friend.

The bulk of the work carried out at Hiro was the repair of Centurion tanks and other vehicles sent back from Korea. A lot of local Japanese labour was employed but it was my job to repair the tank guns and set up the sighting systems. A couple of other NCO's from 16 Inf Wksp's had been posted back to Kure, so I was not among total strangers. Kure seemed to be based around one long street, the 'Nakadori', which started down by the docks and ended up at the top end in a park which contained a very old Bonsai Garden. Some of the Bonsai trees were hundreds of years old and were wonderfully shaped.

Beyond the park was Ju San Chomi (13th Street), which was the Yoshiwara area or regulated brothel area. This was a very pretty area, especially at night. It was composed of wooden bungalows with long front verandas and a small lawn in front. At night the veranda's would be decorated with coloured paper lanterns and the girls in their pretty Kimonos. It was a pleasant evening out, just to walk round the area in the evening and to sit and talk to the girls while enjoying a cool beer. The area was tightly controlled by the police and medical authorities and Commonwealth troops were



5 Medium Workshop Recovery Section with a Centurion ARV

strongly advised to use the facilities rather than become involved with bar hostesses from the beer halls on the Nakadori.

There was a RAEME Occupation Workshops down at the edge of the harbour opposite the docks and soon after my arrival at Hiro it was decided to amalgamate the RAEME Workshops with 5 Medium Workshops and form a Advanced Base Workshops. In the re-organisation, I was moved down to the harbourside location where we were given space to set up a Gun shop.

A Canadian WOII (Guns) was posted in as my boss together with a young REME L/Cpl. from the UK. We had about 12 Japanese who were supposed to be fitters and four labourers. As soon as we had set up shop we received the 12 New Zealand 25 pounders which I had recently condemned in Korea and set about a complete re-build of them.

The situation between the British, Australians and the Canadians was inclined to be a bit strained at times. The Aussies had mostly been in Japan for six years and almost all of them, including the Officers, had permanent girl friends and in many cases, children. They all lived out in the town and came in to work every morning like the Japanese civilians. The

Aussie idea of discipline was much more easy going than the British or Canadian and the idea of the officers and men all living out with Japanese really upset some of the Canadians.

The British tended to shrug and take things as they came and some even tried the living out bit, as I did for a while, but found that being tied down to what was virtually 'married life' was not for me. In one corner of the Mess was a small store which opened only on payday for the sale of western type foods, such as butter and sugar and bacon. The Aussies used to fill their bags with goods each week and take it 'up home to the missus'.

Of course the British and Canadians only looked at things in the short term as they were all on 18 month tours. The other thing that rankled a bit was the discrepancy in pay between the two Commonwealth forces and the British. I had an Australian Corporal working for me who was paid almost exactly double the amount I was getting as a S/Sgt. We had only a couple of Canadians, one of whom was my boss, working in the Commonwealth workshops, the rest were Australian or British, plus several hundred Japanese.

The workshop accommodation consisted of two storey bar-rack blocks, some of which were divided up into two man



Commonwealth Base Wkps - REME & Civilian Gun Shop Staff 1952

rooms or bunks. I shared a bunk with a Aussie S/Sgt. who was in charge of all the civilian labour employed in the workshops. He originated from Yorkshire and had emigrated to Australia before the Second World War.

Each room had a Housegirl to do the cleaning and laundry and ours was a widow of about 32 years of age, although she looked much older. She had a pretty easy time as my 40 year old room mate lived out with a 21 year old Japanese girl, so we did not see much of him. I learned quite a lot of the Japanese language from our housegirl during the lunch hours, when she would sit cross-legged on the Aussie's bed sewing or darning socks.

The Sgts. Mess employed about a dozen Japanese girls as waitresses and they were a nice bunch. At this stage of my life I could still be made to blush easily, so the girls named me 'Tomato-san'. I had a lot of good fun with them and one evening they decided to take me to the Japanese theatre in town. The Nakadori was about a half mile of beer halls, on both sides of the street, except for the odd building like the theatre and I had become curious about the form Japanese theatre took.

Three of the girls met me one evening and took me along to the show. We paid our entrance fee of a few Yen and went upstairs to a small balcony with a bare wooden floor, where we sat cross legged on the boards for the whole show. Most of the show seemed to consist of the enactment of ancient fables, with a sexual connotation, plus the odd interlude where a dolly-bird would whirl tassels around from her breasts! The girls had fun and indulged in a lot of giggling as they explained what was going on.

Over the winter months we had a little snow and were glad when the warmer weather arrived and we could play tennis and go swimming. We had two tennis courts right outside the Mess fitted with floodlights, so in the very hot weather we could play late in the evenings, helped along with a couple of cool pints of Asahi beer.

The Mess owned a couple of 40 foot motor launches and some Sundays a bunch of us would load up a boat with food and beer for a day out on the Inland Sea. We would cruise among the small islands and stop off at a beach for a few hours or belt along at a tidy few knots, taking it in turns to leap into the sea. It is a strange feeling bobbing about in the water like a cork with so much water under you, waiting to be picked up again.

Most of the Aussies owned ex-army Jeeps or motor cycles and I often used to go out with a big ginger haired fellow named Bluey Phillips, who owned a Jeep and a motor-bike. Although he lived out, he would sometimes take three or four of us to Hiroshima for a weekend. Hiroshima was 18 miles away along the coast and was beginning to recover from the devastation of the Atom Bomb attack which ended the Second World War. We were officially only allowed into Hiroshima if we had a weekend pass to stay at the official leave

centre but the Aussies took no notice of the rules. The only military police in Hiroshima were American and Aussie and they did not ask questions as long as we were behaving ourselves. We used to stay at the same place each time we went to Hiroshima, I cannot recall the name of the place but it was a hotel-cum-nightclub with some very nice hostesses!

In the late spring of 1952 large drafts of replacement REME personnel arrived in the workshops, most of whom worked up at what was now the Hiro detachment of the workshops. Some of these replacements together with some of the recent arrivals in the JRBD, were picked up by the multi-national police patrols in Kure for various offences. These patrols were made up of military police, one each of British, Canadian, Australian and a Japanese civil policeman riding around in Jeeps. As a result of the problems in the town, we were put under a curfew whereby we all had to be in camp by midnight.

My buddy at the time was an Australian, a ASM (Instruments) by the name of Jim Wylie. Jim was a very little chap who spent his time 50% with his girl friend and 50% living in camp and whooping up with the lads. During the period when the curfew was imposed Jim would sometimes take me out just for the hell of it. After drinking in the Mess for a couple of hours, we would go across to our barrack block to get our belts and berets. My room was on the ground floor and Jim's was on the first floor. He owned a pretty little chromium plated Colt .32 Automatic which he liked to carry if he was going out late at night. I used to wait for him at the bottom of the stairs, take the gun from him and hide it in the fuse box behind the main door, where it remained until we got back from our jaunt.

We would slip out of the main gate just before midnight and slip in through the rear gate at 6am, when it was opened to admit the civilian workers. With Jim's knowledge of the back alley's of Kure, we could dodge the police patrols all night. Once in the rear gate it was a mad dash to our rooms to slip on pyjama trousers, slippers and a Greatcoat and then fall in on the square for the 6.30am roll-call. The curfew became such a farce that it was dropped after a couple of months.

The Commonwealth forces had a Battle Indoctrination training area at a place called Hura Mura, up in the hills about 15 miles from Kure. I was once ordered to go up there to examine the gun of a Cromwell tank, in particular, the sighting system. Apparently a live round from this tank had landed on a Japanese village just outside the training area and an investigation was going on. That was the first and last time I saw Field Punishment being carried out.

There was only one prisoner and his accommodation was a camp bed inside a small barbed-wire cage about 20ft x 20ft. A wooden shed with only two sides and a roof over the bed was the only cover. The cage was located out in open ground on the training area and the day I was there it was a cold wet day in March. Outside the cage was a small patch of green

grass roughly 3ft x 3ft surrounded by mud. The green patch was where the prison NCO stood to drill the prisoner and the muddy area all belonged to the prisoner when he was not digging holes and filling them in again.

Before I left Hura Mura I was told that a Typhoon warning had been put out and by the time I had got down out of the mountains it was pouring down, with really strong winds. The rivers suddenly flooded and of the 5 bridges which we could have used to get back to Kure, 4 of them were washed out, while the one we used was looking pretty dodgy. When we got into camp we found that everything outside of buildings, such as vehicles, had been anchored to the ground with ropes and steel pegs. Fortunately the eye of the storm passed to the south of us and we sustained very little damage.

One Sunday, Jack Drennan and I took a trip to the island of Mia Jima, which was just off the coast from Hiroshima. Jack was an ex D Coy lad and was soon to return to the UK to be commissioned. Mia Jima was one of the islands which were used by the Japanese Kamikaze pilots for their last few days before their final mission and was regarded as one of the seven beauty spots of Japan. Only a few people lived on the island, although there was a large Shinto temple, and some sort of shrine. The temple faced the sea and there was a large 'Tori', a sort of solid wooden arch, standing out in the water in line with the centre of the altar.

To get to Mia Jima, we had to go by train to the other side of Hiroshima and then catch a small boat over to the island. On our return we waited an hour for the train, which was delayed for some reason and then decided to catch a bus into Hiroshima. At the same time, a Japanese man in his late fifties or early sixties accompanied by a very pretty young girl, decided that they would do the same. While we waited for the bus, I could see that the man was trying to get the girl to speak to us, which she eventually did, in perfect English.

She explained that the man was her uncle and that although he could not speak English, he wanted to converse through her, because he had been to England before the war and was interested to know what London was like now. He was a big well dressed fellow, and apparently owned two factories which produced what we now as 'Elephant Coils'. These were like incense sticks, wound into a coil, which when the end was lit gave off a vapour which would keep the mosquitoes away. He had one factory in Hiroshima and one in Tokyo and we called the product Elephant Coils because his trademark was an elephant.

He invited us to visit him at his factory in Hiroshima and asked us to write to his niece to make the arrangements. She wrote her name and address on a piece of paper and shortly after that they said goodbye and left the bus. Jack Drennan returned to the UK a couple of weeks later and several weeks after that I was feeling at a loose end and decided to write to the young lady and arrange a visit to her Uncle. We fixed up the visit for one Saturday and she arranged to meet me off the bus in Hiroshima and take me to her Uncle's place.

When I stepped off of the bus the young girl, whose name was Saori Kanda, was being chaperoned by her mother who accompanied us on another bus to the factory.

On arrival at the factory I was introduced to a business acquaintance of the Uncle and to another of his nieces who was about eight years old. After a few minutes, Saori Kanda's mother left us and returned to her home while I was taken on a short tour of the factory. We then all went up to a room over the main office where we sat cross legged on the floor round a long low table, for lunch Japanese style. I cannot remember what we ate but I know that I did not eat the raw fish. Uncle and his business acquaintance drank Saki but for me he proudly produced a bottle of Canadian Club whisky.

It appeared that Saori Kanda was eighteen years of age and that her father, who had been a railway official, had died in the atom bomb blast. Saori was eleven years old when the bomb was dropped over Hiroshima and she had a lucky escape. At that time, children over a certain age went to school for half-days and did war work for the other part of the day. On the 6 June 1945 she was suffering from a tooth ache and stayed at home, which was on the outskirts of the city, and only suffered blast damage.

After lunch we all climbed into an old Dodge car that had been kept in excellent condition and Uncle took us for a drive in the city. The thing I really remember about the car is the tiny rear window, which made it look like a gangsters car from the 1920s. They showed me the spot that had been designated as 'Ground Zero' of the atom burst and I also saw the outlines of people left on the ground.

We walked in the gardens round the lake where thousands of people had crowded into the water to try and get away from the heat in the aftermath of the explosion. I also learned that Saori spoke such good English because she was one of the first children to attend the American School which was set up in Hiroshima by the Americans, after the war. It was a most enjoyable interlude in my stay in Japan and I still have a letter which Saori wrote to me, when we were making the arrangements for my visit.

Time was rolling on for me, as it was for most of the Aussies who had been in Japan for up to seven years. The end of the occupation was in sight and the Australian government hired the British troopship 'Devonshire' to take the boys home. The quayside at Kure was like New York when the Yanks were sailing for Blighty, with the side of the ship covered in coloured paper streamers and the quay packed with weeping women! A couple of us went down to see Jim Wylie off and we passed him up a bottle of whisky on the end of a line which we had thrown to him. Little did I know that I would be whooping it up with Jim in London and in Germany, very soon after waving him farewell.

I should mention that was the time when the Australian government immigration policy of whites only, came to an

end. The lads who were leaving unofficial wives and children behind in Japan had been promised that once they were home, they would be able to bring their girls to Australia and marry them. As I waved to Jim Wylie I realised that it would soon be my turn to get on to a boat for home.

I had been in the Far East for two years and been stationed in three countries, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and ten days in Singapore. I had enjoyed the tour immensely even if it was a bit hectic at times but I was now ready to go home. I was surprised by what I found in Japan, by the fact that there was practically no crime, by the respect shown to the elders of the family, by the behaviour of the children and by the fact that I never ever saw a child slapped.

Although the majority of houses were made mainly of wood with interior walls of bamboo and rice paper, they were kept spotlessly clean. People always removed their wooden shoes at the door of the house before entering and the wooden floors were covered with rice straw mats called 'Tatame'.

On 12 December 1952 I boarded a fairly small troopship called the 'Halledale' and sailed out of Kure harbour as Dougie Cresswell was sailing in on a large troopship called the 'Fowey'. Dougie was to do an eighteen month tour in Korea followed by eighteen months in West Africa, before returning to the UK.

The *Halledale's* first stop was at Pusan to take on a tank regiment who were going to the Suez Canal zone to complete their 3 year tour.

Our next stop was Hong Kong, where I went ashore to collect a bag of kit I had left in storage but of course it had disappeared. The NAAFI Club was close to the kit store so I dropped in and had a couple of San Miguels and then decided to pop up to the Command Workshops at Sham Shiu Po, where I used to stay at weekends, to see if there was anyone I knew. Of course that was a mistake as the ship was due to sail at 4pm and at that time I was outside the workshop gate, trying frantically to catch a taxi or a bus to take me down to

Kowloon docks. I eventually made it by bus, being the last man to board, and they pulled up the gangway behind me!

Although the *Halledale* was smaller than most troopships in service in those days, she was quite comfortable, certainly as far as the senior NCOs were concerned. I shared a two man cabin with comfortable bunk beds and ate in the second class dining room. We were informed of the scale of the tips which were expected by the various stewards.

I found that my table steward was looking after me very well after he found that I would be on board for the full trip to the UK. The other people at my table were all leaving the ship at Port Said, so would only be expected to tip for the four week trip, whereas he would expect the full six week tip from me. I found that if there was Apple Pie or Ice-cream for sweet, I could ask for Apple Pie but I would get both on my plate, much to my enjoyment.

We celebrated Christmas in the Indian Ocean in pretty horrible weather conditions and spent most of our time playing cards. In due course, we sailed into Liverpool six weeks after leaving Kure and piled onto a troop train to London. I had no



Commonwealth Base Wksps, Kure, Japan - Xmas Day 1950

trouble with the customs this time, I just pointed out my kit bag and a large duralumin trunk which I was bringing home for Jimmy Greaves, the welder Sgt in Kure and the Customs officer put his chalk mark on it.

Arriving in London, the troops swarmed off of the train and I was wondering how I would get the trunk and kit bag across to Waterloo station, when I spotted this huge porter pushing his way against the human tide. I gave him a wave, pointed to the trunk and said, "Taxi?", whereupon he heaved the trunk onto his shoulder and ploughed his way through the crush of people to a taxi. It was a delight to see the smile on his face as I passed him a ten shilling note.

**JOURNEY TO THE SHARP END - April 1951
(11 Infantry Workshops)**

By Duncan Binnie

(Article reproduced here by kind permission of the author who is not an ex apprentice - Ed)

We scrambled out of the Douglas Skymaster aircraft at about 06.30 hrs. The weather was bitterly cold, even in April and we were ankle deep in mud. Mud everywhere, nothing but mud. Kindly United States soldiers working on the airstrip gave us K rations, which we ate ravenously. We were a party of 12 REME personnel, including our sergeant from Hong Kong via Okinawa and Kure. We were to join our unit, 11 Infantry Workshops somewhere near the front line, somewhere in Korea.

We did not have thick clothing, we began to get very cold. After some time we were loaded into two GMC 6 x 6 lorries including the U.S. soldiers from the aircraft who were to join their respective units. They had boarded in Japan. The GMCs have a throaty exhaust. We roared away from the airfield, the black driver grinning as he looked about and extracted maximum revolutions from each gear. The road was in poor condition, it may have been tarmac at some time but now it was badly holed, the holes were filled with stones and rubbish in an attempt to provide some sort of surface. What

we thought of as a bad road now got worse and I concluded that only the road around the airstrip was patched which would explain the driver's burst of exuberance. We now hit so many holes and ridges the driver was obliged to slow drastically, as much for his own comforts as our no doubt!

We saw Korean people for the first time, trudging along in twos and threes. They were dressed in white and black robe-like clothing. We saw men with a triangular wooden frame on their backs carrying an enormous mountain of goods, they were bent over with the weight; we were to learn this was the A frame, the universal way in Korea to transport everything. And we saw a woman with an enormous load of what appeared to be washing on her head! The children wore ragged, unkempt clothing; they stared with dull eyes as we drove past, some held their hands out rather pitifully. The people were bigger in stature than the Japanese and their skin colour was light brown.

The general countryside appeared flat, with clumps of small trees, but on the horizon, both sides, there was the irregular outline of hills, some large. We passed wreck of vehicles, the rusting remains of a tank and, in the distance, blown railway bridges. Rubbing shoulders, sitting tightly on the bench seating as we jolted along, more scenes of devastation unfolded, apprehension showed on our young faces. The reality of our journey began to sink in.

