



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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Mr A Hardy (65C)

Mr W E N Pusey (46A)

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

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From The Editor

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Issue 24

It may seem that this issue of OBAN is appearing directly on the heels of the last and this is probably true, because the last issue (23) was published a month late and this issue carries information along with it about this year's Reunion, so has to be out well in advance of June.

We hear very little from the letter writers in OBAN 24, I wonder why? This has of course allowed me to include more of your articles, some of which have been waiting a long time to see the light of day!

In addition, I have included extracts from **The Arborfield Informer**, the current ATFC magazine, from its Company news section; my intention being to do this as often as I can get my hands on a copy.

David Barrett (52B, *exactly as it says on the tin*) of cartoon fame has e-mailed me from a jungle in the Far East, saying he hopes to produce another excellent cartoon, depicting Boy's School antics and the like.

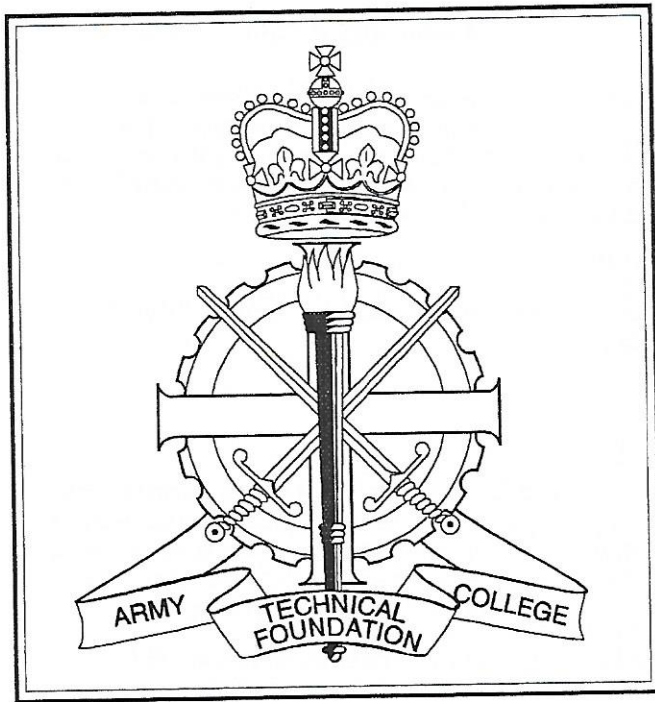
If possible, please continue to send your contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows Word 6/95 versions). If you are using a later version of Word or whatever, it is usually possible to use the *Save As..* function to also select the type of file in an older format, hopefully Word 6/95.

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!).

As always, photos for the Pictorial Archives 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. As always, many thanks to those of you who have already contributed

Lastly, please note that I have changed my e-mail address, as can be seen on page (i).

Brian Hornsey (54A)



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Lt Colonel D A McAvoy REME

A New Year is now upon us so I'll start the ball rolling by wishing everyone a happy and prosperous year ahead with good health and fortune. Turning now to issues surrounding the College and the Association directly, I hope to bring all of our members bang up to date with developments and give them a snapshot of some of the concurrent activity that is now underway for the 2002 reunion. So let me start.

The future of the College is now becoming an increasing topic of interest to the higher echelons as they examine the best way to spend the limited financial resources available to the training organisation. The latest initiative and the one most likely to come to fruition, is the establishment of an Army Foundation College to cater for an estimated 2500 Junior Entrant soldiers. This grand affair is to subsume the ATFC and elements of the Junior Soldier Training, currently carried out at Basingbourn. The current timeline for all of this to occur is by 2007. The duration of the course will be 1 year, whereupon the apprentices will pass to their respective Phase 2 trade training schools to complete training.

On a similar time scale, the Arborfield Garrison (Home of REME) may close in its entirety with Mechanical Engineering moving to Portsmouth with the Navy, and Aeronautical Training moving to Cosford with the RAF. Both

sites Bordon and Arborfield will be handed over for disposal to the highest bidder no doubt.

On the College agenda this term is the ever-increasing possibility of the course length being extended to 42 weeks. A decision will be made in March and thus hopefully prepare the College for a seamless transition to the new site wherever that is? In the interim, however, there has been such a demand by civilians wanting to join the College this year that we have taken the maximum possible loading in January 2002.

We are literally bursting at the seams with 670 recruits under training and every one of them loving every moment, including the countless inspections and drill sessions - of course this is the RSM's considered view! Talking of which, the new College RSM is WO1 RSM Mullins, Coldstream Guards, and he is really looking forward to the 2002 reunion this summer. He has already commented upon the importance of such occasions and is enthusiastically poised to welcome you all back. So make sure you have your hair cut!