Traffic drove on the right. When a vehicle was encountered



Typical Main Road Conditions close to Han River - March 1951

coming towards us the road was often too narrow and the ditch so near that it was necessary for one party to come to a standstill. At a particularly nasty bend, with a big camber, soldiers were sitting on the right hand side, including me, were looking down very nervously into a deep ditch as the driver inched through on his clutch, the lorries almost touching. On another occasion the GMCs crawled in six-wheel drive in and out of a shallow river with the demolished bridge leaning drunkenly beside us. This did not help our progress.

We had conversation with the U.S. soldiers as we journeyed, leaning forward to speak, our rifles thrust between our knees into the floor to give us a prop of sorts against the never ending jolting. Two Americans were returning to the 7th Cavalry after hospitalization in Japan, recovering from wounds. They told us grim stories of the inhumane treatment meted out to comrades obliged to surrender, including cold-blooded murder. I went icy cold inside - what were we getting into?

The two wagons stopped completely a couple of times for us to clamber out to answer the call of nature and beat some circulation into our limbs. In the early afternoon our vehicles pulled off the road into a clearing and stopped. I overheard our driver exclaim "Dis bus doan go up to the sharp end, man, dis is where yuh-all change!" Several other lorries and jeeps were already there. A discussion took place between military policemen and American officers. Eventually we were all ordered to disembark and board two similar GMC lorries. There seemed to be some confusion and we British soldiers were eyed up and down by a lean officer dressed smartly. However, we departed at once with the REME party in the rear vehicle.

We did not get very far before the condition of the road deteriorated further. In fact it was best described as a track of hard packed stones, earth and clay humped high in the middle to let the water run off, presumably. The drivers set the lorry wheels either side of the hump and made the best speed they could, which was not much. Now the weather decided to take a hand and from the leaden sky rain began to fall. Gently at first and then increasing in ferocity, it stung our faces. The GMC was an open backed lorry. We swore and groped in our kit bags for ground sheets; we tumbled into each other as we draped the sheets over our heads and shoulders amid the jolting and tried to get comfortable.

We made a turn on the track that ran through the woods, although the trees were sparse. This surface was more earth and rather muddy but not so many holes and was almost pleasant to ride on and quite a relief. We met no vehicles and saw no one; it was quiet, the exhaust note of the GMCs burred around us. This wound on for quite a way and then we emerged at a T junction and were stopped by a party of military policemen, British and American.

Much discussion took place, heatedly, with waving of arms. From his seat in our GMC our sergeant got involved. It appeared that we, the British contingent, had already been

brought miles out of our way to accommodate the U.S. soldiers. Further travel for us on these lorries would be pointless; we were ordered out of our GMC. The American MPs left the group and climbed into our vacant seats.

We stood forlornly and silently as the two lorries drove away on the left hand road. We had talked to our United Nations allies as we journeyed; we liked the Americans; we waved them farewell. The three remaining British MPs assured us that transported would be directed to this place to pick us up. There were a lot of questions we would have liked to have asked but they told our Sergeant that they must leave at once, pointing to their jeep just off the road in a small clearing.

They departed rapidly with a wave on the right hand road. I wondered vaguely who was supposed to look after the junction. There were no signs. An hour or so passed. The rain eased slightly. We had no food; we had water - at least those of us who had thought to fill our water bottles. We shared but incredibly for the British Army, we had no tea! The smokers among us had matches and we could have made a fire, it somehow did not seem worthwhile. We moaned at each other.

Standing in the middle of the road, downcast, I watched the water running off the corner of my ground sheet trickling into a small puddle which filled up and overflowed into a larger puddle. When the puddle was full, the water shot off the edge of the road into a ditch. "Interesting", I thought, "suppose it's the same the whole world over." The same as home - home seemed a long, long way away.

And then, in the stillness of the late afternoon, above the patter of the rain, I heard a lovely familiar sound. The road to our right dipped down and twisted out of our vision behind a clump of trees. Now, from this place appeared the cab of a Bedford QL. relief flooded through us, we whooped in delight. Yes, the driver was looking for us. Whatever the communications system was, it had worked. Our sergeant shouted, "Right lads, in you get!" Then I heard him say to the driver, "Any grub - got any rations with you?" The driver was shaking his head. "Bloody Hell!" said the sergeant with a look of disgust and then more to himself, "there must be a war on." He could be quite comical at times. On my way to the tailboard I could not resist saying to the driver, "The Army at least gave you a decent lorry then?" A tousled head with bright eyes looked down from under a cap comforter set at a rakish angle, "Not a bad old gal." He replied in a London accent, grinning back. "Likes the mud." We eagerly boarded, threw our dripping ground sheets into a corner of the body, piled our kit on the floor and sat on it. Huddled together we were glad of the canvas tilt over our heads. With a couple of shunts the lorry turned round and we were on our way. This was a very poor road again, probably more used.

We drove along, the QL lurching in the mud and potholes, the transmission whining in the indirect gears. Our sergeant sat in the cab. He passed back information that the cockney RASC driver was uncertain of the whereabouts of our unit

as the front line was very fluid at this time. The mud, aided by the rain, got even worse.

At a junction, a GMC lorry carrying supplies turned into our path ahead of us. We went along in company and presently we came upon a sight I shall never forget. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry had just withdrawn from the front into reserve. They were obliged to bed down for the night where they were, spreading their ground sheets and bedding on top of the mud. The GMC in front got into difficulties. Soon he bellied down into the gooey mess, the differentials sinking into the mud, the all-wheel drive turning uselessly.

A bulky American NCO dropped out of the cab onto the surface and heaved his legs a few paces and surveyed the scene. Spreading his arms wide he shouted, "We've had it, the goddam..." He looked at us, thirty feet behind and turned a thumb down with a grimace. Our driver had other ideas. Up until then we had managed in rear axle drive only, the clever little driver not overdoing the revs, just letting the big trak-grip tyres bite their way. I watched at the tailboard and I listened. The driver stayed in second gear, released the clutch to just move the rear wheels, then smartly depressed the clutch pedal and moved the transfer box lever into low

ratio and four-wheel drive. He released the clutch and we moved forward, our driver steering to the right of the GMC where the ground was more level. The revs of the Bedford engine came up as the wheels sank into the clinging mud. Each of the big tyres clawed at the mud as we sank deeper, the revs screaming to maximum as the QL gave everything to the task - still we moved on. We crawled past the large NCO, his mouth agape. We now steered back onto where the track proper should be. Above the roar of the engine could be heard cheers from the Canadian soldiers. We found a smoother surface and the driver lifted the throttle to some extent. A bemused American NCO stared after us, hand on hips. Our driver now stopped, re-engaged rear-axle drive only and we continued on our journey. Time passed, the night arrived.

The driver switched on the headlights. The lighting on a QL couldn't be said to be one of its better points but this was adequate for our speed. The rain subsided into a drizzle and a pale moon tried to shine through a watery sky. We lumped and bumped along, the lorry alternating between second and third gear. We were very tired; we were very hungry; we had experienced a long day; we dozed fitfully amongst our kit and against each other. A particularly bad lurch caused by a probably unavoidably large hole brought forth Army style



11 Infantry Workshop - American Equipment or what?



Korea 1950-51 - Enjoying a cigarette with our Korean staff

bad language in which the driver was cursed, then the QL, then the Army in general and finally the war that brought us to this foreign country. We then got the bad news passed back to us from our Sergeant that the little driver was lost.

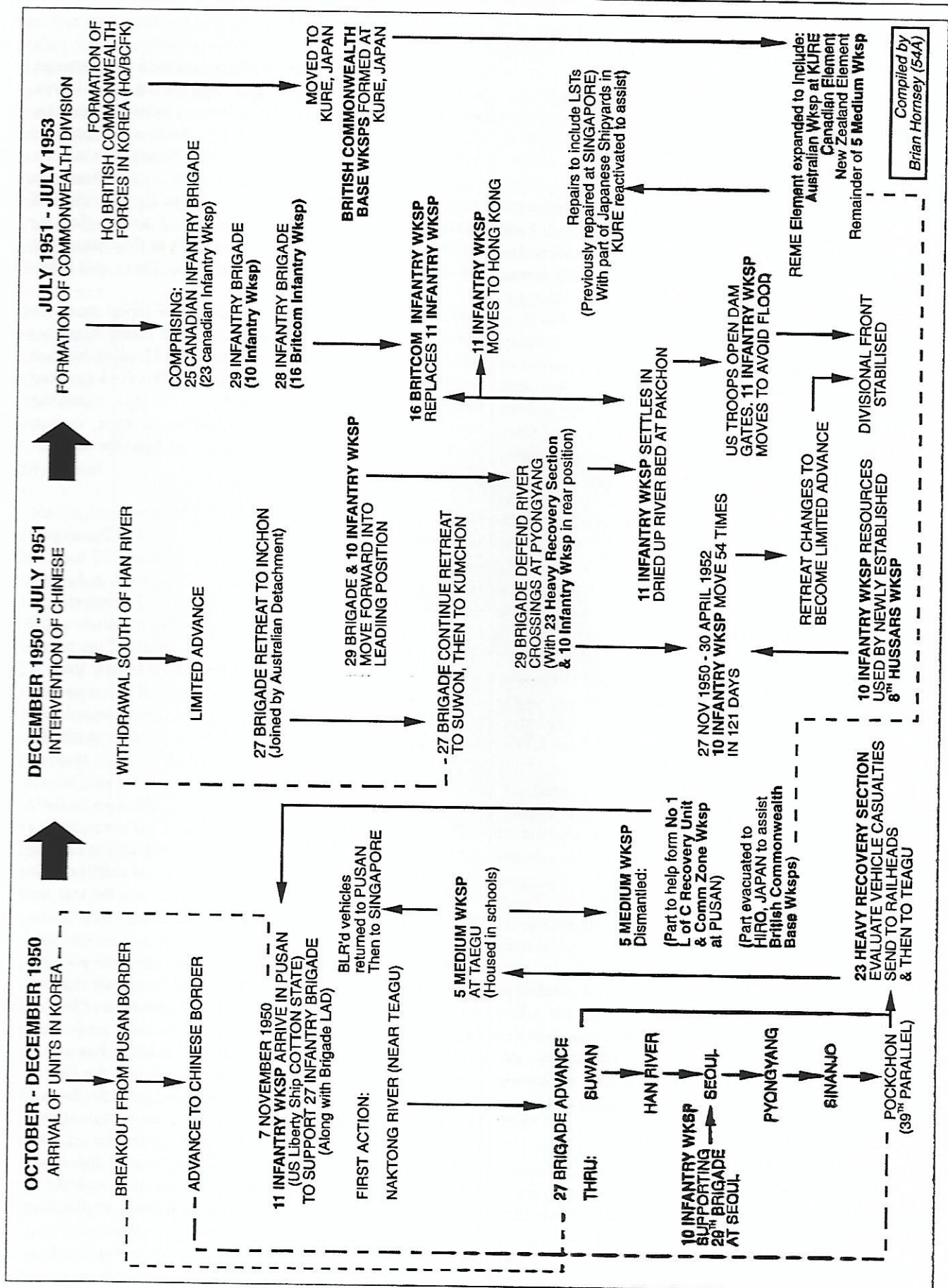
At around midnight a very powerful voice roared from the darkness, "Halt or I fire!" We stopped dead and now wide awake I listened to the conversation outside. It transpired that we were about to drive into no-man's land. The voice belonged to a British Corporal at a Forward Observation Post - we were in the right sector, but the wrong place. He sternly advised us that further advance along this particular route would result in rice for breakfast. The Chinese forward positions were right ahead. The Corporal quickly gave us some directions and our driver then had to turn the QL around. Peering into the gloom we shouted from the tailboard how far he could back up to the deep ditch in our rear. It took several shunts and finally we roared away, very tense, never mind the holes.

After lurching along a further interminable time the British

Military Police sprang out before the lorry at a crossroads. They definitely put us on the right route, finally we joined our unit at about 0400 hrs. But some time before we arrived, above the sound of the QL and travelling through the night air, I heard the thump, thump of the Lister generator that powered the whole of the electrical requirements for the workshop. This would be my baby to look after.

The REME guard commander gave us a hearty greeting. He commented, "Well, you could get lost in this terrain in daylight - you were bound to get lost at night, the front is moving up - we only got here two days ago." We quickly unloaded our kit, most of us thanking the little driver for sticking to his task, although dawn was streaking the skyline I bundled my kit under the canvas awning attached to a machinery lorry with the other soldiers sleeping there - I went out like a light!

A whole twelve months of trials, tribulations and adventure lay ahead.



MOVEMENT OF INFANTRY WORKSHOPS IN KOREA

**IN KOREA WITH THE
7th ROYAL TANK REGIMENT
& 8th KINGS ROYAL IRISH HUSSARS**

By Brian Conway (42A)

It was in February 1949 that I returned to the UK after a 3 year tour overseas and was posted to the 7th Royal Tank regiment at Mooltan barracks, Tidworth and was attached to 'A' Squadron as the commander of a Churchill ARV. It was in July of that year that I first met the young lady who was to become my wife. She was the nanny to the 4 children of Lt Col J E Snow RAMC, the CO of Tidworth Military Hospital. Early the following year our regiment moved to Bovington Camp, Dorset and from Easter time, a composite squadron of RTR personnel was selected from the other three and were moved to a hutted camp at Lulworth Cove, where we became the sponsoring unit for all armoured (TA) units during their annual camps, with me being kept pretty busy rescuing casualty vehicles under training. In July of that year I married my fiancée at her home town of Torquay, with Colonel Snow, kindly consenting to give the bride away. On returning to my unit at Lulworth Cove in August after my honeymoon, my squadron sergeant major (SSM) Jim Darby RTR took great delight in telling me, "The honeymoon is over! You're off to Korea, Conway!"

A composite C Squadron equipped with Churchill Flame Throwers and their trailers was formed, comprising all regular soldiers drawn from the 4 squadrons of the regiment, supplemented by B reservists, re-called to the colours for the duration of the Korean war, under the command of Major Jack Pettingell RTR. We were to operate as half-squadrons, each with their Churchill ARVs, one half under the command of Major Pettingell and the other under the command of Captain Freeman MC RTR, with Sergeant Jack Woodward REME commanding one ARV and me the other. We were to be part of the 29th Independent Infantry Brigade Group, comprising the Gloucesters, the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Royal Ulster Rifles with the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars (Lt Col Sir Guy Lowther, Baronet) with the latest centurions providing a full regiment as our main tank support. (Coincidentally, Lt Col Snow RAMC, now a Brigadier, was to be director of Medical Services for all commonwealth forces in Korea and the Commandant of the Commonwealth Military Hospital at Kure, Japan. My wife took up service once again with Mrs Snow while Brigadier Snow and I were in Korea).

We set sail for Korea in early October 1950 on *HMTS Empire Fowey* and on the last leg of the voyage, from Singapore to Pusan we picked up an advance party of officers (who had already been to Korea) to give lectures about the 'land of the morning calm', a land about which we knew so little. "The best description that I can give you of Korea," said one officer, "is that the land you will walk on will be solid shit, the water you will drink, liquid shit, and the air you will

breathe, evaporated shit!"

Upon arrival at Pusan harbour after an almost 6 week voyage, we understood what our lecturers had meant about Korea, with the all-pervading stench of human excreta emanating from the fertiliser used on the paddy fields which covered the whole of South Korea; the excrement carried in buckets inappropriately called 'honey-buckets' by the Americans, on two ends of a bamboo pole slung across the shoulders of Korean men, the buckets bouncing up and down, splashing their contents over the legs of the carriers as they ran along! The world's finest rice comes from South Korea, it is said.

One of my most unforgettable memories (apart from the stench) comes to mind. As we sailed into Pusan, a soldier standing at the ship's rail with a bewildered look on his face said to me, "To think that I spent 3 years in this God-forsaken hole as a prisoner of war of the fg Japs, where the so-called vicious and cruel Japanese guards were, in fact, Koreans, and here I am coming back to fight for the bastards!"

We unloaded our tanks from the freighters, tied up alongside the jetties. Someone had forgotten to ensure that Pusan port had adequate lifting gear, capable of handling 70 tons or more. The Korean stevedores were not prepared to do anything about it so the Ship's crew manned 2 steam-driven donkey winches with two derricks working in unison to lift the sheer weight of our tanks from the depths of the holds, where we unfortunate soldiers shackled the hawser lines to the lifting eyes on each tank and then watched in fear as each vehicle rose slowly above us, seemingly filling completely the whole space of the hatchway and so blocking out the daylight. We prayed that none of the hawser lines snapped to send a tank crashing through the bottom of the ship taking us with it! As each tank was swung across the deck to hang precariously over the side, the ship would list over with the shore lines groaning and straining to prevent it from keeling over completely until the load was deposited safely on the dockside (terra-firma - the firmer the ground the less the terror, as the paratroopers are often wont to say). Then came the task of loading our tanks on to the flat-bed railway cars for onward transportation to Kaesong on the 38th parallel. This proved a somewhat hazardous exercise. These flat-bed cars were nothing as sophisticated as those we had loaded back in the UK. On the Korean cars, the fulcrum pins on the underside of the cars simply entered fulcrum bushes on top of each bogie, unsecured. The result was that as the first of our tanks attempted to mount the first flat-bed, the far end tilted upwards dislodging its bogies. We overcame this problem after replacing the set of bogies at the far end by positioning our two ARVs breadthwise across the space between each flat bed to hold them down as each tank drove on. Each ARV then interchanged along the station platform between cars until each tank had been loaded on to its own flat-bed, the two ARVs being the last on. We hoped that there would be siding platforms at Kaesong!