The apprentices now enjoy a brand new wide screen TV in the WRVS lounge, thanks in part to your donation last year. Adventure training continues apace with a skiing expedition this term and cross-country backpack skiing in Canada over the Easter break. For many apprentices this will be their first taste of travel and I know it will be a lasting one in their minds for the rest of their lives.

It is with great regret that we have to accept David Schofield's decision to retire as Webmaster of a website so well conceived and managed over the last three years. I only hope we can find someone within the membership with the same skills and dedication to continue. David, I am sure that all members will join me in a heart felt thank you. Of course, we still expect to continue to see you at the reunions!

Finally, the committee and I continue to struggle with ideas to increase the members database and to encourage new members to join. I'd be naïve to think that this is going to be an easy task but there are one or two younger members on the horizon who are showing an interest. The challenge is now to turn interest into membership and thus ensure that the AOBA can be sustained.

I hope to have some suggestions on a revised title for the AOBA at the reunion, so if you want a say in the way ahead make sure that you come along. Bill Cleasby will shortly issue the date and details for all to respond to. My part will be to welcome you all.

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Lt Col(Retd) Bill Cleasby (61C)

It hardly seems credible that once again we are starting to get ready for the annual reunion, scheduled for the weekend 21st to 23rd June 2002. It may be a sign of old age or the demands of the job but the months just seem to slip away with an ever-increasing momentum. The reunion programme has been agreed, wines are being selected and menus tasted. Well someone has to do it! You will find further details of the weekend and the usual application form within the pages of this issue.

The manageress of the Rowcroft Sergeants Mess has advised me that accommodation will be tight this year and as such I would appreciate it if requests in the first instance could be limited to those with special requirements. By all means state your preference for mess accommodation and if space allows we will do our best.

Following up on a number of requests last year, I have tasked the Pictorial Archivist in the museum to come up with a photographic display of life at the School/College over the last 60 years. I also plan to put on a better display of the School/College artefacts and historical items that we hold. In addition, the updated Brief History of The College has been completed and will be available at the reunion.

On a final note, a number of you have very generously contributed towards the rebuild of the Poperinghe Guardroom within the grounds of the REME Museum. Plans are still being finalised but with a fair wind the shell should be up by the time of the reunion. Any further contributions will of course be very much welcomed.

Warmest Regards

Bill Cleasby (61C).

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Col(Retd) Peter Gibson

You will all be pleased to know that there is nothing much from me in this issue! I haven't yet produced the 2nd edition of the Membership Directory, mainly because of other commitments but also because corrections to the 1st edition are still dribbling in.

My biggest problem at the moment is trying to find members who have moved house but forgotten to tell me. Many of them are paying subs by Standing Order but have not noticed that the OBAN has ceased to arrive! If you move house, please write and let me know.

At the end of last month I attended the funeral of one of our members - Tony Hunter of 53B. I didn't meet Tony until 1986 but we became good friends and remained so, despite the fact that he worked for me on two occasions! Tony had suffered from cancer for a number of years and although at one stage he appeared to be clear, it returned with a vengeance. After the doctors had told him that he only had a very few months to live, he confounded everyone by keeping going for considerably longer than expected. I shall never forget his funeral service - and not only because he was such a good friend. It took place in the very attractive chapel of Cambridge crematorium and was conducted by Algy Morton's wife.

Tony had planned an unusual funeral for himself and was very much in charge right until the end. Many members of his family, and a number of colleagues and friends played an active part. We were all moved by the personal memories, the readings, the poetry and the choice of music.

Hopefully, I expect to be at the next reunion, so look forward to seeing you all.

Kindest Regards

Peter Gibson

PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS - 2002

There has been a delay in the setting up of the Direct Debit System for payment of subscriptions. Would members please continue paying by Standing Order for the year 2002 and the additional £5.00 will be collected at a later date. New members will be charged subscriptions at the new £10.00 per year rate.

Mike Davis (60B) - Treasurer

RECRUITMENT AND PUBLICITY REPORT

From David (Titch) Schofield (65A)

When I look back over the last three years I find quite a lot has happened on the recruiting front. The most important initiative though has been the development of our own web site. When I was asked to build one I didn't know where to start, but I have to say it has (in the main!) been an enjoyable task. I have had more phone calls and e-mails from lads who - through the web site - have located old mates, most of whom have not met each other since their own Passing Out Parade.

The web site is now quite massive. At the last look I think it stood at around 30 Megabytes - which for an Alumni site is probably without exception. We have pages for almost every event and activity possible, from write-ups of reunions to photographs of time spent at Arborfield. Out of all of this I think the most used and worthwhile page must be the Guest book. Clearly this has been an outstanding success.

All this, of course, has nothing to do with me - it's very clearly all down to the large numbers of ex-apprentices who regularly visit the site leaving messages for each other. Only last week I had a phone call from someone who - through the guest book - found a mate whom he had not seen since 1947!! They have now met and I am confident will not lose touch with each other again!

By now you are probably wondering why I am waxing lyrical about the web site so much. Don't we know all of this? Well, yes we do - but all good things must come to an end and I am saddened to report that the time has come for me to hand over the development and upkeep of our site to another equally motivated ex-apprentice.

Pressures of work, home life and studies have resulted in me having to make some difficult

decisions. Quite frankly, I can't fit it all in!! So, with great reluctance, I have reached the decision not to seek re-election at the next AGM. So we must look for someone within our ranks to take over from me.

I understand Derek McAvoy has offered the services of the College Web Master if we cannot find a suitable volunteer. This is, of course, very kind of him and I know you will join me in thanking him for this. However, I strongly believe the future of our web site is inextricably linked to the future of the AOBA and as such must be managed by the AOBA membership.

So, please can I ask you all to think about the future of our web site and can we find someone to come forward to take it on to bigger and better things?

If you are interested in this exciting project but wish to learn more before putting your name forward, please telephone me on 01454 615283 and we can talk through the responsibilities.

Over the last three years I have received considerable support and encouragement from the membership and I know I can promise that the successful candidate will receive the same support and find the task a most rewarding experience.

David (Titch) Schofield 65A

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TEMPUS FUGIT
(From Army Apprentice to Pensioner)
By Clive Soord (54B)

Part 1 - From Army Apprentice to Civilian

Time flies! Was it really 47 years ago that I, as an innocent 15 year old, and the rest of 54B, first walked through that distinctive gateway into the Army Apprentice School at Arborfield, without really knowing what we were letting ourselves in for? Now, at the dawn of the 21st century, seems an appropriate time to look back and to try and assess the impact, of those formative years at Arborfield, on my life and career, which I suspect is typical of many others who passed through those gates.

The Formative Years

Getting to those gates in the first place was quite an adventure. Having signed on in Egypt, where my father was serving in the RAOC at the time, I had a ten hour flight in a York (civil version of the Lancaster) via Malta to Stansted. From Stansted I was taken to Goodge Street underground station which was being used as a collecting depot for service people travelling to and from abroad. After a sleepless night at Goodge Street, I was put on a train for Workingham and given instructions on how to get to Arborfield. Unfortunately, I ended up at the Depot REME by mistake and was taken to the REME Boys' Band, who of course, were not expecting me. All rather confusing for a 15 year old! Anyway, after much phoning around the mistake was discovered and I at last arrived at the Apprentice School about a week after most of the others of my intake.

I'm not sure what I was expecting but the experience of the first few weeks was a cultural shock! The sparse and crowded barrack room in 'B' Squad HQ Company, the tight discipline and having to stick up for myself without any back up from my parents. Being a week behind everyone else didn't help. The rest of the squad seemed to know exactly what they were supposed to do while I was floundering without a clue! However, there wasn't time to be homesick. After a couple of weeks, with help from Cpl of Horse O'Dell and from Mick Owen (who always had his kit spick and span long before everyone else) I was able to catch up.

We can look back and identify crucial turning points which have influenced our lives and our careers. Obviously deciding to join the army was probably the most significant one. However, the choice of the trade for training also greatly affects the rest of our lives. So why did I select Instrument Mechanic? I don't know! It probably sounded good. I certainly hadn't a clue what it involved. Anyway, IM I became for better or for worse. There were twelve of us IMs in 54B (including Don May who came down from 54A). All great characters in their own way.

The trade and educational training were excellent, even if we did wonder why we had to spend so much time on filing, tin

bashing, blacksmithing and other subjects which seemed to have little relevance to the Instrument Mechanic trade. Nevertheless, it has stood me in good stead through the years, but more on that later.

We thought that the first six months as jeeps in I Div HQ Company would be the hardest but we were wrong! We didn't realise that we were shielded to a large extent from the other divisions. When we moved up to 2 Div and into the other companies we soon found that we were at the bottom of the pecking order which meant always being at the back of the queue for meals, being 'persuaded' to clean kit for the seniors and being put down in numerous other ways.