A comparatively short train journey of some 250 miles took

several days as we were shunted off into sidings, sometimes being kept there for hours on end, but it did give us an opportunity to dismount, put the kettle on and have a cooked compo meal on firm land rather than try to accomplish this while on the move on our swaying flatbed cars, from beneath tarpaulins lashed to the stern of each tank and fastened to the wooden platform of each car, our only sleeping quarters for the next few days! Along the way, all crews, including the officers, had to provide a guard up to the turret (Turret Guard) during the hours of daylight, because of sabotage activity along the line, and drew lots for 'stag duty' during the hours of darkness. I was also pleasantly surprised to discover that officers had to do their fair share of the cooking for the day?

My driver was 'Paddy' Brown RTR, a veteran of the 8th Army in North Africa, through Italy and into Germany, who had probably forgotten more about tanks than

I would ever know, and did not take kindly to 23 year-old REME Sergeants! My Wireless Operator was 19 year-old Steve Hawkins RTR who, because of his age, ought not to have been in Korea at that time. My Winch Operator was Gerald (Spud) Murphy REME, who when not operating the winch from the commander's seat, was the Besa machine gunner in the hull at the co-driver's seat.

One morning at sunrise, as I awoke, I found all of my crew in their sleeping-bags. Who, then, was supposed to be on turret guard? I awoke the crew, to discover that it should have been young Steve Hawkins? By way of explanation, he said, "Well Sarge, you all looked to peaceful and comfortable there, in your sleeping-bags, I just didn't have the heart to wake any of you!!" We had great difficulty in restraining our mirth as I tried to adopt an angry countenance, to remind Steve that we were on active service, and that if the terrorists had not shot us in our sleep, then our OC would have done, had he found out.

Fortunately for us, we did not encounter any terrorist activity along the way but, on arrival at Kaesong, each tank had 'acquired' and additional 'crew member' (?) in the shape of little Korean children, none over ten years of age, boys and girls, who had been standing along the railway line, begging for food. With our OC's permission, each tank crew was permitted to 'adopt' one Korean child, travelling in the co-driver's seat, sharing food and spare sleeping-bags, in return for carrying out small tasks, such as folding and stowing our sleeping-bags and washing up our mess tins and eating-irons after each meal, for at least until we arrived at Kaesong where, perhaps, we could make other arrangements

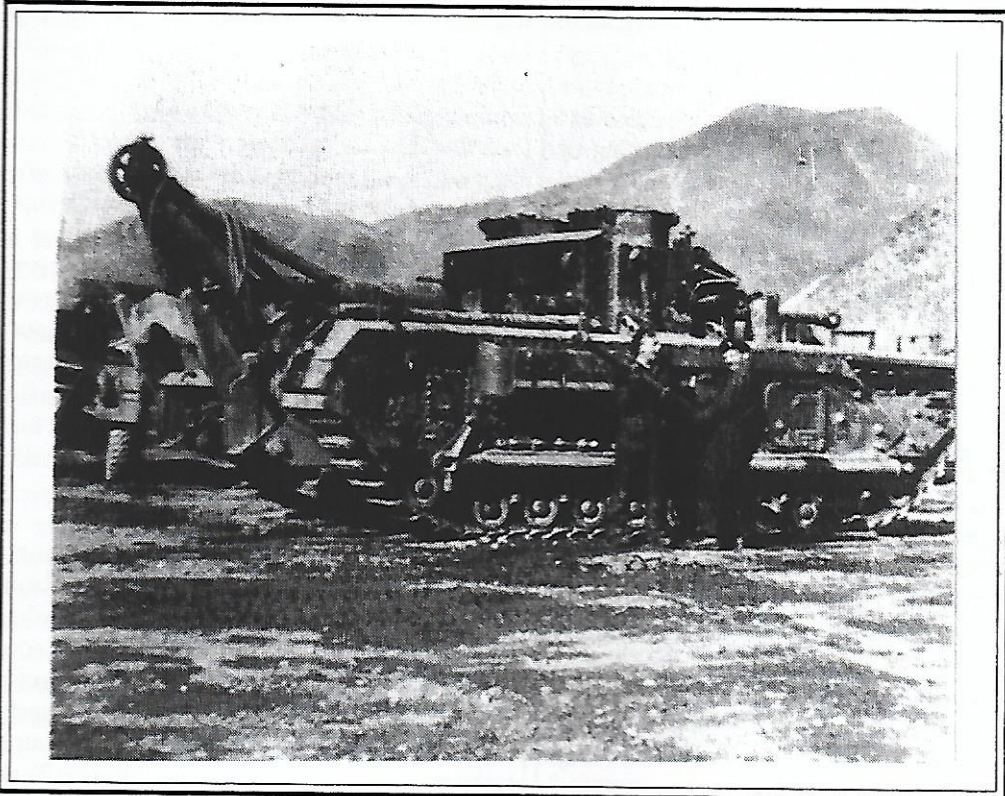
for them? We had one little boy on our ARV, appropriately called 'Won', so we called him 'Two'. His younger sister was on another tank in our squadron.

Our Korean Intelligence Officer, who was the interpreter between us and 'our' children told us that the North Koreans, on their initial sweep southward towards Pusan at the early stages of the war, had shot their par-

ents before their eyes, and had left the children to fend for themselves and to be taken care of by the UN Forces!

At Kaesong we were pleased to find off-loading facilities at the Railway Station and used a reverse unloading procedure to that which we had used at Pusan. It was from here that we were to learn that the 27th Infantry Brigade, the first Commonwealth Forces to arrive in Korea, from Hong Kong, comprising the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the Middlesex Regiment and the 3rd Australian Regiment, were now enjoying a well-earned rest after experiencing what is now known as 'Friendly Fire' from American Aircraft.

Having off-loaded at Kaesong, our squadron promptly turned around, to travel south, in the direction from which we just arrived. We were permitted to keep our orphans! It was on this journey that I was to experience not only the perils of vehicles operating in the sub-zero temperatures of a Siberian winter, but also of the dangers of driving on very



A Churchill ARV in operation

narrow roads, barely wide enough to take the width of one tank, weaving along the roads between paddy fields, where the unwary driver could easily find his tank slipping from the road and into a paddy field, to shed a track! This then became my most frequent recovery operation and fortunately Craftsman Murphy and I were not often required to wade into paddy fields any deeper in 'fertiliser' than ankle-high, singing "Sweet Violets! Sweeter than all the Roses!" An expected simple recovery task became complicated, by our blocking the only main road to other traffic, and having to continually unhitch our tackle and get out of the way, particularly for ambulances. At first light each day, while the teapot was brewing, we carried out our 'first-parade maintenance' with my Wireless Operator 'netting-in' his radio to the Squadron Commander's radio signals, while 'Spud' Murphy checked over the winch and recovery equipment and the weapons. 'Paddy' Brown and I checked the engine and transmission oil levels, fuel and coolant and, on warming-up the engine, rocked the steering tiller-bar to-and-fro in a partial 'neutral' turn to free the track links from the frozen ground.

Following upon an early visit from Captain Snow REME, the Brigade Forward Recovery Officer (no relation to Brigadier Snow RAMC) we learned that engine and transmission oils were to be changed from SAE 40 and SAE 60 respectively, to SAE 30 and 40, Anti-freeze was to be of a 50/50 mixture, and that no ARV was to tow any other vehicle for a distance exceeding 5 miles in any one day! Engine and gearbox life was estimated to be no more than 500 hours, when a major unit-change would be necessary. There was, however, a small RASC Unit of Diamond 'T' Tank Transporters in our area, on whom we could call, if necessary, to help evacuate tanks to the nearest railhead or REME Repair facility but, because of the nature of the hilly terrain, narrow roads with sharp bends, with sheer drops on one side, such services were almost impossible for the RASC. We could only pray that there would be a railhead with loading ramps within five miles of us, to which we could tow the casualty? One other problem we were to confront, as we moved towards Seoul was that the American Corps of Engineers had been ordered to destroy all road bridges behind them!

It became a part of the REME ARV Commanders' duties (including the Commanders of the four ARVs of the 8th Hussars Squadrons) to wait on the northern side of each bridge, to await a signal from our respective Squadron Commanders, that all 'call signs' (their tanks) had passed safely over the bridge before we ourselves could pass over, and the American Engineers ordered to destroy the bridge. Indeed, it was said, that the 8th Hussars did, in fact, lose one of their Centurions as a result of this routine, with 'all hell to pay' because it was known that the Russians would have 'dearly loved' to have got their hands on one of our latest Centurions, courtesy of the North Koreans and Chinese forces, and here was one 'presented to them on a plate' complete and intact! Apparently American rocket-firing aircraft were sent to the area on a 'search and destroy mission' without a trace of the Centurion being found.

It was known that the enemy had no mechanical facilities of their own capable of transporting such a heavy load. It had to be assumed that an 'Army of Chinese Ants' must have had to pick the tank up bodily and carry it off!

The destruction of all the road bridges created another recovery problem with our 'soft' vehicles, particularly ambulances, becoming stranded on the steep slippery slopes of river banks as they attempted to ford the shallow rivers. Fortunately Sergeant Jack Ward REME was on hand with his Scammel to get them out. Recovery vehicles thus became prime targets for the enemy 'T34' Russian-made tanks with their very powerful 85mm gun, in a 'hull-down' position, strategically placed at bends in the road to 'pick-us-off' as we rounded the corner! However, with the arrival in Korea of the 8th Hussars, with a full regiment of Centurions, with their superior 105mm gun, the 'T34s' seemed to disappear from the 'the field of battle', never to be seen again, much to the great disappointment of the the Hussars who had hoped that they could 'have a go' at the latest Russian 'T54' with its 100mm gun! Our only danger now being an attack by American aircraft, whose pilots seemed to have great difficulty in identifying British tanks. For this reason we displayed aircraft recognition panels on top of our turrets and engine decking and, to fool the Chinese Infantry, our Churchill ARVs had 4 inch drainpipes, with false flash-eliminators on the muzzle, welded to the front of our turrets, to look like our main armament, to make the enemy believe we were anything BUT a Recovery Vehicle!

With the Northern Korean and Chinese tactics seemingly being confined to the steep surrounding hillsides, with the American Air Force frequently using Napalm Bombs to dislodge them, this made the use of our squadron as a flame-throwing unit rather unlikely. We therefore removed our flame-guns and remounted our BESA machine-guns at the co-driver's position in the hull, ditching our FTF trailers and became, essentially, an Infantry support Tank, for which we were ideally suited.

It was probably at the beginning of 1951 that the 29th Brigade found itself consolidating in 'Happy Valley' just north of Seoul. At this time only three recovery operations come to mind. The first was to extricate an Oxford Carrier belonging to the Royal Ulster Rifles, which had become bogged down in a paddy field and had then become frozen-in overnight. Neither I nor my OC knew of our destination except that it was north into no man's land and I must confess to a feeling of unease as we drove through the forward dug-in positions of our own infantry, in their slit trenches, although I was comforted that we were being escorted by a section of RUR snipers, whose Carrier we were to recover and who were directing me to it. On approaching the Carrier we were alarmed to find the words, 'crush the British Imperialists' painted along its hull, with its instrument panel stove in! On reporting this back to my OC on our radio, he dispatched a troop of Centurions under the command of Captain Shackleton, 8th Hussars, to protect our ARV. Provided I had another armoured vehicle or a stout tree trunk to which I

could anchor the ARV to winch myself out from the boggy paddy field, towing the Carrier behind the ARV, the recovery operation presented no great problem. Upon arrival of the 3 centurions I positioned one of them as my anchor, while the other two aligned their main armament onto a nearby village (probably full of enemy soldiers who had sabotaged the carrier) to blast it from the face of the earth. To captain Shackleton's dismay he was ordered to withdraw from that position as soon as the recovery operation had been successfully completed.

The second operation was the recovery of a centurion which had shed its track on a 300 yard stretch of road known to us all as 'windy corner'. Whether this was because of the strong winds which gusted along it or because everybody who travelled along it where 'windy' to do so, because that particular stretch of road came under constant enemy mortar and small arms fire, I never really knew, despite this activity hampering my attempts to get a Hollebone drawbar onto the centurion to tow it and its discarded track to safety. We accomplished this by requesting the centurion commander to lay a smoke screen about himself by firing his own smoke canisters as we traversed from behind the shelter of a bluff towards him, our Hollebone drawbar laying on top of our engine deck, ready for a quick coupling-up and away, back behind the shelter of the bluff, to replace its track unhampered.

The third recovery operation was the evacuation of a light armoured car to the nearest railhead for backloading to REME workshops. What was so memorable about this particular job was that we were ordered off the road by the Military Police belonging to a US airborne unit, awaiting the arrival of the Commanding General of the US 8th Army. General Mathew B Ridgeway, himself a paratrooper, along with his entourage who were all about to pass.

Being British, under such circumstances we immediately put the kettle on, inviting the MPs to join us for 'a cuppa', they little realising that our tea was 'gunfire' (tea laced with Navy rum, the well known early morning tea served by officers to ORs at reveille on Christmas day). How we came by a one gallon stone jar of neat Navy rum is another story! Let it be sufficient to say that the British Army in Korea received a tablespoonful of rum each day

After the general had passed we and the MPs departed to their tented camp nearby, it being too dark and we too inebriated to proceed further. We had swapped vehicles, we at the controls of the US Jeeps and the MPs at the controls of our ARV, with them knocking down the barrier gate at the entrance to their camp, almost crushing the Korean sentry!

The following morning after a very comfortable sleep in an oil stove heated tent and a sumptuous breakfast of flapjacks with syrup, Ham and Eggs and with an unlimited supply of coffee, I ventured to ask if I could get a refill of gasoline for my ARV, in order to complete my mission and return to my unit. I was pleasantly surprised to see a petrol tanker pull up

beside our vehicle and fill up both fuel tanks in a couple of minutes - so much easier than having to hump 40 gallon drums of petrol up onto our engine deck to fill up through a funnel. It was at about this time that our squadron moved further south from Seoul and across the Han river to take up a position some 30 miles away, where we established our own tented camp and enjoyed a period of relaxation, playing football against teams from the Royal Navy anchored at Inchon and we reciprocating by visiting their battleships to enjoy hot showers, a film show, ships food and to take back a bag of bread baked in the ship's bakery - a welcome change from months on hard-tack biscuits.

It was also at about this time that my ARV needed a new engine and gearbox. So we moved further south by railway flatbed car to a REME workshop to exchange my ARV for another. My replacement ARV was 'Battle Axe', the former ARV of B Squadron of the 8th Hussars. I returned to join C Squadron, 7th RTR on another flatbed car. On moving forward, we were assigned to support US regimental combat teams in their activities. These were units a about three battalion strength, commanded surprisingly by a 'Lootenant' Colonel rather than a Brigadier, but with every man an infantryman, without supporting units such as artillery, road transport or armour etc.

When the combat team was assigned a specific objective, the commander called upon whichever support units were at hand for him to accomplish that objective. It was his show. Our commander was Lt Col (Mad) Mike Michaelis, a West Point graduate and protege of general Eisenhower when he was C-in-C Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). One occasion I will never forget. The commander had called his first O Group to brief all officers and NCOs on that day's activities. As my crew and I carried out our first parade daily routine maintenance, while the kettle was boiling, my radio operator Steve who was 'netting-in' his radio up in the turret, called out to me, "Sarge, they're calling for you." I listened in and sure enough there it was, "Bluebell Sunray Minor report to Sunray at the double." (Bluebell was REME, Sunray Minor a lesser mortal). Strange! I'm not normally required to attend O Groups? Battle tactics are not the stuff of ARV commanders. I am on net to the squadron commander from whom all my orders came and on one else. I suppose I should go and show my face.

As I approached, the colonel, ever immaculately turned out whatever the weather surrounded by his officers and NCOs, glared at me. "Sergeant, did you hear a message at 0630 hours today, calling ALL Sunray Minors to an O Group briefing?" "Yes Sir," I replied. "And are you a Sunray Minor?" he enquired menacingly. "Yes Sir," I replied, wishing that the ground would swallow me up. "Well, why did you not comply with that command?" "Well Sir, in my regiment . . . " "You are NOT in your regiment NOW! You are in mine! And you will be the FIRST soldier to appear at all future GODDAM O Groups!" (Errol Flynn would never have spoken like that to his men.) "And while we are on the subject of MY REGIMENT," the Colonel continued, "I have ob-

served that UN soldiers are not paying compliments to my officers, the excuse being made is that you are unable to distinguish between the various ranks used in the the United States Army. I am now going to tell you how to recognise the various badges of rank of my officers. And herein after, any soldier failing to salute any officer will answer to me!"

"Now, gold is found lower in the ground than is silver, therefore gold badges are lower in rank than are silver - so one gold bar is a Second Lieutenant and one silver bar is a First Lieutenant and two silver bars is a Captain. Now, above the ground are the trees and the trees have leaves, therefore, a gold leaf is a major and a silver leaf LIKE I'M WEARING. is a Lieutenant Colonel. Now, above the trees are the birds - the eagle - the silver eagle, and that denotes a full Colonel. And above the birds are the stars - silver stars, and they are the Generals, one star being a Brigadier General, two stars a Major General and so on. AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT! I always tried to be the first to appear at all O Groups thereafter and saluted every American officer with both hands just to be sure! I have related this story to many American friends since then, including a former Lieutenant General with whom I worked in Saudi Arabia some 30 years after the Korean war and he admitted to have never heard of the American officer ranks described like that. Lt Col Michaelis himself went on to become a Brigadier general at SHAPE after the Korean war.

As the UN forces moved north towards Seoul, our squadron occupied a position on the banks of the Han river at Yong-Dong-Po, a southern suburb of Seoul and for some reason I found myself and my ARV on a railway platform at Seoul station. Just us and no one else.

My orders were to report to a US signal unit housed in a building across from the station. As I walked across the square, hand in hand with Won, our little Korean orphan, he took me to a large house which had been vandalised and looted. Won pointed to a sign over the doorway and then to an identical sign on his box of paints, his only treasured possession. On meeting up with our Korean intelligence officer on a later occasion, he explained that the house Won had shown me had been a fully equipped, modern private hospital owned by Won's parents, both surgeons, whom the North Koreans had shot in front of Won and his sister and had then ransacked the hospital, destroying all medical equipment. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be doing on a station platform in a deserted city, reporting to a US signal unit every hour on the hour.

Shortly after this I was detached from my squadron and assigned to B Squadron of the 8th Hussars, then encamped in an orchard north of Seoul. This meant leaving my Korean orphan in the care of our B Echelon until my return. I wasn't quite sure why the 8th Hussars had not used their own REME ARV commanders and, come to think of it, what had happened to my REME colleague Jack Woodward or his ARV.

For the next few weeks each squadron took fortnightly turns

of duty - but not for me. As B Squadron was relieved by C - although I did enjoy the experience of serving with various squadrons, I was particularly impressed with the 8th Hussars' use of their Squadron Sergeant Major's tank to escort and protect their ARV. The SSM of C squadron was Jimmy Marshall, a character well known in Royal Armoured Corps circles because of his very distinctive voice caused by a speech impediment. Wherever my ARV went so went Jimmy Marshall's tank, answering to the call sign, 'Bluebell Sunray Minor Able' - aid to the REME ARV commander.

I am not certain whether it was a general rule for all units of the Royal Armoured Corps, when travelling in line ahead or line abreast formations that there must always be one round up the spout of their main armament. The story goes that on one occasion Jimmy Marshall's gunner turned the turret through 90 degrees and lowered the main armament towards the ground in preparation for cleaning the barrel and inadvertently stepped on the firing lever to send a round straight into the ground - fortunately not high explosive! At about this time there was a very popular song going the rounds back in the UK, the words of which were, "I didn't know the gun was loaded". As the squadron moved along the road, a voice would be heard over our radios, using Jimmy's distinctive voice, "I didn't know . . ." to be taken up by another voice in mimicry, "... the gun was loaded", followed by Jimmy's outraged unmistakable voice over the air, "are you taking the f . . . g piss?" with the CO's voice ordering, "use the proper procedures!"

On the eve of St George's day 1951, one of our centurions had developed engine trouble, attended by the squadron mechanist sergeant with me standing by to lend a hand if necessary. The repair went on into the dark before we could return to base. At day-break the following day, 23 April the Chinese Spring Offensive began with hordes of Chinese infantry seemingly appearing from nowhere. For more than two weeks our squadrons had searched that area with American aircraft carrying out reconnaissance flights without a sight of the enemy and yet there must have been several divisions of Chinese infantry in that area at that time. For me it was a sobering thought to reflect that only a few hours before just one Centurion tank and one Churchill ARV stood between several divisions of Chinese and United Nations Forces.

As our squadron moved forward in support of our infantry, its progress was impeded by an American tank believed to have been from a Philippines UN force which had caught fire and been abandoned by its crew. I at the rear of our column had stopped to assist a Centurion which had slipped from the road and shed a track - a simple enough task but once again my winch rope was stretched across the road, thus impeding the free movement of ambulances and other soft vehicles moving south. So both ends of our road being blocked, I was ordered to discontinue the recovery operation for the time being. During an appropriate lull in traffic movement I was eventually allowed to continue pulling the stranded Centurion back onto the road, but on attempting to attach our winch

rope to the centurion, I and Spud Murphy came under small arms fire from the hills above us. Tracer bullets could be seen going towards Steve, our wireless operator, sitting up in the turret engrossed in reading a magazine, oblivious to the danger he was in. Calling up Jimmy Marshall on the net I asked if he could see where the small arms fire was coming from, to which he replied, "do you think I'm f...g blind?" and promptly placed a high explosive shell among them, scattering the enemy in all directions and then opening up with his own co-axial machine gun. The enemy small arms fire subsided for a while and I was able to get a line to the Centurion to winch it out. Unfortunately, we were blocking the road once again, not only hindering the ambulances now full of the wounded from our brigade, but also our returning squadron whose attempts to reach our infantry had to be aborted. By this time the enemy infantry was within 300 yards of my ARV and we again came under their small arms fire. The Hussar Lieutenant commanding our ditched Centurion brought his own co-axial gun into play as did Jimmy Marshall, my shadow. With our own small band of withdrawing infantry manning the Bren guns we ourselves carried on top of our fixed turret, Spud Murphy and I were able to unhitch our winch rope and get out of there fast! The Last tank up and the first tank out - what a golden opportunity the Chinese would have if they could knock me out and block our only escape route.

As we sped along the road at a top speed of 18 mph, carrying about half a dozen of our infantry boys on the engine decking, I noticed several odd looking soldiers lying on the edges of the paddy fields on each side of the road who appeared to be throwing large stones at passing vehicles. When a large flame shot through the winch rope opening at the bottom of my turret, level with the engine decking, burning a hole through my tank oversuit, wind proof clothing and my battle dress, leaving a very painful blister on my backside, I realised that the odd looking characters were not all that friendly and were not throwing stones, but were Chinese soldiers throwing grenades, one of which, a phosphorous grenade landed on my engine decking with some of my infantry passengers taking the full blast, some severely burning their faces and eyes. The Chinese forces had apparently encircled 29th Brigade. How were we supposed to distinguish the North Koreans from the South Koreans or for that matter, from the UN Thai or Filipino soldiers?

Apart from administering morphine injections from our first aid kits, there was very little we could do for them until we had got well away from the enemy and were able to hand over our wounded men to the nearest first aid post. These we exchanged for any deceased soldiers whom we carried on our engine decking covered by our aircraft recognition panels until we could place them for appropriate burial. At the end of our day our squadron reassembled and laagered some miles further south, establishing listening post slit trenches around the outside of our laager perimeter, with me and my crew taking our turn for a one hour 'stag' in one of our listening posts along with some of the remnants of our infantry units who were sheltering with us, as the sound of

battle raged about us and flares lit the night sky. I can remember our squadron commander (who was later awarded the DSO for his part in the Imjin river battle), telling me as I went out to my listening post, that I should whistle the refrain of a well known English song as I approached the laager at the end of my stag to rouse my relief. Being unable to whistle through my dry and anxious lips, I waited in fear for a hail of 'friendly' fire to greet me from the laager on my return. As it turned out I needn't have worried - the whole squadron had been alerted and stood by for the last hour - and I hadn't heard a sound from them or, thank God, from the enemy.

As we moved further south I was allowed to join my own squadron of the 7th RTR for a welcome reunion with my Korean orphan, Won, but within hours I and my crew, along with the remnants of our Brigade were sent to Tokyo for a one week spell of rest and recuperation leave, to re-join my squadron at Inchon, where we were accommodated in a former health and holiday complex complete with natural hot spring baths.

We then moved back to Pusan where we camped at the port, awaiting the hand over of our tanks to our relieving armoured unit. Once again I found myself working as a stevedore on freighters, manning steam driven winches to unload ammunition onto American landing craft - a task which the Korean stevedores refused to do without being paid danger money. With the freighters unloaded we were granted seven days leave at Kure, Japan, to do our last minute shopping before our return to the UK. It was here that I had the pleasure of meeting up with Brigadier Snow once again at the Commonwealth Military Hospital. We then made ready for our return to the UK, culminating in the tearful hand over of our Korean orphans to a UN missionary society and set sail on *HMTS Empire Orwell*, after almost one year since the date of our arrival at Pusan on *HMTS Empire Fowey*. We called in at Hong Kong for shore leave as the guests of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment who we were about to relieve in Hong Kong, as soon as our C Squadron had rejoined its 7th RTR parent regiment back in the UK after a well earned spot of UK leave. Hong Kong, however, was not to be for me, having only just completed a three year overseas tour before going to Korea. Instead I was posted, coincidentally, to a tank transporter column, RASC(TA) at Leeds, as a permanent staff instructor, where I had the great pleasure of meeting up with Sergeant Jack Ward REME(TA), who had commanded the Scammell of the forward recovery unit in Korea, with whom I had worked closely.

Another Korean connection while I was at Leeds was that Colonel Carne VC of Imjin river battle fame, erstwhile CO of the Glorious Gloucesters was now Commandant of the Army Apprentices School, Harrogate and who was also the deputy commander of North Eastern District of which we were a part

REME MUSEUM OF TECHNOLOGY HOSTS VETERANS OF THE KOREAN WAR

By Brigadier(Retd) Martyn Clark

*(Article reproduced here by kind permission of the
Craftsman - Ed)*

Veterans of the Korean War were re-united on Thursday 6th July when the REME Museum of Technology hosted a 50th anniversary reunion at Arborfield, in remembrance of that uncomfortable and bloody conflict. The majority of veterans who came to Arborfield had been too young for the recent World War, but had been 'summoned to arms' as National Servicemen or young regulars to learn and discharge the military trade in all its stark reality in such a far-off place. A four page summary of the War's events was carried in the July edition of The Craftsman, and is not repeated here.

Previous to this anniversary day, a photographic exhibition had been mounted in the Vehicle Hall in time for the AOBA Reunion 2000 weekend, in honour of those Korean veterans who were also ex-Arborfield apprentices. This was later modified for the anniversary for the 6th of July as mentioned later.

Just under a hundred REME veterans attended the reunion with a further twenty local members of the British Korean Veterans Association (BKVA). Together with many of their partners we numbered over 150 in all to recall the past, to meet old friends, to remember those whose lives were lost at that time or who have departed since, and to swing a substan-

tial number of 'lamps' (providing that there weren't too many former colleagues present to argue the veracity of the war stories). They were all welcomed by the DEME(A), who gave his assurance that this war did not merit the nickname of 'the Forgotten War' - rather, that young soldiers now starting their service with REME should learn this past history and inherit the spirit of their predecessors.

Displays included vehicles of that time from the REME Historic Vehicle Fleet, documents and personal narratives held in the Museum's archives and a comprehensive photographic and map display assembled over many months by Brian Hornsey (the Museum's pictorial archivist) and his predecessor, Korean veteran John Dutton. At noon a Service of Commemoration was held in the Garrison Church of St Eligius, conducted by The Reverend Godfrey Evans, a Royal Navy veteran of the Korean War and Chaplain to the Surrey West branch of the BKVA. A buffet lunch and cash bar ensued in the Prince Philip Hall - and out on the grass too, in the fortunately sunny surroundings. War stories became more and more elaborate ---. Finally the REME Band beat Retreat, a superb display very much appreciated by the many who rarely have an opportunity to see and hear their Corps' band.

Memories had been awakened, companionship had been recalled, and generous additions to the Museum's collections had been made. Photographs were taken, and Meridian TV broadcast some of its recordings of the day in its early evening news; about 30 minutes of their total recordings are now held in the Museum and may be viewed by visitors. It remains the Museum's intention to hold such reunions from time to time, in remembrance of subsequent military actions through the remainder of the 20th century.



50th Anniversary Display of Intakes 50A/B & Korean War

Map/Doc No 21A

SECRET
BRITISH COMMONWEALTH KOREAN BASE
OO No 1

KB 1027 G
5 DEC 50

Ref maps Korea 1/250,000 sheets I 52 B, J 52 C, J 52 T, J 52 U. KOREA 1/1,000,000

INFO

1. One lorry three ton, accompanied by OR of Cable and Wireless Coy, has broken down at CHINNAN (CQ 5861) AND ARE NOW WITH DET 11 rok div.
2. It is understood that the lorry CANNOT be moved unless the gearbox is changed.
2. Guerrillas are op in area between TAEGU-CHINNAN-TAEJON. They op chiefly by night but have been known to attack small parties by day.
4. Roads to CHINNAN are mountainous and in bad condition and not fit for towing.

INTENTION

5. To evac Cable and Wireless pers and lorry three ton if repairable.

METHOD

6. Composition of rescue party.
 - (a) Comd. Offr to be detailed by OC "K" RHU.
 - (b) Escort. One pl "K" RHU min 24 men.
 - (c) Repair party. As detailed by OC 5 Med Wksps.
 - (d) Guide. Offr to be detailed by Cable and Wireless.
 - (d) Interpreter. Under arrangements this HQ.
7. Vehicles.
 - (a) For escort and guide, 2 lorries three ton 4 x 4 provided by 23 Hy Rec Sec.
 - (b) For repair party, veh as detailed by 5 med Wksps.
8. Repair Stores
Spare gear box and necessary repair equipt.
9. Weapons
 - (a) Escort. 3 LMG with six mags per gun.
NCOs to carry stens and four magazines.
Other OR rifle and 50 rds per man.
 - (b) Repair party - personal arms and amn.
10. Reg Amn
Following will be taken under arrangements "K" RHU.
One box .303 ctn.
One box .303 bdr.
One box 9 mm.
11. Route
TAEGU - YONGDONG (CR 9003) CHINNAN.
12. SP and time passed SP
 - (a) SP Area 6
 - (b) 0700hrs 6 Dec 50.

Distribution

"K" RHU	(3)
5 Med Wksps	(2)
24 Hy Rec Sec	
Cable and Wireless	(2)
HQ TAEGU Mil Comd	
War Diary	(2)

IN KOREA WITH THE MIDDLESEX REGIMENT

By Peter Simmonds (44A)

The South Korean Army and those Americans that had been there since the end of WWII were quickly defeated and driven back to the Pusan perimeter by 8th September. On June 27th President Truman had ordered more US Troops from Japan and America to go to Korea, and at the same time the United Nations requested member states to send troops to back the Americans.

On the 18th August we were informed that we would be embarking for Korea in one weeks time. I was most concerned at the state of the weapons and knew they could not be made serviceable in the time, it would have taken months not days. However we were issued base overhauled weapons by the RAOC. I had not been wasting my time at Shrivenham. It was a pretty hectic week, I had a few farewells to make and Les Pearce had my White evening dress jacket and promised to sell my Saxophone for me. I telephoned Nancy Kong and told her I would write to her-I don't think I ever did. In fact I did not write much to anyone, it just wasn't convenient to write letters and it got too cold eventually.

The Battalion was completely rearmed with overhauled weapons and in those few days I was requested to get them all zeroed before departure. One fussy CSM who fortunately was now my Company Sgt Major (He had just joined the Regiment as had a lot of others as we were badly below establishment) was put in charge of the firing point. Bearing in mind the mammoth task we had he was going on about get your legs apart so many degrees -how many I forget and the whole thing was becoming a farce. I politely told him to let me get on with it, and I think we did the job quite quickly.

Off we went down to Kowloon harbour and embarked for Korea on HMS Unicorn a fleet repair aircraft carrier with no planes aboard on Friday 25th August 1950. On board the Carrier it was noted by some ERA that I was wearing a REME cap badge, he noticed it in spite of wearing a Maroon and Old gold patch behind it as per Middy instructions. This meant that I should share the mess of the ERAs and not the POs where all the other Sgts went. I was of course delighted it turned out that I had been at school with two of them in Portsmouth, A school where you nearly always went into the Dockyard, or the Royal Navy.

If I thought this would lead to more comfort, I was to be disillusioned. On time for bed I inquired where we slept and was told on or under the mess table or could have a Hammock. I chose the Hammock and slept well. I was well fed, all messes had different messing arrangements and I suspect that they had one of the best, they also ensured I had a drop of Rum every day.

The Armourer's shop on board was way down in the depths along side the armoury, I did not spend much time down there but arranged for all Bren gunners and Heavy machine gunners (Vickers) to fire off the stern at old packing cases and was able to do a bit of zeroing as long as the foresight did not have to be changed. It turned out that this area was the Quarter deck so a few Naval Officers were a bit put out as they liked to sit up there in their deck chairs. I had no tools or spares except what I was able to borrow from The RM Armourer Sgt.

We arrived in Pusan 29th August and embarked for Taegu by train, I remember this day well as whilst waiting in the station another train pulled in beside us full of American wounded, not a pleasant sight and made us all wonder just a bit. From the station-and it was getting dark by then and raining we were moved further up country by American transport driven by Afro Americans all smoking big fat cigars and dumped in a field. An O group was called and we were instructed to get some sleep for the night with more orders to follow in the morning. The soldiers mostly national servicemen looked at me and said "Where do we sleep Sarge?" I pointed to the wet floor and said "There". That was the first night of 'sleep where you can' until we departed 14th May 1951.

There was not much of South Korea left at this time and it is a miracle that any was left at all and the dividing line was the River Naktong. The Battalion had not had Bren gun carriers in Hong Kong and only a few soldiers knew how to drive them. I had driven them in Blackdown with the flame throwers attached therefore volunteered my services to go up and down to the station several times driving them up to the Bn from the station yard. They were divided up between the MMG Platoon and the Mortar Platoon who quickly got trained up to drive them. At this time we were a part of the First Cavalry Division (We frequently moved from one division to another I suspect as trouble spots emerged,) and the push was on to get over the river. I think our arrival somehow gave the Americans some resolve to get up and at them again having been driven back so far from the border.

I was of course at this time in 'B' Echelon but very close to the Battalion a few days before the push forward and apparently a US jet had detected some signs that a sandbag road had been constructed overnight just beneath the surface of the river. More troops were needed to fill the gap in the line about 400 yards behind the river on some high ground. I was told to collect all the clerks, cooks, storemen, and what have you and fill the gap. It was dark by then and I remember falling down something like a sand pit on my recce. However we then had to go back and forth to collect boxes of extra ammo and hand grenades.

At dawn the shrubs became north Korean soldiers climbing up to our positions and the Post Cpl fired his rifle at them and I think every gun in the brigade opened up, a very costly mistake, it cost him 28 days pay. I foolishly went down on a personal recce and found nobody and my rag bag of a platoon

relaxed.