C Company Intake of 1954

L-R - Self, Jim Ashworth, Tony Lynn, Don May, Dickie Richards, Derek Palmer, Adrian Cleaton, Jock Greve, Spike Riley, Clive Swatton, Robin Tomsett (& Terry Bunyard, who took the photo.

I remember my three years at the Apprentice School with mixed feelings. There were many good times but also some that were not so good. Fortunately, we tend to remember the good ones more than the bad. Some of the living conditions would not be tolerated today and some of the bullying would be treated as criminal offences now.

Each of us could probably fill a book with our memories, so I'll just recall a few which come to mind: - the panic preparations for Commandant's inspections and parades - the count down to summer leave - the lie ins on free Sundays - being put on light duties after a spell in hospital and then being sent to shovel coke! - the antics of some who were trying to work their discharge; who was it who took high-tea on top of the water tower? - the mainly awful food - the rush to grab crusts when the left-overs from bread slicing were put out - managing on 6 shillings a week and blowing some of it on NAAFI eggs, chips and beans - the friendships - the banter and repartee, particularly that between Clive (Johnny the Hard) Swatton and 'Spider' Smith - the tormenting of those who did not conform - fights; that between Pat Smith and Paddy Cunningham which seemed to go on for ages and

the one between 'Big' Memmot and 'Little' Memmot with some of the hardest punching I have ever seen - fatigues, particularly cookhouse tin wash - jankers - sports afternoons - compulsory cross-country runs in the cold and wet, Kitchener always miles in front. . .

. . . - listening to the Top Twenty on Radio Luxembourg after lights-out - standing in for someone on fire crew, failing to connect hoses properly, being drenched and threatened with nick by Fred Silver - the firework factory going up in flames - being roped in for the boxing team and the awful butterflies before a fight and the pain after! - singing 'The Reds' - Jack the Ripper's 30 second haircuts - the hymn singing strike at church service in protest at short haircuts - the passing out parade dance with one female for every fifty males -



P.O.P. Dance 1957 - Notice our newly pressed BDs

Of course I could go on and on. They were three long years. However, most of us survived the school of hard knocks and benefited from the experience. We couldn't wait for our passing out parade to make our mark in the big world of the mans' army. We thought we knew it all but would soon learn otherwise!

The Man's Army

My first posting was to 27 Command Workshops at Warminster, along with Adrian Cleaton, Brian Edminson, Bill Morrell, Johnny Shaw, Paddy Webb and a few others. I suppose it was a fairly gentle introduction to the mans' army. We enjoyed the relative freedom of being able to go out in the evenings and the more frequent 48 hour passes. We were also lucky in that the unit had just moved into new barracks.

We were not quite so prepared for our first encounter with national servicemen, many of whom looked upon us with contempt as being bolshi, thick regulars. We also discovered that we still had a lot to learn about the real world of applying our trade training. In the Instrument 'shop, the civilians saw us as a possible threat to their jobs so didn't provide any help. However, we slowly gained experience and eventually pulled our weight.

After an easy year, most of us received our first posting abroad. Cleaton, Shaw, Webb and I went to Cyprus. This was in 1958 at the height of the EOKA troubles. We flew out by RAF Comet (after the crashes) and as we got out at Nicosia

airport, Johnny Shaw remarked at the heat radiating from the jet engines. When we had moved a hundred yards away and the heat was still the same, it finally sank in that Cyprus is a lot hotter than England!

I ended up with the LAD attached to 625 Ordnance Depot at Four Mile Point outside Famagusta. It was a tented camp and I soon learnt to appreciate the luxuries of life, which we had taken for granted, such as flush toilets! There was little work and what there was, was dead boring. Because of the EOKA troubles, we were not able to take advantage of the all that the island had to offer and had to be armed whenever we left camp. After six months I applied for and was granted a posting to the Command Workshops at Dhekelia, near Larnaca, where conditions were more civilised.

In early 1960, the EOKA troubles came to an end and many of us were sent back to the UK on the troop ship Devonshire. My first and thankfully last experience of the stinking black hole of the troop deck!

After brief spells at 12 Command Workshops, Mill Hill and on a FCE 7 (Yellow Fever light anti-aircraft system) course at SEE Arborfield, I landed up at The School of Artillery, Manorbier, in South Wales where The FCE 7s were fired at drogues. It was an amazing piece of kit with a mechanical computer, weighing about a quarter of a ton, at the heart of the system and whose job was to solve the ack-ack problem. (The same thing could be done now by a tiny and cheap micro-chip!). Manorbier was a great place when the sun was shining but the locals used to say that if you could see the Isle of Lundy, it was going to rain, if you couldn't, it was raining!