Shortly after this the push commenced northwards, and 'B' Echelon was left behind just south of the river. The advance was so fast that I decided to leave my L/Cpl behind with the Boxes Armourers that made up into quite a good little bench and the majority of spares whilst I joined Tac HQ with Bags Armourers and a few items I considered to be useful. In the event all the infantry men who were killed or wounded which through the war amounted to 42 dead and 94 wounded, their weapons where possible were passed to me.

I inspected their weapons, kept the good ones, spent what time possible on the remainder and when I had too many, sent the rest back to Company stores along with the ones for further repair by my L/Cpl. He was a lucky fellow. A few days after I had left him behind, he was working at the bench with the lid in its open position. A shell landed in front of the bench, it was armour piercing so didn't explode, but the earth it disturbed blew the lid down onto his arms and gave him one hell of a shock. It was said that this particular gun had been left behind very well camouflaged and was a German captured 88 mm from WWII. Passed from Russia to China. We found a lot of evidence of Russian and Chinese co-operation in houses in the North particularly and a few in the South. Particularly magazines and newspapers.

One rather nasty incident happened about this time. There were some North Koreans dug in on a hill just beside the main road that we all had to pass and one Bn. from our brigade was ordered to clear. This was the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. I think they just sent one company up as it was not thought to be heavily defended. They had a bit of trouble and decided to send for an air strike of American air force. These were Twin Engine Jets. We called them Shooting Stars, and I don't know if that was their real name and they usually dropped Napalm bombs a really terrifying weapon. Napalm was a sticky substance that stuck to the clothing and set fire to everything.

Now to request air cover we had to pass a message through to Brigade HQ which then went to an American HQ and then to an American Aircraft carrier. It wasn't the distance that was the problem but the communications. By the time these aircraft arrived, the Scots had taken the hill but had not had the time to lay out recognition panels. These were long strips of red and yellow material that the pilots could see and knew you were there. They therefore dropped the bombs on to the Scots and there were many killed and wounded. The advance was so fast that far too many of the enemy were allowed to remain behind in the hills and mountains. They were complete with guns and ammo and were a plague to all those that followed on in Vehicles. Hand grenades being thrown down from hills when we passed through gullies at night etc.

One day we had to cross a river, at dawn. The Americans were to supply suitable small craft. When we arrived, someone had forgotten the paddles. It was broad daylight when they eventually arrived and no sign of anyone the other side

of the river. I did not know it at the time but the tide went out and most of the regiment went hurtling off towards the sea. In my boat was the MO, RC Chaplain, PT Sgt and one or two others and apparently we were the first of the few that managed to cross. We were met by a friendly crowd of civilian North Korean dignitaries.

Like most wars, the civilians wanted little to do with it. We made our way by boat again as the tide had turned with the other boats that appeared round the bend and all landed up at the main bridge which the Yanks were repairing, quite an exciting day with no shots fired at anyone. The poor old PT Sgt was not supposed to be with us at all and had no duties. Certainly nobody wanted to do any PT. Anyway he made himself as useful as possible, one day he was cutting up some logs with a large axe, something slipped and he hit his leg. I don't believe he hurt it very much, but however they took the opportunity to ship him out and I didn't see him any more. We passed through Seoul and over the border without much fuss, Seoul was on fire as it was on the other two occasions we passed through. This was September 8th.

About this time a few replacements began to arrive. Our Sgt Major went to Support Company and he was replaced by the Colour Sgt we had left behind in Hong Kong. On the very first day he managed to shoot himself in the foot, and that was when I found out what colour he was. We never saw him again. A Major whom I had never seen before arrived in my location looking for his new company. They were up a hill and not difficult to find, so I gave him directions.

The next day I saw the same Major coming down the hill looking very shaken, and said he did not know who he was or where he was or how he had got there. He was a reservist who had been called up after serving five years in WW II. The army were short of experienced officers and Senior NCOs, and called up quite a few for the Korean War. I think he was putting it on, but I can't be sure. Anyway he was sent back and we didn't see him any more either. In WW I the army was not so considerate, and many soldiers were executed for similar behaviour.

Our supply lines were now very long and rations were becoming a problem. The ration Cpl would sometimes arrive back at the same time that he was to set off for the next trip. I volunteered to take a few trips until things improved and found the biggest problem was the state of the roads. I was to do this in later months several times and in fact quite enjoyed it. It was all American of course and we went to the nearest rail head and drove along side the train to collect whatever each carriage contained and a bod at each carriage would ask name of Regiment and how many men have you got. If it was C Rations all in little individual boxes it all came from the one wagon. We did occasionally get fresh. We eventually got to Pyongyang October 19th. We were just waiting south of the city on a dried up Paddy field and I saw a convoy on the road passing us out and it looked to me very much like 11th Inf. Wksp with all its machinery wagons etc. Anyway it didn't get far, they had obviously got lost and

were about 20 miles north of where they were supposed to be. Anyway they came back a lot faster than then went up.

Our brigade was diverted around the west of the city I think probably to allow the Americans to get in first. We experienced some problems with mines in the road. At this stage some wags started leaving signs stating 'The Midds can say with pride and joy that they were there before Kilroy. Kilroy was a symbol drawn from electrical characters denoting resistance and ohms and looked like a man peering over a wall. The Yanks left it everywhere saying they had just captured this or that.

It is the first time I have mentioned the Brigade and I should mention it consisted of ourselves, The Argylls, 1st Bn The Royal Australian Rifles, Princess Patricia's Own Canadian Light Infantry, A New Zealand Field Regt (25 pdrs) and an Indian Ambulance Company. The two British Battalions arrived first followed by the rest some months later.

Back to the Bn and another ration trip, this time in a Bedford 1 ton MW with an Irish driver a very decent character, we had quite a few Irish in the Bn probably one of the reasons we had an Irish Catholic Chaplain. The week before we left Hong Kong an American officer and two Sgts arrived with a 3 inch Bazooka and some rounds of ammunition to demonstrate to us as we were being issued with them on arrival. We were if you remember on a golf course and someone delivered an old Bren gun carrier to use as a target. The American officer missed, an American Sgt missed and then we were offered a go. This same Irish driver volunteered and knocked a whacking great hole in it.

On the return journey we got lost and it was getting dark, not a sign of life anywhere and the road was barely wide enough for the vehicle. We came to a large drop with a few not very strong looking boards across the gap. Going back was out of the question. I did not know whether to get out and guide him across or volunteer to drive myself or stay in the vehicle with him, he solved the problem by telling me to get out and guide him over. I was very grateful. It was OK. This was mountainous territory. Eventually before it was completely dark, we came to a main road, turned left by instinct passed a village with a few slant eyed soldiers and a group of officers and NCOs poring over a map, decided to go faster and a mile down the road came to our CO, Adjutant, and a few other people planning to attack the village we had just passed through. I know I have a guardian angel. We had assumed they were South Korean troops.

The Bazookas that we had tried out in Hong Kong proved to be a formidable weapon against tanks. The enemy used Russian Tanks, which, had rather thin armour at the back, and an escape hatch underneath. I saw many of these Tanks burnt out, but the crew had always managed to get out. My Brigade Armourer WOII Mitchel arranged for him and I to visit an American Field Wksp to learn a bit of the technical side to these things and we had a good day out. Their Armourer had a Vehicle converted into an Armourer's shop,

and it was very warm inside. We learnt that when you pulled the trigger on the Bazooka it generated a small charge and it also generated a similar charge when you released the trigger. It took two men to fire this weapon, one to hold it on his shoulder and to aim it, and the other man to put his back against the man in front and connect two wires to the rocket. When it was connected he would tell the front man to fire. Some of these were captured by the Chinese, and they didn't know about the charge existing when you let the trigger go back. Consequently if they had a bad connection and the man behind turned to see what was wrong, and the man in front released the trigger, the man at the back got his head blown off. It was not often I had the opportunity or the desire really to go up to the men's positions, they were nearly always on mountain tops that the Americans spent a few million dollars firing at without much success and then sending the British up to clear.

The old ration problem came up again and as these mountains were a lot higher in the North than the south it was a problem getting up them. Someone arranged for some of the civilian population to help, and as they were the enemy after all and probably half starved they had to be escorted up by someone so again I stepped into the breach. On my first trip up a BBC Television man was up there with us taking our picture, but I never ever did see it. I was given a Barbers outfit to use as I had time on my hands and gave quite a few haircuts. I cut the BBCV man's hair and I started on the Adjutant and was cutting it a bit short. He got up and said "Armourer Sgt, keep to repairing the guns and leave my hair alone". He walked off with one side overgrown and the other side bare. All of us had thrown our steel helmets away, why I don't know. In my case it was because it was still painted silver from my Roman outfit. We all wore a knitted gadget called a cap comforter before we had American fur hats and as we never took them off even to sleep, our hair grew through them and you could clip off what came through.

At about this time I was unfortunate enough to slip up and when I fell, a bit of rice paddy stalk went right through my hand. In no time at all, my arm had swollen so much they had to cut the sleeve of my combat jacket to get it off. I went off to a MASH. Not a bit like the telly except they were drinking fruit juice laced with surgical spirit. At least those in the know where. I was there about a week stuffed full of penicillin. We were in a large tent with petrol burners in the middle, we were warm and well fed. One day a visiting General came to dish out Purple Hearts. He was putting one on each stretcher regardless of how the soldier had been wounded. He was about to put one on my stretcher when the Doctor said "He's a Limey". So that was that. The weather had got cold by then and some of the Americans were sticking their bare feet outside the tent at night to get Frost Bite. This was the recommended way to get Stateside or 'Jaypan' as they called it.

We had now started to get severe problems with even oil freezing, and the men had to keep easing the bolts of rifles during the night and moving the working parts of the Brens

and Vickers. Shortly after this we were all together for a change of Division advancing up with the help of American transport, it got dark and we pulled in to a circle of American tanks like the old covered wagon days. I wandered around and was invited up on to a tank by an American Technical Master Sgt who I got to know well for a couple of weeks. I told him my freezing problem, and he had solved it by using a brake fluid they had used in Alaska. I issued this around the Regiment and it worked very well.

I remember on one ration trip, the American Supply Trucks were on a frozen river, the rivers were shallow but very wide and froze right to the bottom. In the short time we were there a lot of the trucks had the brake shoes freeze on. In no time at all small fires were lit to thaw them out, a bit dangerous but no alternative. At this same spot a very large Afro American asked me if I would like some fruit juice, and as it was in half gallon tins I said I would but had no means of opening it. He must have been tank crew because he whipped out the largest automatic pistol I had ever seen and blew a hole through the top of the can and the bullet came out the side about a quarter way down. I remember it was good but full of flaked ice particles.

On another ration trip they were able to bring the rations up by train so I only had about a twenty mile road journey. Each carriage contained various items, and we were being issued with some C4 packs, which were individual ration, and some fresh rations. We sometimes got crates of shaving cream boxes of razors and tobacco. On this occasion there was a RASC officer checking that we were getting the correct amount, as he probably got the bill for the British government to pay. He came up to me and had a very well to do accent, and said "Sgt have you got any Pepper?" I said "no Sir but they gave me some salt". "No you fool" said he, "writing pepper!"

At about this time we were well up north and the Chinese had joined in the war (October 25th). This was bad news because we had all been told that we would be home by Christmas. After all you would think after being in a war you would at least get home after it. When we did go it was only as far as Hong Kong. It was estimated that there were three-quarters of a million of them. Up until this time, apart from the cold things were getting easy for us, and 11 Inf. Wksp had moved right up and had set up shop on a river bank, and we were just up the hill from them so that I was able to renew old acquaintances.

Beyond the mountains just North of us was the Chinese border, and I saw some American Marauder bombers dropping bombs over there and I believe the target was a Dam. Whether it was or not the river rose about two feet overnight, and the workshop had to move rather fast.

The following day we were told to move back south to Pakchon a small village surrounded by mountains. I remember going into a mud cottage and finding that the fire -place had a tunnel which went right under the house and kept it

warm, and above the fire was a hollowed out area to contain water and was able to have a bath. In fact about ten of us had a bath in the same water one after the other. This was pure luxury as it was too cold to wash properly normally. We did endeavour to shave every day and had to melt snow in American steel helmets, which were just right for the job. We knew that another British brigade had arrived and were fighting on another front. This was 29th Brigade who had come from England and had all the correct British winter clothing and rations. We were more like Americans with our uniform and rations and US Script dollars.

As food was always on my mind, I must explain a bit more about the American food that we were issued with. A C4 ration pack was intended for one person for one day and could be carried in your haversack. There were different varieties but all contained a packet of cigarettes, a roll of toilet paper, one block of a cocoa drink, one packet of coffee powder which was unheard of in England at the time. One bar of some sort of sweet, a tin of fruit, and three tins of main meal which could be any of the following. Ham and Lima beans, Chicken and rice, Frankfurter and beans, and many more that I forget. There was also a 'Five Man' one day pack which I used to often get for myself and the remainder of the REME and maybe a driver. I was the cook for the five of us. It was already cooked so only required heating and maybe a bit of additional flavouring if available. There was a can of rashers full of fat, and contained forty thin streaky rashers. I used to tip this out and cook it in an old coffee tin, strain off the fat, and fry the can of cooked potatoes in it.

One day we had a large can of stew and I decided to add some onions I had seen growing in a field. I thought I had done a good job but the onions were not onions but garlic and I ruined the whole thing. You could not say 'I will settle for a sandwich' as there was no bread. Our cook Sgt who was based in B Echelon managed to get a field oven from the Americans, which worked off a petrol burner. For quite a while he baked bread rolls, which came as a great filler for us as we prefer a bit of stodge which the Yanks don't. Unfortunately for him the thing exploded in the back of a truck and he was severely burnt and evacuated by helicopter to a MASH and then back to Japan and never returned.

One day we were advancing to a position where the other British Brigade were pulling out, I suppose we were relieving them. We were held up for a while and I was stopped next to a British Centurion Tank. The Tank commander got chatting to me and the subject of food came up, and when he heard we were on American rations, he asked if we would swap some of them for British Steak and Kidney pudding. We were delighted, you can soon get fed up with Ham and Lima beans, but I could never get fed up with Steak and Kidney pudding.

Back to Pakchon again, we were to be eventually virtually surrounded there and had to get out fast with the Aussies charging up one hill and the Jocks up another and us passing through the middle. I was in the back of a Bedford OY once

again amongst the rations poking a rifle out the back and surrounded by boxes of tinned food that I hoped a bullet would not pass through. We went back about ten miles onto a very flat area where you could see for a long distance, and there was no sign of the enemy. I was sent back with a one ton water vehicle to try to find some fresh water as everywhere around us was frozen snow. Of course we got a puncture and had to haul this very heavy wheel from the top of the water container and jack up the truck to get the other wheel off. Fortunately we were still empty and called on the help of a couple of North Korean fellows making for safety. We saw them crossing over the inevitable frozen paddy field. Somebody had planted a trip flare in their path, and it went off with a whoosh and we all dived for cover, it was like a mortar going off. When I looked up in the air I could see this flare floating down on a small parachute. It took us a while to get the two Koreans back to help with the wheel and to get myself out of the ditch into which I had smartly jumped.

A very big withdrawal was now taking place. It was said that that over a million Chinese were now over the border and although they had little support from aircraft, and were also very short of transport, they were a formidable force, and were prepared to travel cross country with very effective use of Mortars. Although we had little enough transport ourselves-we always relied upon the Americans if we had to move long distances.

A very large convoy was heading south through a pass which had steep cliffs one side and a large drop on the other. One of our Bedford OYs had broken down and was holding up the whole thing, and who knows what the position of the people at the end of the convoy was with the Chinese catching up fast. As usual, send for the Armourer Sgt (Good job I had done my recovery course). I was told what had happened and set off in the pitch black night, snowing hard and bodies asleep all round me and covered in snow. I used a Bren gun Carrier, the tracks would ensure that I didn't get stuck in the snow and someone helped me out onto the road with a torch. When I got to the truck I see there was absolutely no time to do anything but put a rope on it pull it halfway off, then get behind it and pull it over into the valley below. The CQMS was quite cross, he had all his goodies in it and was reluctant to give them away.

At Thanksgiving and New Year, we had enormous turkeys and I was asked to make ovens out of steel drums and a Corrugated building (the corrugated sheets taken from destroyed building in the nearest village). The idea being to heat up the shed to thaw them out overnight as it was minus something outside. I don't know what the temperature was. Some said 20 below, some said 40 below, I know a mug of tea froze in about 5-10 minutes and a bottle of beer I scrounged for Xmas day froze and was just a piece of iced watery beer in a bottle shape with glass all around it. I think we were unlucky as it was said that previous winters had not been as cold.

The Sgts mess were invited to the Argylls site on New Years

Eve, and they had a large bonfire. We were some miles from the front line and it was considered safe, as we never saw any enemy aircraft. We all had to bring a bottle of whisky unopened. I had opened mine and given a swig to each of the REME soldiers, and to disguise the fact I topped it up with water. The Jocks were all going round getting sips from each others bottles and mine was very soon discovered to have been watered down. They were not happy about it but we drank everything in sight, and I was really far gone. I eventually staggered back to my Pup tent, into my sleeping bag and fell into a deep sleep. I believe I slept for twenty-four hours. I was very lucky, I could have fallen over in the snow and passed out and would have been found frozen to death in the morning.

One platoon of B coy was attacked on a mountain and none of their Bren guns would fire. The following morning I was sent for and the guns and their gunners were paraded behind the hill while I tried to sort it out. I took up a magazine for each gun fully loaded and fired each gun with no trouble at all. I then inspected each gun and found that most of the gas regulators required cleaning, and nobody had the tool for doing it except me. This was very annoying because when I joined the Regiment in Hong Kong, the CO asked me to take all the platoon commanders on weapon maintenance on the lawn in front of the Officers mess Saturday mornings and I thought I had got it into them the importance of cleanliness. However on examining a magazine from one of the gunners I had to use a screwdriver to get a round out of the magazine.

As you know it is quite possible for the company in the lead to get no opposition when advancing and it seems this is what had happened to this Company. They must have had a charmed life and didn't use the guns for some while. The magazines had got wet in the rain, dusty from the roads and finally frozen from the cold, had never been emptied or cleaned. I met a wounded soldier from this company on my way home to UK for my Artificers course and he glared at me and said our Bren guns wouldn't fire. I imagine nobody bothered to tell him why. We were then told to start packing up as we were going back to Seoul to get a boat back to Hong Kong. No going back to UK after all we were on a three year tour and we still had about eighteen months to go.

We were relieved by a South Korean brigade and on the second night as we were almost ready to depart the Chinese made a big attack and the South Koreans disappeared so we were back in the War again. They were very close because when I woke in the morning a Battery of New Zealand 25 pdrs were firing on the other side of the wall I was lying on the ground and the noise went right through my head. What about my ear defenders, I must sue the government. Some hope. All this time almost from Seoul we had picked up a young Korean fellow who had a bit of English and requested we take him with us and he would do odd jobs for us. His name was Ho Nam Mi, so we called him Joe. He was very useful. He would get water if there were any around, he some times found a hut still occupied by it's owner and get us some Sake.

We clothed him in spare bits of uniform and generally looked after him. With my cheap gin, I had purchased from the Yanks two Pup tents. These are made in two parts and each soldier carries one part and they join them up and two can sleep in them. I also got sleeping bags and a petrol burner fire for heating.

When we arrived at a new location, we first dug a square hole and leaving a ledge all round where four people could sleep then put up the tent one portion each side, this left a hole in the middle. This hole was covered with a sheet of corrugated iron with a hole in the middle to accommodate the chimney from the stove. In case of attack we could go into the hole-with a squeeze, and also use the hole to put our feet in when just sitting talking before bed. I always said, 'any fool can be uncomfortable.' Joe would bring us tea in the morning and hot water for washing. I was a bit worried about leaving him behind, but I passed him over to the Regiment that relieved us, and I can only hope they looked after him as well as we did.

Finally we were once again told we were leaving and to make our way to Inchon, which was in danger of being surrounded at that time. An American ship was waiting for us, the USS Montrail. It was one of those ships you see on the war films unloading soldiers down scramble nets to small landing craft in the War in the Pacific.

The waters at Inchon suffer from extreme tidal conditions, which had made General McCarthers invasion there earlier such a feat. Unfortunately when we got there the tide was going out fast, so we went out by small craft and climbed scramble nets to get away. This was May 14th 1951 a day to remember, it was only nine months we were there, but with hardly any respite, just the odd couple of days here and there and we were delighted with the chance to have a hot shower and a really good hot breakfast.

We were all sitting round the deck, and the ships barber was doing a roaring trade, we all got crew cuts and looked like Yanks. A lot of us had brought a bottle aboard. Sgts and above got a bottle of whisky a month in Korea and unlimited other types of spirits. We were paid in US Dollar script money but the price of drink was in Sterling. Whisky was 12/- a bottle, and Gin 7/-. And we could sell it to the Yank's, because they couldn't get any at all, for \$50 and \$35 respectively. The only problem with this was that we could not change the script into real money.

On arrival back in Hong Kong a few days later we found we had moved to a different camp and were now in wooden huts. Still a long way from town, and as I now had no saxophone, no more band jobs. I didn't see Nancy Kong any more, somehow my liking for the Chinese had diminished a bit after Korea. I now couldn't wait to get back to England.

COMRADESHIP WITH THE GLOUCESTERS

By G M ('Tommo') Thompson (45B)

My attachment to a front line infantry battalion was from 20 December 1949 to the completion of my regular engagement on 5 March 1956 - the battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment. In that period the Regiment completed tours in Korea and Egypt, adding a further battle honour to their Colours.

However, it is not my aim to convey the glory, but to paint a picture of the close comradeship that is forged in a unit that continually serves together in adverse situations. An infantry battalion is far more family orientated than a corps can ever be and to me this is the basis of its strength.

Turning this observation to the Korean War, there was added strength of a sprinkling of experienced reservists, many of whom had seen service in Burma. In my own case as a REME Sergeant aged only twenty, I had two such individuals, one a recovery vehicle driver and the other a unit fitter; both were towers of strength - there is no substitute for experience. The young REME craftsman like myself soon learned when to keep his head down, when to work and when to get the inevitable 'brew' going.

Our recovery became a brew-can on wheels following the hectic withdrawal from the North, as the Chinese advanced. The Americans had a supply dump at Pyongyang railway yards such as I had never seen before or since. It had everything from aero engines to chewing gum, the exception being tea. It was about to be abandoned and had charges placed, ready to be detonated. Before this happened, there was a brief free-for-all movement of 'stores' to United Nations vehicles streaming south. Our reservists, well versed in the art of preparing for a rainy day, quickly loaded our vehicle with sacks of sugar, cases of Carnation milk and also a large container of coffee.

My own choice from amongst all this largesse on offer was a complete bale of woollen pants and another of warm vests - much to the amusement and ribald comments of my colleagues - but I had learned the value of being able to keep warm, and I certainly enjoyed the luxury of 'disposable' underwear for the remainder of my time in the Land of the Morning Calm!

Brews remained a feature of all our days and the coffee not used was a sound investment for barter - again, there's nothing like experience!

IN KOREA WITH THE 5TH ROYAL INNISKILLING DRAGOON GUARDS

By Roger Millard (46A)

My Dad told me all about troopships, the smell of cabbage, 300 men on a troop deck and so on. *MV Georgic* wasn't quite like that. We had a cabin on C deck, steward service at meal times and the food was excellent. My dad would have to be informed!! Later 'troopers' were to prove him right. Our arrival in Pusan was greeted by an American Army band playing 'When the Saints go marching in', dressed immaculately with glistening white steel helmets. This in total contrast to the squalor and chaos that was the gateway to Korea at that time.

We carried our kit to the railhead some three quarters of a mile from the quayside to board a train reminiscent of World War I - 8-horses, 40-men variety. A long, or it seemed long, journey to the Britannia Transit Camp and our first night in a war zone. Most of us had read about the 'thunder of the guns' and wondered if what we were hearing was the weather or artillery and, if the latter, whose? Most of the senior ranks in the regiment wore war medals and would have known, but at nineteen and the first time abroad a little maggot of trepidation crept into the mind. It was bitterly cold, but thankfully, the superb cold weather clothing had been issued; the only problem being that when it was all on, one was in a sort of cocoon, warm but hardly mobile and with restricted vision. Never mind, we moved further north to take over from the 8th Hussars who were doubtless impatient to get going in the other direction.

Signs along the road, apart from extolling the expertise of the American Engineers who had built them, warned that 'Dust brings shells', 'Raise no dust', and so on. That little maggot wriggled a bit more! I remembered that Diesel was used to 'damp' the roads down.

Arrival at the destination that fate had allotted me revealed a hole in the ground lined with ammunition boxes, covered with a sheet of canvas, peppered with burn holes caused by hot ash from the chimney of a strange contraption laughingly called a 'space heater'.

The incumbent (for the life of me I can't remember his name) wore a REME cap badge in a fur hat of odd design and uniform(?), which was a mixture of American and Chinese origins. The cold weather clothing had obviously not reached the front line yet! He didn't hang about either and who can blame him. Formal hand overs weren't the order of the day. He pointed to the tool kit, advised me that I could have his stock of Hershey bars and that the Armourer's truck was parked outside. The tools I knew what to do with, the Hershey bars I discovered were American chocolate and the truck I couldn't drive! I was to learn very quickly!



Defensive Position at the NAAFI Wagon

My first job was to make a crucifix for the Padre from a 20 pounder shell case (cartridge brass is very hard I discovered). It seemed strange to think that it would stand on the altar at church parades having, maybe, dispatched a shell that would have taken lives. Our own first casualties came in a tragic accident when a Centurion tank, the brakes of which had frozen, careered down a slope and ran over a 'bivvy' in which a signaller was sleeping. The temperature had sunk to 44 degrees of frost and skin-to-metal, contact was fraught.

The work load was the usual round of repairs; adjustments and odd jobs that were the Armourer's lot. The fact that we didn't have bicycles to maintain helped a bit! Visits to the tanks in forward positions were viewed with alarm. My first involved removing the BESA machine gun from a turret which had become jammed in the mounting. A spare gun was to be fitted - repairs were rarely carried out *in situ* unless unavoidable. It was at this moment when the commander received a message to stand to. That little maggot, still there, became very active!

The presence of a technical type among the crew, apart from adding to the overcrowding (they could hardly ask me to wait outside) was unwelcome because he hadn't brought any rations with him. Fortunately, it happened not too often, although the view of the enemy front line through the gun sight or the periscope was a bit unnerving. Most of the time it was quiet but shelling or Mortar attacks would start suddenly without provocation and certainly without warning.

It was during one of these attacks that a good friend of mine was killed (I was to go and see his parents much later when we got home). To ease the discomfort of the tank crews and because the tanks were static most of the time, overhead protection was built so that they could have the Cupola lids open. By sheer chance and in accordance with the 'law of sod' a shell slipped through the embrasure and entered the turret of one tank killing the whole crew; what chance brought tragedy to those families back in the UK. Life went on though. The removal of machine guns from the aforementioned tank was a grisly task and one that will stick in my mind for ever, both the sight and smell.



Examining a Browning Machine Gun - to fix or not to fix

There were no body bags in those days. The regiment's Pioneer Sergeant had the grim job of sewing the remains of the dead into a blanket. This was then laid out on a trestle table and the funeral service held, usually in B Echelon area. The body was then taken to the War Cemetery in Pusan for burial. The regiment paraded there before we left, to say farewell.

For most of us who hadn't been to war before and for me certainly, it was the first time that sudden violent death had entered our young lives. When it happened to someone you knew it was difficult to know how to cope with it. Cope with it we did though and came through the experience wiser and not so cocky. I remember standing on a dusty tank park looking at the blanket-wrapped body of a mate lying on a six foot table, while a trumpeter played the 'Last Post' and feeling absolutely nothing and I couldn't understand why. The same call today moves me close to tears - the scene 50 years before being vividly recalled. Very strange. I think the fear of being seen to be affected put you into firm control of emotions.

And so we had undergone our introduction to life with a front line unit. We had on occasions, serviced equipment in the sight of the enemy and we had, with others, learned to cope

with the rigours of freezing winters and hot, muggy summers. We had the joy of the RAOC Bath Unit, but infrequently. Even better were the services of the American version where one entered as a dirty, smelly British squaddy and emerged 20 minutes later in a freshly laundered GI outfit, smelling vaguely of scented foot and body powder.

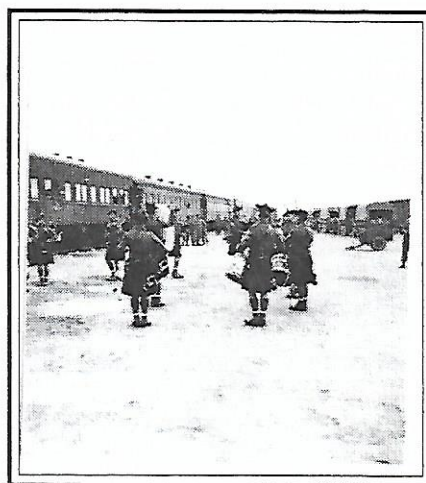
Who can forget, those who were there, the smell of AL63, liberal dustings of which kept lice at bay. It was the first time that I had heard the expressions 'crutch crickets' and 'mobile dandruff'. Looking back, it was the first time for a lot of things.

What did we learn? We learnt to do 'stag' with live ammunition in our magazines, to brew the early morning tea, to live in bunkers - but not in squalor, to give silent thanks to our instructors who had taught us to do things by hand, light a blow lamp, file flat, and most of all, to think beyond the covers of the Regulation Book. Nobody patted us on the back, praised us or separated us for special mention at the end of it all - we didn't expect it either. The greeting "morning Tiffy", or a gruff invitation to share a tank crew's brew were thanks enough. To be accepted as part of the whole, the cap badge was recognised by the regiment as being worn by somebody who 'had got their knees brown' and had taken to the hills with them when shot and shell were in evidence.

We applied ourselves to the job, got drunk and fell about as is the British soldier's wont, moaned and grizzled, loved and hated, but most of all we felt that the ground under our feet would fall away if we said, "Sorry mate, there's nothing we can do to help".

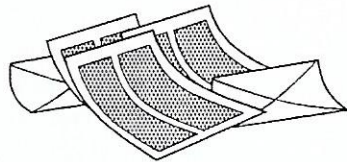
Nine times out of ten, we knew the chap who had the problem and who would be waiting patiently(?) for a quick and effective result - beer might depend on it, but a darker thought lurked at the back of the mind, so might someone's life.

And so, in mid December 1952 we left. Pipers from the Black Watch, whom the regiment had supported in the 'Battle of the Hook', played us off and we, after a memorial service at the War Cemetery in Pusan, said goodbye to the thirteen who were never to return and embarked on the *Empire Halladale*. My Dad had told me all about troopships - and this time he was right!!



The Black Watch play us off

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



✉ Brian Conway (42A) writes from Cyprus

The letter from Don Smith (42A), Page 29, Issue 18, would seem to support the doubts that I expressed about the date that Photo No. 1, Issue 13 was taken, so I hope that this will be the end of the controversy over that particular photo?

But I make no apology to John Kidney (42B) who, writing on Page 30, Issue 19, takes me to task for berating his old room mate, Harold Price (42B), for calling himself 42 (A). It was Harold who doubted the date that I had given to the 'General Montgomery talking to Boy Drum Major Brian Conway' photo, mistakenly believing that I had enlisted at Arborfield at the same time as he did, when in fact I had joined three months before, by which time, not only was I the Boy drum major, but also a boy NCO in charge of a room in E Block across the square from the jeeps in K Block.

I was saddened and surprised to read of John Kidney 'hating his five and a half years incarceration at the Queen Victoria School, Dunblane and of not being particularly enamoured with Arborfield.' Why then did he continue with his love of being a drummer in the Pipes & Drums at Arborfield? Skills which he had learned to love at the QV School, and then to continue with his association with Arborfield 50 years on through the pages of OBAN? John is obviously aware that in addition to my being a Dukie I also spent some time on two occasions at the Queen Victoria School, Dunblane?

The first time, on being evacuated from Dover to Dunblane at the outbreak of the war and secondly, from Cheltenham, when our School finally settled at the Saunton Sands Hotel, Braunton, North Devon, from where I left for Arborfield. I was therefore a contemporary of John, long before he became a room mate of Harold Price!

Perhaps John noticed my mention of his name in my recognition of faces in photo No.3, Page 12, Issue 13, having recognised him 50 years on. I also have a photo of E Company c.1942, in which John is shown sitting on the ground in the front row next to Jock Minto (both kilted) with me as the shortest chap in the back row Harold must be there somewhere but I am unable to put a face to him.

With my 'conduct much to be desired' upon my leaving the Dukies, it must have come as something of a surprise to those who knew me at both schools, to find me as the Boy Drum major so soon after, my arrival. Even so, despite the Scots making life a misery for we 'sassenachs' at every opportunity, simply because after every Sunday church parade, we dared look upwards from the bottom of the stairs to see whether it was true about what Scotsmen

wore under their kilts, I have some very happy memories of my time there. The lovely countryside 'By the Banks Of Allen Waters' (your school song, if I remember correctly, John?). Of the lovely dark haired Cissy, one of the young dining hall ladies who threatened me with "I'll skelp yer arse!" for daring to ask for milk and sugar for my porridge at breakfast time (AH! If only I had been 10 years older!)

Of the annual piping, drumming and highland dancing competitions! The Pipes & Drums (the Haggis Bashers) rehearsing each day (it made a change from rehearsing with our 'Spit & Dribble Band'). The Harmonica Band concerts, my memory of skiving from a sports afternoon to nip across the field to Jock Penny's to buy 20 Wood-bines and on my return meeting Sergeant Major Maxwell as I strolled nonchalantly across the square to be asked, "Why are ye no at sports parade this afternoon, laddie?" And to reply with, "Because I have sprained my ankle Sir and have been excused sports for today!" To be followed by, "Och! Is your ankle so painful that ye cannae run then?" And on my confirming that this was so, he retorted, "Well, tha's awfie strange, because I've just seen you through my binoculars, running across the field from the direction of Jock Penny's and it didnae seem to be paining you too much then! Turn yer pockets out!"

I was taken before the Commanding Officer and Headmaster, Lieutenant Colonel Clarke RAEC the following morning, charged with malingering, breaking out of and into school, stating a falsehood and being in possession of cigarettes. He ordered that I should receive three strokes from a leather strap (not quite a cat-o'-nine tails, but almost) meted out by Regimental Sergeant Major (never RSM!) Watson, King's Own Scottish Borderers (never the Kosbees - at least not within his hearing for fearing to receive an extra lash to that already awarded by the CO!) I received another belting from my mates for losing not only their fags, but also their pocket money!

At a later date, I remember playing truant from the School classrooms with my mate Clayton for the day, soon to be picked up by the 'cops' at the small town of Cowie, just outside Stirling despite my very clever disguise of wearing a 'gorblimey' flat cap to conceal our khaki uniforms (as distinct from the blue uniforms of shorts and jumper worn by the QV boys) to be taken to the local Police station where we were lavished with great big plates of egg, chips and sausages, during the eating of which the door flew open and in walked my favourite RSM who greeted us with, "Get outside, you couple of tramps!" - Not giving us time to finish our egg & chips! I don't think he was very pleased to see us. Neither was the CO on the following morning who, with his customary, "This will hurt me more than it will hurt you", awarded us both with another lashing of three strokes! "March them out Sergeant Major!"