By this time (1961) I had lost touch with most of my intake. I had made full corporal and was starting to think of trying to advance my career in the army so I applied to go on an Artificer Selection Board at the tender age of 21. I didn't expect to pass first time but thought that the experience would stand me in good stead for the next time. A friend, who had just been on a board, briefed me on what to expect and described, in some detail, the command task he was set. That happened to be the first task set on my board so I pushed myself to the front of the group hoping to be chosen to lead the one and only task I knew anything about. My luck was in! I led the group in the task, it went like clock-work and I duly passed the board.

With hindsight, that was another of those significant turning points in my life. If I had been given any other command task, I feel sure I would have made a hash of it and failed the board. It would have taken ages to get on another one with no certainty of passing.

I joined No. 26 Artificer Instruments course, in the autumn of 1961, at SEME, Bordon where I met up again with a few ex Arborfield apprentices including Terry Bunyard and Len Symonds. The course was 15 months of fairly hard slog but there were many moments of good fun and camaraderie. One

of the enduring memories was a full dress rehearsal for a GOC's parade on the square which was covered in black ice, on the command; 'open order march' the front and rear ranks collapsed in a slithering heap!

We completed the course in December 1962 but were lumbered for duty over the Christmas and New Year period. You may remember the winter of '62/'63 as being one of the coldest on record with some of the heaviest snowfalls. I was the guard commander on New Years day and remember getting phone calls through the day and night from people stuck in the snow and unable to report back for duty the next day.

My posting, at the end of the course, was to 56 Station Workshops which was co-located with 36 Regiment RA and 77 Tells Workshops at Duisburg in Germany. The Station Workshops was supposedly managed by the half dozen REME officers and senior NCOs but in reality it was the 150 German workers who ran the place.

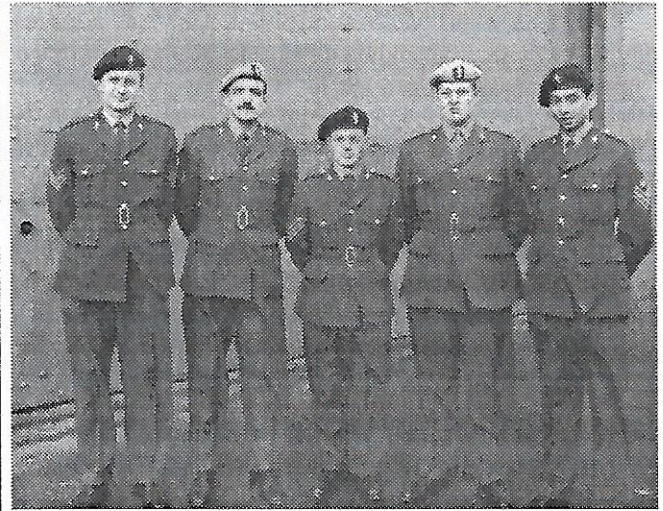
My greatest achievement while at Duisburg was learning to ski on exercise 'Snow Queen' with 36 Regiment. For ski boots we used our issue boots CWW with a strip of leather nailed to the heel for the ski bindings to grip. The wooden skis were 2 metres, 10 centimetres long and the cable bindings did not release in a fall. In spite of that, most of us survived without serious injury and I enjoy skiing to this day, all be it with much shorter skis, modern ski boots and creaking knee joints!

After a couple of years at Duisburg I was getting bored with not much to do at the Station Workshop and I was also concerned that the instrument trade was heading up a blind alley. (This was just before thermal imaging came to its rescue). The Army Air Corps had just started up a few years earlier and there was a shortage of supporting REME technicians. After advice from Len Symonds who had already converted, I decided to embark on the conversion to Artificer Electrics, Instruments & Radio (EI&R). This turned out to be another of those cross-roads in my life.

I started the conversion process in the spring of 1965 by attending a basic electronics course and then an EI&R upgrading course at SEE Arborfield. I then went on to join Art. EI&R 6, after the regimental training, I'm glad to say! The whole process took about two and a half years and introduced me to the strange world of accountability through signing and counter signing for all work on aircraft. A bit of a culture shock after the relatively happy go lucky repair and maintenance of field instruments.

After completing my second artificer course (a glutton for punishment some may say) I was posted to 71 Aircraft Workshops at Detmold in Germany for a fairly gentle introduction to REME in support of army aviation, with the help of Len Symonds who was also there at the time.

Another cross-roads loomed! While on Art. EI&R 6, I had



On ART E1&R6 Course at SEE - Circa 1967

been courting a girl in Southampton and was contemplating asking her to marry me. In Detmold in early 1968, I had the opportunity to go skiing again at Winterburg where there was lots of snow. However, I was nearly broke and could afford to buy a pair of skis or an engagement ring but not both. While I was wrestling with this dilemma, the weather changed, the snow melted and so engagement ring it was. On such fickle things are life's paths decided!

After my marriage to Jeanette, I had a posting, at short notice, to the LAD at 131 Flight RCT, to take over from an artificer who had suffered a nervous breakdown. 131 Flight operated Beavers and Scouts and was a lodger unit at RAF Wildenrath.

From the relatively sheltered world of the Aircraft Workshop I was thrown into the harsh reality of meeting tight deadlines to get aircraft ready for important sorties. As an artificer with little experience of working with real aircraft with real problems, on exercise and back at base, I felt way out of my depth. Luckily I had an excellent sergeant in John Barrett who helped me through the early months until I learnt the ropes and gained confidence. At that time, 131 Flight was an independent flight with its own first and second line support so we were able to do most repairs and maintenance up to major inspections.

Jeanette joined me at Wildenrath and it was great to move out of the mess into married quarters. Our daughter, Rachel, was born at the RAF hospital at Wegberg.

In 1970, 131 Flight RCT changed over to 669 Squadron Army Air Corps. The occasion was marked by a parade with a high ranking officer presenting blue berets in exchange for the black berets of the RCT. The parade had been rehearsed many times until it was perfect. On the great day I acted as one of the bearers of the new blue berets to be presented to the middle rank. The berets were piled up on a tray in the correct order until a late-comer arrived at the last minute, chucked his blue beret on top of the pile and squeezed himself into the middle rank. Everything went perfectly after

that except that some in the middle rank marched past with large berets over their eyes and others had small ones perched precariously on their heads.

Looking back, Wildenrath was probably the happiest posting for Jeanette and myself. Everyone from the RCT, AAC, RAOC and REME got on well together, the whole unit just seemed to click and the social life was great. After Wildenrath, I had a short spell at HQ Army Aviation BAOR at Bielafeld in 1972/73, during which time my son was born. By now I was an ASM and wanted to get to grips with the new helicopter for the AAC, the Lynx or WG13, as it was known then. I managed to wrangle a posting to 13 Maintenance Advisory Group (MAG) which had the responsibility of bringing the Army Lynx into service from the maintenance point of view.

13 MAG was part of a combined Navy, Army and Airforce team, known as the UKSLG (Lynx), headed up by a Lt. Commander and based at the Westland Helicopters factory in Yeovil. The team monitored the development of the Lynx and was able to influence the design to improve maintainability. We provided a unique information gathering service which the factory in general made use of. When we were seeking information on the aircraft from various departments in the factory, it was not unusual for us to be referred back to the UKSLG as being the most likely to know the answer!

The other members of 13 MAG travelled between Middle Wallop and Yeovil daily. However Jeanette and I decided to buy our first house in Yeovil in order to get a foot on the housing ladder before prices rose to levels we could not afford. With the aid of a large mortgage, we bought a semi, planted a few shrubs and trees in the garden and found ourselves putting down roots! That was probably the moment when I realised that we had to start thinking of what we would do when I left the army.

The Lynx went into service with the Navy in 1976 and this was followed by the Army Intensive Flying Trials Unit (IFTU), in early 1977, based at Middle Wallop. For my sins, I was given a short service commission and posted to the REME element of the IFTU to head up the avionics side of the support to the new helicopters. Things didn't start off well. The first lynx to be delivered caught fire during its initial compressor wash with us. The resulting board of enquiry was a stressful time for the whole unit but the eventual finding was that the compressor washing fluid had been incorrectly specified and had ignited during the wash.

Once again I felt out of my depth, both as an officer and as the person in charge of the avionics maintenance. However, I had great support from Major Ian Garrow, who was OC the REME support element, and from AQMS Bernie Guignard who was an excellent Artificer Avionics. The rest of the intensive flying trials was a success and the aircraft has since done well in service.

I often wondered if I had made a mistake in accepting a commission. I always felt slightly uncomfortable and never completely at ease, particularly with my relationship with more senior officers who had not come up through the ranks. Some of these made it clear that they did not accept ex rankers on equal terms. I wonder if any other ex boys, who were commissioned, also felt this way. It did amuse me to notice how one or two individuals changed to a 'posh' accent after being commissioned.

Shortly after I was commissioned, I went on a course at the REME Officers' School in Arborfield. While I was there, I wandered around the old Apprentice School which was in the process of being demolished. It was an emotional and quite an eerie experience to walk among those spider blocks which brought back so many memories. The whole place was somehow smaller than I had remembered it.