However, our greatest humiliation at the hands of the Scots was yet to come. During the annual inter-company

snowball fight on the sports field, we were led by one of the QV monitors, who had volunteered (?) to lead us in battle against the Scots (we having no Dukie prefect of our own). He had led us into a deliberate and well planned ambush, forcing us to crawl on all fours all the way back to the School buildings and then being pelted with snowballs by every QV boy they could muster - at the end of which the monitor exclaimed with glee, "Now you know who the Traitors of Scotland were!" - no doubt, being a member of The Clan himself, whoever they were.

You are correct John, when you state that we all write about the old days with a little bit of affection and yes I would do it all again! From reading my Personality Slot in Issue 10. John may have noticed some similarities of our movements after leaving Arborfield, although we never actually managed to meet up with each other.

After my posting to India in late 1945 (too early to spot John's white knees) I was posted to 2 Base Workshop Tel el Kebir in 1947 and upon entering the Sergeants Mess, I was greeted with "Aren't you the Arborfield boy who doesn't shave?" It was the unmistakable voice of the RSM ('splitpin') Atkinson REME the Garrison Sergeant Major, Tel el Kebir.

This was a reference to the time in 1945 when I was sent down from No. 1 Command Workshop, Catterick Camp to the Vehicle Training Wing, Hazebrouck Barracks (now SEAE) Arborfield to attend a short course and on my first morning parade I saw 'Splitpin' approaching the parade ground from the direction of the Guardroom, accompanied by a CSM (known for some reason as 'The Back Prince') and the Provost Sergeant (no doubt to garner a few more residents for his Guardroom from this morning's parade).

As the three of us neared the edge of the parade ground, a stream of unintelligible words of command poured from the mouth of 'Splitpin', whereupon a body of men marched smartly to him. He, now standing in the middle of the square glared in my direction and screamed a few more words of command, with everyone looking around to see who he was shouting at. Whereupon a Corporal, standing next to me, wagged his finger at me shouting, "You! You! Get out there!" - which I did with alacrity not wishing to be the Provost Sergeant's newest guest for the day! Upon reaching the RSM, he informed me that I had been designated my Course Right Marker for the remainder of my Course and then peering closely at my face asked, "Have you shaved this morning?" On my telling him that I had not started to shave yet, he retorted with "Well, go to the barber's shop and get a facial trim," looking around at all the Markers to ensure that they too appreciated his humour.

Standing there in the Sergeants Mess at Tel el Kebir, I was amazed that 'splitpin' should have remembered that incident among all the others in his time as RSM at Arborfield.

On leaving TEK, I served in East Africa, Somalia and Korea and after a short spell as an instructor with the

RASC(TA). I did my first stint as an instructor at the Army Apprentices School, Arborfield from 1954 to 1957 followed by a three tour at 624 Ordnance Depot Vehicle Park Workshop, Benghazi, Libya from 1957 to 1960. During this period the Kingdom of Libya was being run down as a British base.

Tripoli had already been closed down. Cyrenaica, with the exception of the RAF base at El Adem, Tobruk, was in the throes of being closed down and I was destined for the 8th Infantry Workshop, Nicosia. My MFO boxes had already arrived in Cyprus, but I had not because at this time the young King Faisal of Iraq and his family had been assassinated, with Benghazi once again swarming with troops! And so, once again I just missed meeting up with John Kidney.

I do hope therefore, that if John and his family should ever wish to revive memories of his time in Nicosia, he will find time to call me on (06) 242656 (after 30 June 2000) and arrange to meet, either at Nicosia or in Paphos (where we have plenty of accommodation, including a swimming pool) should they wish to spend some time at the western end of the island, as our guests, despite his being a Jeep of 42 (B).

Incidentally, I have just had the pleasure of meeting up with another Jeep, Ken Jenner (44A) at Larnaca as recently as 24 April 2000, where he very kindly presented me with a record of the Arborfield Band and Pipes & Drums (c. 1988). I was Accompanied by Pat O'Hara (52B) who was once one of my Apprentices at Arborfield and we were accompanied by our respective wives who, for a change, could not get a word in edgewise, once Ken and I got to swinging the lamp' about Arborfield!

Ken said that he was the 'cymbal basher' in the Corps of Drums, but regretted that I did not remember him, having left Arborfield shortly after his enlistment, just prior to the dispersal in Easter 1944.

Coincidentally, upon my return to the College in 1960, I had the pleasure of meeting up with Mr ('Splitpin') Atkinson, by now a civilian Clerical Officer at the Garrison Medical Centre, next door to the Dental Centre, where some Apprentices may remember my wife was the Chair-side Assistant who found Mr Atkinson to be a very charming gentleman. I wonder if he checked my face to see if I had shaved that morning?

P.S. June 2000. Since ending this letter in May 2000 I have also had the pleasure of meeting Colin Williams (44A) and his wife, Hazel. Colin was a contemporary and good friend of Ken Jenner (44A). I have also had a letter from Michael Cheeseman (c. 1961) who has recently become a member of the AOBA and who will be visiting Paphos in July and who with Geoffrey James (61B) was a member of the Corps of Drums (see Page 17, OBAN 13).

(See also Mike Cheeseman's letter later in this Issue - Ed)

✍ *Brian Conway (42A) continues . . .*

Having just received OBAN 20, I do not question Don Smith's ability to recognise his own brother-in-law (Bryan Norman, Page 22, OBAN 20).

Since photo No 1 (OBAN 13) was first sent to me for identification, I had doubted the date given by 'Chip' Tomlinson of when that photo had been taken. The identity of the persons shown in that picture were used in support of my doubts. For example, the date I believed RSM McNally had first worn his chequered cap and the year that Mrs Hilborn had left the school; doubts which Don Smith himself seems to share but, with Bill (Inspector Cleuseux) Page's masterly investigation of the facts in this case, I now accept that indeed that photo was taken in 1943. So I hope that this acceptance will be the last letter on this subject (although I fear the Editor is not likely to let matters rest there?). *Brian, if everybody is happy, why shouldn't I be? - Ed)*

I do, therefore, feel a great deal of sympathy with the views expressed by Bob Castell (same page) on this matter, although I do take exception to his remark, 'who cares?' (about the RSM's cap)! From the correspondence generated by my letter, published in OBAN 13, quite a few of our members *did* care, including Bob himself (otherwise why has he bothered to write on the subject, thus curing a few more of our readers from insomnia!)

If Bryan Adams is questioning 'my memory of long past events' (Page 20, same issue) he will probably retort, 'If the cap fits, were it!' - Oh dear, not another cap! Let me draw his attention to the letter from Peter Baldwin (Page 24, OBAN 14) in which he tells of trying to find someone at an AOB A reunion who could remember the march, 'The Arborfield Apprentice', composed by Bandmaster Nel almost 60 years ago.

Nobody could, except for Peter and myself. I have even written the music from memory, also published in OBAN 13. By the same token, I have NO memory of the incident described by Bryan Norman (same issue), 'of guiding a base drummer (*bass* drummer, Ed! - as in *bass*, *tenor*, *soprano*, etc.) onto a post at the centre of the entrance to Cintra Park in Reading.

As the leader of the Corps of Drums, I surely would have remembered such an incident - and with CSM 'Nobby' Hall (a former Drum Major of the East Yorkshire Regiment) always with us on such occasions, he would never have permitted such irresponsible behaviour, particularly during a public performance, with the possibility of causing serious injury to Charlie Ashdown, not to mention damage to a very expensive bass drum!

(Charles, do you remember this incident? . . . In his letter just received, he says he does!) - Ed)

✍ *Charles Ashdown (42A) writes*

I was much amused to read the letter from Bryan Norman (Apr42) in OBAN 20 concerning the incident involving me and the bass drum at Cintra Park. I had forgotten it until now and it has released some other memories, which I will now recount.

When the Corps of Drums was formed in early 1942, I was appointed big drummer. The original bass drum was a much smaller affair and it appeared to Colonel Hillborne to be inadequate in noise output and its ability to reach the whole school, particularly when marching in column of companies after Sunday church parade and en route via the back lane to the upper end of the parade square, prior to the march past. He was also dissatisfied with the uneven tempo I produced and this problem was eventually solved by constant practice with a metronome.

Bandmaster Nel was instructed therefore to find a bigger drum, which he did, and the very large instrument was given to me with instructions to not only to keep good time, but also to beat the stuffing out of it if I wanted to keep the job! Thus equipped, I was able to increase the noise output to a satisfactory level.

There was, however, a serious drawback. In order to get the drum where it could be beaten on both sides with the required gusto, the d . . . d thing had to be hoisted up on my chest to a point where it was impossible to see directly to the front, with little visibility to either side. It was determined that I should use the cymbal player on one side and the triangle player on the other as my markers as to location (not only within the band, but also the immediate area as well). It is easy to see why I could easily be inveigled into a compromising position, although I have to say that this did not happen very often.

I recall that this condition of relative blindness did lead to an unfortunate, but rather funny, accident. On one of our many excursions to play in the local area, we were marching in one direction and Drum Major Conway gave the signal for the counter-march (I could see his mace, by the way).

We counter-marched still playing and as we emerged from the turn-about, the cymbal player (Jasper Connell I think) suddenly stopped playing and when I looked in his direction (remember, he was one of my markers) he was gone! Soon after this we received the order for double-tap and finished playing. It was only then that I discovered that in counter-marching and of course whaling away at my drum, I had hit Jasper fair and square on the nose with one of my drumsticks and given him a nasty bloody nose! I naturally apologised and he was good enough to take it in his stride (what a nasty pun!).

Thanks again for helping me to remember this phase of my life and I hope Bryan has some other memories he can recall and publish.

 Peter Gripton (56B) writes

First time in 40 years. Nearing the date of the 2000 Reunion I came to the conclusion that, despite having sent off the required amount by cheque, I was going to be unable to attend. Ah well, I thought, water under the bridge – it's a worthwhile cause! Just a few days later, and probably only a week or so before the date of the event, I had a phone call from an old cobbler from 'down under'. Tony Domoney and I had met up in Perth, Western Australia, around Christmas 1996 – I wrote an OBAN article about it at the time.

Tony had recently completed a tour in Zimbabwe (got out just in time?) and was thinking of taking up a post in Europe for a couple of years. He was due to be in UK in time for the Reunion and wondered if it was possible that he could be squeezed in. It was Tony's good fortune that 'my' ticket was available and, with some excellent assistance from Bill Cleasby, it was arranged that Tony would 'take my place'. After all, Tony hadn't attended a single Reunion since leaving Boy's School some 40 years previous!

By coincidence, on my 60th birthday in August, along with messages from 'rellies' (also in Perth) came an e-mail from Tony. I am sure Tony won't mind me publishing the majority of it here as a 'thank you' to those guys who made his attendance in June such a memorable one. Here it is.

At last I am back in Perth for a short while before starting a new project. Sorry for the delay in contacting you again, but I had to finish one project in the Balkans, another in Poland, then a week's trip to Kenya.

The Reunion was great, although it was disappointing not to meet any 56B comrades. Would you believe it though, the first folk I met were one from Perth and another from Adelaide. The only face I recognised was that of Dougie Cresswell, who I first met in Kenya with the Army Air Corps. Whatever, it was great talking to other folk, sharing beer, stories and many fond memories.

The programme was excellent, certainly no complaints from me. The Sergeant's Mess and their staff did a splendid job and I was very comfortably accommodated. The RSM was tops, especially as I was hauled up for parking my car in his space! First mistake that – shouldn't it have got me jankers or something?

The parade was memorable. I felt those steps of old returning and was proud to have marched with the other 150-odd on the day. Memories came flooding back, including 'seeing' again my parents, who attended my Passing-out Parade in 1959. Funny how the brain acts in these circumstances, I was quite emotional at the drum-head remembrance service and thoroughly enjoyed talking afterwards with the Padre.

The food was top class, including the BBQ, even the

weather stayed fine until the end. I must admit to eating too much and certainly drinking more beer than I should have, but it was to a good cause and a lot of pleasure. It was fun, wandering around the 'old' Arborfield, trying to identify the barrack area, cookhouse and workshops, meeting others on the same quest.

A few moments alone at the garden where the guard-room was once situated proved somewhat poignant, someone has done a good job there. The REME Museum proved very interesting, especially the 'Scout' helicopter that I used to work on. I actually bumped into a few other AAC veterans, caressing the helicopter with glazed eyes.

Finally, my congratulations go to Bill Cleasby and his committee, who really did an excellent job. Pete, I owe you a drink or three for letting me use your ticket – I don't think I let you down! I don't quite remember ALL the details, due to a beer-drowned brain, stomach stuffed with food and many runaway memories. What a great time and I hope I can soon attend another."

Tony goes on to say that his next stop is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for a 12-month posting with 'ICAO', whatever that is! With his background, which he detailed in a recent OBAN article himself, it will be in the field of aircraft servicing and safety. He thinks that may be his last stint before retiring. I myself retired in August and I hope to meet up with Tony and his wife, Heather, again in future – maybe in 'The Land of Oz' or perhaps at another Reunion.

 Mike Cheeseman (62C) writes

In reply to your note in OBAN 20, regarding bugle calls, I was a member of the Corps of Drums during my time at the school. A very enthusiastic drummer, not so very good at the bugle though!

I hadn't until earlier this year played in a military band since my passing our parade in August 1965, but am now a member of the Corps of Drums Society and a member of the Fleet & district Corps of drums. This means I am not only drumming but also trying to become proficient on the bugle again.

If a bugler was really wanted for the Reunion, I know I could find one from the Society – even better I may even be up to speed to play a call or two by then. Perhaps there are other old boys out there who would like to join me? We could all give each other some moral support. Perhaps a note in the next OBAN for volunteers to join me might drum up a bit of support. (*I seem to remember the name 'Naylor', circa 1956, who was a bugler? - ED*).

I am intrigued about your tapes *Bugle Calls for the Army*. Can you advise where you purchased them from, I would like a set myself.

When I was at the school, Brian Conway was O IC Corps of drums and although I am a new recruit to the AOA I

soon saw that Brian is an avid contributor (I'll say! - Ed) to the OBAN. It was quite coincidental that having joined the AOBA I had a holiday booked in Cyprus and having seen that Brian lived out there was able to make contact with him and his wife Pam. We were in fact only staying just down the road from where they live and were able to meet up and do a bit of reminiscing.

I have just finished putting some music to a video of Brian's which is film put onto video tape of the Corps of drums in the mid sixties, together with film taken by my father. I have made a copy for the Association and will be forwarding it to Bill Cleasby in the near future.

Right! I am off to annoy the neighbours and get my lips in trim - look forward to hearing from the hoards of volunteers who can't wait to join me having a blow! I have just remembered of course that Geoffrey James, another old boy member and member of the Corps of Drums during his time at the school, was the Champion Bugler in 1964, the same year as I was Champion Drummer. Must see if we can persuade him to tune up.

(Mike, If the 'Fleet' mentioned in your reference to The Fleet & District Corps of Drums is the town close to Basingstoke, why not drop by and borrow my set of Bugle Calls for the Army for copying? They were recorded by D Richards, Orchestral & Recording Services, 233 Charlton Road, Charlton Village, Shepperton, Middlesex in 1985. My set was supplied free from a lady at that address who told me that they had gone out of business but had a few left! - Ed)

© Fred Wells (44A) e-mails

I was interested to read the letter in OBAN 20 by West Robertson (50B) regarding his involvement in producing working versions of external respirators from a prototype. His interest about the timing of the manufacture of these respirators co-coinciding with the work we did in Kenya is valid, but our work was done in 1954, whereas he was involved in 1955. It is probable though that our work was directly responsible for more modern respirators to be supplied to Military Hospitals.

The respirators we made were the classic box type (mainly because of the urgency of the situation in Kenya) although extensive modifications were made to improve their efficiency and patient handling.

When the time came to repatriate the patients to the U.K. via RAF planes, mains/battery operated external (chest only) respirators were detached from Oxford (John Radcliffe Hospital?) together with the nursing staff.

It is possible that from that time, (together with our experiences and report) that the authorities realised that the external type of respirator was more efficient, less bulky, and caused less patient problems than the whole body pressurised system then available in the Services, and no

doubt in-house fabrication would seem to be an attractive proposition at that time. (REME, often did prototype work, as I remember) I do not know what further progress was made, as I left the Service soon after, in 1955. What the situation is now is also unclear, with Polio virtually eradicated in the U.K. Are there any machines of whatever type still in stock?

A letter from C Pepper (43B) also held my attention. He states that he enlisted in the Royal Signals in October 1943 (Royal Corps of Signals at that time) and transferred to GSC at Arborfield in November 1944. What interests me is that I also started with the Royal Corps of Signals in October 1943 and voluntarily transferred to GSC Arborfield in March 1944, just prior to the Camp closing and we were moved to Bury, where I became part of 44A intake.

Was C Pepper at Catterick in October 1943? (as I was), if so we must have met, as the intakes were quite small compared to Arborfield, although after all this time his name is not recalled. If he was at Catterick, no doubt he will recall a certain Lt Tombs, a very smart Officer, the first person I knew who had put lead shot into his trousers to keep them straight and uncreased over his gaiters!

One other question. Did he willingly leave the Signals or was he drafted?

© Peter Simmonds (44A) e-mails

Just read your note in OBAN 20 looking for info regarding Korea. I got it a bit late because my wife and I have been cavorting round Ireland on cheap autumn breaks.

I have been writing 'MY Book' for my Grandchildren to read one day after I'm gone and Chapter 6 is devoted to my time as Armourer Sergeant with the Middlesex regiment. I am not sure how to send it by e-mail but have put the one chapter onto floppy disk, but it might take about 5 or 6 days to reach you. It will also require some editing as it is a bit long. Let me know if you are interested, I will e-mail it if you tell me how. I was 44A, - not many of them left I think - my two best mates were Les Pearce and Les Sang. I also knew Ken Jenner, but he only did eight years and I only saw him once in the years between.