During the IFTU my family had moved from Yeovil to Salisbury and once again we had started putting down roots. We decided then that I would leave the army at the end of my seven year short service commission mainly because we were fed up of moving every few years and wanted to settle down and I didn't want my children to suffer the disruption I had experienced when I attended 14 different schools while my father was in the army. Ageing probably also had something to do with it!

13 MAG disbanded on completion of the Army IFTU but was then re-formed to help bring the TOW anti-tank missile system for the Lynx into service. The MAG consisted of just two people, myself and ASM Dave Plummer. We worked closely with Westland, British Aerospace, who was the prime contractor to the MoD and with Hughes, the manufacturer of the TOW system. We developed the maintenance policy for the system and managed several trips to the USA to carry out maintenance assessments at the Hughes factory in Los Angeles. We saw the equipment into service at the successful firing trials. The whole project had been an immensely satisfying one and enabled me to leave the army on a high note in January 1984.

I suppose that my army career had been unremarkable but, on the whole, I had been very lucky. Although I had missed out on some of the plum postings such as Singapore and Hong Kong, I had escaped Sharjah and Northern Ireland.

My last ten years with the MAGs and with the IFTU had been good preparation for civvy street. Even though I had my doubts as to whether I made a good officer, I did appreciate leaving with an officer's pension!

(Clive has written a follow up to this article entitled, Part 2 - From Second Career to Retirement, q.v. - Ed)

MEMORIES OF ARBORFIELD

By Les Wiffen (39A)

Some memories of Arborfield, which may trigger a few thoughts by some of the boys who were there in 1939 - 41.



Les Wiffen - April 1941

With eleven other boys Brighton Station (Southern Railway) at 9.00am on a Monday morning, the first of May 1939. This was 3 weeks before my 16th birthday, and I was probably one of the older boys present. For me and probably some of the others it was a big step in our lives.

Our train arrived at Wokingham station about 2 pm and we were met by our Sergeant who escorted us to an army truck and then to Arborfield. This was to be our home for the next two to three years. I was given recruit number 8, and installed in the barrack room nearest the guardroom (A/1 'A' Company). From then on it was the army recruit reception, a visit to the doctor, dentist, barber, and finally to the stores for our kit. Our service trousers were drainpipes, but very soon we were permitted to have Vs inserted in the bottom of

the legs. A few boys finished up with trousers like navy bell bottoms. From then on it was kit inspections, bullying our kit, boots etc and square bashing. It was very hot that summer and the tar had barely settled on the square. With PT, drilling etc we soon became tanned and very fit. About June 1939 we were introduced to workshops and tried to learn to file and chip square and sliding dovetail joints. Also about this time we attended classes at school and among the subjects new to us were Imperial Military History, map reading, etc.

Some of us decided to improve our SD caps with taking in the peak to straighten it down, which meant you had to hold your head up to see where you were going. We also reinforced the small spring clip in the top with broken pieces of hack-saw blade, clothes pegs or tooth brush handles. This made the front top of the cap stand up straight like a guardsman's hat. However some boys managed to make their hats stand up straight by using soap or starch. One morning on parade RSM Ben Cook went up to a boy and brought his pace stick down on top of the hat. Usually the reinforcing would come out of the hat and the boy would have to get his cap repaired or replaced. However in this case the cap bounced straight back up, without any damage. Ben said to the boy "What did you do to make your cap bounce back?" The lad said, "Will power Sir!" Ben was not impressed.

On another morning parade the R.S.M. caught a boy slacking and roared "Go to the guardroom and lock yourself in!" After the parade Ben visited the boy in the guardroom and when he opened the cell door it fell down. The boy had removed all the screws from the hinges. I think his name was Mott, and not too long afterwards he was given his discharge. When the school closed for 3 weeks in the August holidays, I was sent to Aldershot Military Hospital and did not return till the end of August. I was sent on leave, and a few days later on the 3rd Sept 1939, at 11am, war was declared. I was in Hove at the time and shortly after 11 the air raid sirens sounded. I felt very conspicuous in my service dress and white belt as, at that time, all military personnel were reporting for duty.

On return to Arborfield I was sent to C Company, barrack room E/3, it was the nearest one to the WO's and Sgt's mess. We had a birds eye view of the mess members, relaxing in front of the mess and sometimes performing a few antics (after a hard day's work). On one occasion it was bull fighting using the R.S.M.'s purple greatcoat and his pace stick as a sword! Some of the names of boys in my hut were:

A. Dick, Dan Marfleet, R. Morgan (Mog), E.J. Hogg, D. Marr, D. Brown, Gordon H. Manton, Ken Siddons and James Gibson.

The last two were good friends and I'd love to hear from any of them.