(Duly received and included, many thanks - Ed)

✍ Dick Wade (39A) writes

What a gem of a letter from Paddy O'Brien (39A) in OBAN 20, Page 26; it had my wife, myself and friends in fits of laughter. It goes to show that a sense of humour was paramount in enabling us to survive the strict discipline and the hardships encountered during World War II.

Regarding John Moir's letter, who confirmed my observations of the NCO in charge of our nissen hut (Corporal Sidney Wooderson) makes me wonder if John can recall

another well known person who was at Crookham at that time; he was the cartoon artist for 'Comic Cuts' (did I hear someone say "Before my time"?). There was a blackboard in the dining hall and this artist would draw out squared, horizontal columns as it was done for the comic; an example was of a Sergeant Major Bawling, his head off with his peaked cap floating above and complete with SD and regimental cane. It reminded me of RSM Ben Cook on the barrack square at Arborfield - which now reminds me, how many 39ers of E Company remember Corporal Freddy Fox?

I can recall RSM Cook screwing up his mouth as no other could, shouting at Freddy across the barrack square, "Corporal Cunning", and Freddy would always respond at the double.

Another member of our permanent staff was E Company's CSM, a Seaforth Highlander. His dress was tartan trews and a Glengarry hat, but I do not remember his name. In its day the Apprentice School was staffed by many members of the well known regiments. It was nice to see they all kept to their own uniforms which to my mind was an education in itself.

To go back to John Moir's reference to the 15-cwt 'Guy Ant', it reminded me of the time I was sent on a course from Command Workshops, Setchy, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, to a driving school at Ladysmith Barracks, Ashton-under-Lyne.

The vehicles were 3-ton Chevs and 15-cwt 'Guy Ants' and Norton Motor-cycles. The route taken was via Glossop, then through that area of the Pennines to Huddersfield and back. The Chevs would go tearing away at the start, with the Guys labouring behind, but come to the hills in the Pennines, the Guys (hill climbers) would overtake the Chevs - which now brings me to the ultimate in driving abilities.

The Guy had a crash type gearbox - it was crash by name and crash by nature! When double declutching to change down, you had to get your revs just right or else it was crash - crash - crash all the way until you finally stopped. How those gearboxes lived up to such punishment defies description.

The loudest noise from that driving school was from the learners trying to change down on the down hill slopes, finishing up being stuck in neutral. Brakes were the only answer to avoid a disaster! For myself, the Guys were no problem as I already had experience in repairing and testing them.

I loved that Guy, but all that crashing made me wince. Hence that well known saying, "sort 'em out, they're all in one box!"

Finally, I was sorry to miss out on the last reunion as I was down with Sciatica for 4 months, but now I am OK 'firing on all cylinders', so I hope to be at the next!

PS. Although I was not (as a reservist in Korea) in the front line, I do have a few interesting observations whilst I was out there, but I will leave that to another Issue of OBAN. It will be interesting to read the experiences of others who were also out there.

② John Roden (47B) e-mails

Well Brian, here you are. I've decided to send you something for OBAN! Sports: this is how 87 Tels was circa 1964 to 1966.

Priorities

I'd heard of a workshop in Minden
Renowned for its radio repair,
But oh what a terrible discovery
I made, when they posted me there

I thought I'd be working an AVO,
And BFO on a C42,
But all the talk was of cricket
And who the hell had bowled who.

They changed the bosses quite often
To get a selection of sports
No use to them were technicians
They wanted all-rounders of sorts.

The first was canoeing and sailing,
He was quite aquatic you see,
The second was football and cricket
And sometimes Egyptian PT.

Along came the technical inspection
The brigadier was so sad,
He said "Tha's got nowt awaiting collection!"
"Aye, but we've won every cup to be had!!"

So thinking again to my future,
When once more a civvy I'll be.
I've put myself in for a posting,
To repair radios with the APTC.

② John Pewsey (45A) e mails

I was surprised - and pleased - to read the reprint of "The School Badge, by Colonel J D White, DSO, MC." on page 29 of OBAN 20. In particular, the fact that I contributed to the design of the badge (and received 5 bob for my input).

However, I was not in 45B but 45A. The error is quite understandable because Chalky probably shuddered at the mere mention of my name - and probably heartily wished I had been back-squadded in 1945 to at least 50A intake (after he retired)! The reason is explained in the attachment.

(John attached 2 photos of a damaged left hand - Ed)

 Peter Langley (Intake 41) writes

Thanks for another good OBAN. I do have a good idea of the amount of work involved!

Some comments: the VC who took the handbag - was that Eardley? Not in my time of course, but I did know an Eardley VC some years later. There's a tale there, but I'm not sure it's right for OBAN.

Lovely snippets from Curly Hoare: many things hadn't changed since '41/44. And Paddy O'Brien's piece too - great! I thought we (41) were the first - and only - ones to experience dancing lessons. Clem Clements - are you the Clem, one time with 6th Field Regt? The 'dispersal' and Jim Hutchinson's posting to 13 Command Wksp. Did everyone go there? There seems to have been a lot of us!

Bryan Adams' comments: about corps loyalty are very perceptive. I never seemed to stay long enough with any unit to feel I really belonged, except perhaps for the 3rd KOH (long since amalgamated) and I sometimes feel a bit envious of ex-regimental types, or those 'attd bods' who had long postings, who really did feel a family allegiance. (*what's 'attd bods'? - Ed*)

Y'know - Bob Castell's got something there!

Re BC Atkins address in Armadale WA: On my one and only visit to visit my son (ex-Navy but I suppose someone has to be!) I travelled on the Armadale line. A small gauge railway, excellent service and laid between the two carriageways of the also excellent main roads, runs from Armadale, through Perth, to ... somewhere else! Said son lives in Hamersley.

I'm going, leaving you with something 'other than about the School'.

The Anatomy of an Accident: I shouldn't really have been driving it. The British Army has rules about its vehicles only being driven by specified drivers and this was not my vehicle. However, we had just been placed on a war footing so perhaps it didn't matter so much.

We were in Cyprus, staging en route for the great Suez debacle of 1956 and three of us were returning from a journey somewhere on the island. I was driving an Austin Champ, Britain's disastrous attempt to emulate the jeep.

I clearly remember what happened that afternoon. I had plenty of time lying in a hospital bed to reconstruct the exact sequence of events. My regiment was in a tented camp, along with several other units, on an embryo building site, a large area of right-angled roads and little else. It was probably because we were not intended to be there very long that no-one had thought about putting up road signs or organising any system of road priorities. This was to prove critical to what happened that afternoon.

My passengers were Craftsman Williams and Corporal Hughes. It was, officially, his vehicle.

We were all armed. As I swung left onto the immediate approach to our camp, I saw another vehicle, considerably larger than mine, coming at me from the left, out of one of the many criss-crossing roads. It subsequently transpired that it had been to the beach to pick up a load of wet sand. Wet sand was invariably used to provide a flat surface on which soldiers could play football, something soldiers always do when not otherwise engaged. It could also be used for marching up and down, something soldiers always endeavour to avoid doing. And wet sand weighs remarkably heavy. Thus the vehicle was grossly overloaded and the driver, looking into the setting sun, couldn't see a thing!

Had I been going faster, he would have missed me, but conditions determined that I was moving slowly and I knew with absolute certainty that he was going to hit me. Just whereabouts on my vehicle's flank was somewhat less certain. So - what to do? I know what I did do. I accelerated, hoping to get out of his direct path, a decision that probably saved our lives. As a result he struck the rear left hand corner of my vehicle. He struck it with enough force to flip us over like a landed turtle, the main difference being that I was trapped underneath. Fortunately, and through no effort on my part, the engine stopped running.

I have no clear recollection of the overturning, only getting an almighty bang on the head and lying alongside the vehicle, feet toward its front and my left arm firmly pinned. The designer of the Champ had, not unreasonably I suppose, assumed it would always be the right way up, though given that it was supposed to be a battle worthy vehicle, he does not appear to have had all his chairs under the table. A minor - or rather in my case major - oversight was this. When the windscreen was folded down, as it usually was in those sunny climes, the exposed locating clips presented, to the world at large, a group of vicious spikes. It was just such a set of spikes that held my arm, and me, captive.

In order to extricate myself, I doubled up my legs, got a purchase on some part of the Champ with my feet and pushed upwards. The result was a groan from poor Williams, still trapped somewhere underneath. Cpl Hughes, I learned later, had been thrown clear, whereupon he leapt to his feet, loaded his sub-machine gun and adopted a defensive stance. We were surrounded by British Army encampments!

Williams's cries gave me pause for thought, but in any case help was on its way. Dodger Green of the LAD came pounding along the road, his Army-booted legs going like pistons, seemingly about to run over my head. I never knew he had such big feet. Obviously thinking clearly, he reached in and removed the ignition key. He then threw it away, complete with Cpl Hughes's personal keys, which were on the same ring and were never seen again. With that out of the way, Dodger with, I assume some help, raised the vehicle enough for me to scramble out, Williams having already done so.

I managed to get myself upright, probably unwisely, since blood was pumping from my head and splashing on to the road at my feet. Next on the scene was Ernie Lambert, Battery Sergeant Major. Ernie had obviously attended a first aid course and had paid great attention to that cardinal rule of first aiding, 'reassure your patient.' For he looked at me, touched my shoulder and said 'F g 'ell, Pete!' at which point welcome hands picked me up and carried me to a shallow ditch at the side of the road, where I died.

Across the road from our camp was a Field Ambulance, so that in no time at all I was surrounded by medics of all sorts, shapes, sizes and ranks. I could not have been in better hands. I was sure I was dying, but very little of my earlier life passed before my eyes. None, to be accurate. I do remember what I said, words which I supposed would go in the general direction of posterity. I said, whether aloud or not I have no idea, "This is bloody stupid!" and woke up in hospital, being sewn together again.

The surgeon doing the needlework, a bit short on sympathy said, "I suppose you were driving too fast." This I refuted hotly, adding that if I had been, I wouldn't be telling him! This earned me a curt demand not to be impertinent, a sharp reminder that Army doctors all carry Her Majesty's commission and thus outrank me.

However, I was a Warrant Officer, albeit second class, which eventually led to an audience with my commanding officer, at his suggestion. He listened to my version of events and, rather grudgingly I thought, accepted it, with no more than an informal reprimand, that is, not entered on my personal records. The other driver, being a private soldier, was awarded ten days CB and fined. No-one said life is supposed to be fair. . . . Oh yes, both vehicles were written off, no questions asked. One of the perks, I suppose, of wartime accounting.

Pete Gripton (56B) writes about the College Histories

My name is Pete Gripton of Intake 56B. Many of you may remember that I served on the Committee as the SEME Bordon representative for many years until my recent retirement in August 2000.

On many Committee meetings I was always bringing up the question, as do many of you guys, I'm sure, 'What is the progress on the College history?' Well, unfortunately this project ran out of steam when Victor Alanbrooke first of all began to suffer from ill health and then retired from his duties as a College lecturer.

During the last couple of years, I have been busy researching and putting together a history of my local village and parish, Greatham in Hampshire. I have been greatly assisted in this by Brian Hornsey, editor of the OBAN, thanks to his expertise in editing and publishing, using his computerised publishing system.

It was Brian who steered my mind onto the College History, as he thought I might be able to have a reasonable bash at reviving this erstwhile project.

Having put this thought to a recent meeting of the Committee, I have now been invited to look into the task involved.

The first requirement is for an updated 'short' history, which was last produced in 1992.

The second requirement is to write the definitive 'long' history. Whether or not I'm up to this, time will tell! But I'm willing to attempt it and to this effect will be making frequent visits to the College and Museum over the coming months, delving among the archives. This will, of course, involve some expense and your Committee has been pleased to give the go-ahead on the project. I hope I have your approval and good wishes with my endeavour!

John Dutton (43A) e-mails

Where Are You Now? I am one of six ex-boys still in contact out of approximately 200 that joined the Army in March/April 1943. We are desperate to contact the remainder if at all possible. We six are going into as many venues as possible to spread the advert that is as follows:

'Boys that joined the Army Technical School (Boys), Arborfield in March/April 1943 with Regimental Numbers, 2548204 to 2548402 (inclusive) and nine others. Please contact us on:

e-mail: <dutton1943@freenetname.co.uk>
and/or Tel No 0118 981 2957,
or e-mail: <douglas.boucher@ukgateway.net>

How Times Have Changed!

Captain Kelly, of the Military Studies Department at the Army Technical Foundation College now edits the new School Magazine:

The Arborfield Informer.

On page 12, in the *College Standing Notices* in the latest issue, appears an advert for the College Shop as follows:

'Due to popular demand, sports bras in all colours, shapes and sizes are now in stock.' (Anyone interested, the Shop is open from 1200 to 1400 hrs Mon to Fri.)

I wonder what how such an advert would affect apprentices of our day?

(I hasten to add that Captain Kelly is not of the masculine gender) - Ed.

MEMBER'S RESIGNATIONS

R B (Roy) Arnold 43B	R F G (Ron) Holland (39B)	B R (Bryan) Pepper (PS)
C Ashford (38B)	M J Howells (55A)	R Ruddock (45B)
A Bancroft (42A)	C F (Frank) Jacobs (43A)	D J (Dave) Slane (PS)
R B (Robert) Cammish 62C	J E Lawrence (54B)	I A Smith (54B)
K Darby (53B)	T W (Trevor) Lines (60A)	M R Stevens (56A)
V G (Vic) Emery (69B)	J F (John) Lloyd (PS)	G P (Gerald) Tiley (56A)
J M Golding(55B)	M C (Mike) Lomas (55B)	D J Wass (56A)
T A T Grigg (52A)	T Mann (55A)	P (Peter) Webb (PS)
J A Harcourt (55B)	R E (Dick) Morris (56B)	K (Ken) Wilkinson (39A)
W M R (Bill) Hayles (63C)□	D Oakley (52B)	

NEW MEMBERS

C I Melhuish	50A	Shrewsbury	2 Mar 00	R J Wilson	63C	Brentwood	31 May 00
A Fenlon	51B	Connahs Quay	4 Mar 00	G P Noble	61A	M Mowbray	31 May 00
M J Toogood	54B	Halstead	9 Mar 00	M J Blackburn	42C	Northampton	5 Jun 00
R V Evans	42B	Brixham	9 Mar 00	R K Younger	66B	Luton	15 Jun 00
H J Mills	42C	Havant	9 Mar 00	R N L Lambert	43A	Green Point	14 Aug 00
F R Foster	50A	Stourbridge	12 Mar 00	W J Wright	56A	Billingham	14 Aug 00
M R Gardiner	50B	Berwick	21 Mar 00	W C Freeman	48B	Ipswich	14 Aug 00
R T Dyer	61B	Kidderminster	23 Mar 00	R Bastow	68C	Dumfries	17 Aug 00
I J Rawls	67C	Fort Pierce	21 Mar 00	D Baker	47B	Alton	2 Oct 00
R D Tryhorn	62B	Carlisle	12 Apr 00	E C Reynolds	51B	Diss	2 Oct 00
R M Warwick	49B	Weymouth	27 Apr 00	D G Pickworth	52A	Southampton	4 Oct 00
R P Stubbs	50A	Telford	28 Apr 00	I J Pickworth	50A	Reading	25 Aug 00
T J Taylor	60C	Oldham	9 May 00	D N Murray	PS	Wokingham	4 Oct 00
P F Roche	44A	Tonbridge	16 May 00	S C Wilson	72C	Doncaster	4 Oct 00
M G Cheeseman	62C	Worthing	10 May 00	P Baiden	63C	Southampton	4 Oct 00
R E Stannett	50A	Norwich	17 May 00	L Blakley	61B	Waterlooville	4 Oct 00
R Langley	52B	Andover	19 May 00	D Chapman	53B	Ullapool	4 Oct 00
F K Mills	51B	Peterborough	23 May 00	J A Plant	52A	Morphett Vale	7 Oct 00
J Hosty	50A	Mansfield	23 May 00	A Barthorpe	70A	Worksop	8 Oct 00
A P Dunne	64A	Reading	24 May 00	E A W Spick	39X	Northampton	14 Oct 00
B Cockwell	57A	Bristol	27 May 00	R J Shephard	61B	Marlborough	14 Oct 00
M J Charman	62C	Worthing	31 May 00	K P Neal	71C	Ipswich	14 Oct 00

DECEASED

It is with sadness and deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following since publication of the last OBAN.

M J (Mike) Parsons (46B), 26 February 2000

T (Trevor) Grantham (42A), 27 April 2000

R F G (Ron) Holland (39B), 2 July 2000

Corporal 'Bru' Beard (91A) died 7 July 2000 in a motorcycle accident

A G (Alec) McLauchlan (47A), 10 August 2000

G (George) Cameron (41A), 9 September 2000

P W (Peter) Gibby (55B), 31 October 2000

D J B Howes (38B), November 2000

When members wish to contact the Membership Secretary to notify him of the death of other members, they are requested to make the contact in writing.

ASSOCIATION ITEMS FOR SALE.

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

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

By post to members:	£11.50
By post to non-members:	£14.00

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

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

History:	No charge, but 50p postage & packing to UK and BFPO addresses and £1.00 for overseas.
OBANs:	£1.00 each including postage & packing. 5 Issues for £4.00 including postage & packing. (Orders from members overseas will attract considerably higher postage charges - overall cost will be £2.50 per issue).

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

Cheques for ALL the above items should be made payable to: **Arborfield Old Boys Association.**

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 from *No 2 Coombe Drive, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 1DB.* They are 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. *(Since the original advert, David and his wife have emigrated to Malaya, but before leaving he produced a second cartoon which will be published - Ed)*

THE CRAFTSMAN

Subscription Rates:	Single Copy:	80p.
	Annual Subscription:	£15.60, surface post paid.
	Overseas Subscription:	£19.20 surface post paid.
	Air Mail Rates:	On application.

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

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