There was one tragic incident that I will never forget. Shortly after Dunkirk we were issued with rifles, they were American made, P14s I think. Of course we were not issued

with any ammunition as we had barely any weapon training. Unfortunately, boys being boys, we all returned from leave with several rounds of ammunition, mostly souvenirs that our fathers had brought back from WW1. I'm sure all the boys at the time will remember a lad in D Coy being accidentally shot while playing the accordion. All the barracks were searched and C Coy yielded a blanket full of unused ammo. It was probably lucky the Germans did not invade!

Of course in those days only a few had private transport, a bike, which much of the summer days was used to explore Reading and surrounds. One such event might be of interest, we rode to Wokingham after tea one lovely evening in late summer and on the return journey saw an apple tree in a field. We dropped our bikes, climbed over the wall and were just going to pick some when the local bobby came riding down the road towards us. We made it back to camp in record time, the policeman didn't have a show.

On another trip to Reading we pooled our resources and hired a row boat. We went downstream and eventually behind a small island where we had a swim, it was a hot day and we had no swimming trunks so we went in the water in the nude. Back on the boat we dried out in the sun, dressed, and as we rowed back to the boat shed spotted some land girls who had been watching us from behind a hedge in the nearby field. Before riding back to Arborfield we had a shandy in a small riverside pub, a first for most of us.

One night we decided to investigate an old house which was at the top of the square, our curiosity got the better of us. We obtained some treacle from tea on a sheet of paper and someone had a glass cutter. We cut a hole in the glass of one of the windows, put the treacle paper on it and pulled the circle of glass clear of the pane, we then released the catch and put the window up. About sixteen boys jumped into the room, but before we could investigate further we found the room had been used as a gas chamber. There was still enough chlorine gas left to make us get out far quicker than we came in!

The German bomber that flew over the parade ground at about ten minutes to nine on a Sunday morning was watched by several of us who were waiting to parade for the "other denominations" (i.e. Baptists etc) church parade. We would have made good targets in our service dress complete with white blanched belts. We could see the front gunner clearly in his cupola and he must have noticed us. However he chose to fire a short burst of machine gun fire straight ahead to the top of the square, and, after he had passed over the boundary fence dropped a couple of bombs in a field on the far side. He turned to the left and although still quite low, disappeared. I was half expecting a fighter to come after him but saw none and often wonder what happened to the enemy aircraft. I presume he could have given us a burst if he'd wanted to and wondered why he did not. Most of the boys would have been in their barracks rooms preparing for C of E church parade which was at 10 a.m. It was our first glimpse of an enemy plane up close and most of us enjoyed the

excitement. We often had ENSA shows visit the camp, which most of us found a break from routine and quite enjoyable. A few names come to mind, Joyce Glynne, Steve Cairns and Teddie Mann were in No 19 Show, which was called 'Happy Landings' and was on in November 1940. Another show was known as 'Langham Unit' with Clifford Dennis, Mavis Ray, Len Childs (ace BBC funster), Gaby Valle and June McGibbin. I still have the autograph book which they signed for me and wonder if any of them ever made the 'big time'? About April 1941 I was posted to Upton Wirral near Birkenhead to an A.A. workshops, and was lucky enough to make a good friend. He was an ex Arborfield boy called Ron Barratt and his home at that time was in Bangor, Wales, where we spent a happy 7 days leave.

If I have not bored you all too much, I could do another write-up of my 18 years following boys school. (My address is 12 Stirling Cres, Mosgiel, Dunedin, New Zealand, phone 03 4896709 also a fax. If any ex boys are down this way I would be pleased to see you.)

**Company Contributions Extracted from The
Arborfield Informer - October 2001**

A COMPANY

Garrison Fun day, by Major Lewis, OC A Coy

The annual Arborfield Garrison Family Fun day was held on the afternoon of 18 July on the Garrison Sports pitches. The event was organised by Carlisle Company of the ATFC and aimed to raise money for the garrison Amenity Fund and further develop the community spirit within the Arborfield Garrison. Following the success of previous years, the fun day maintained a sporting-cum-village theme. This allowed all departments within the garrison to be intimately involved in the organisation of the event, participate in the many activities and ensured that all felt part of what turned out to be a fantastic occasion. The sporting element of the day consisted of a 6-a-side football competition, volleyball and a tug-of-war contest. Teams from all departments played their part and gave spirited performances throughout. WO2 Sanderson and his gym staff expertly managed the co-ordination of the competitions but without the dulcet tones of Mr David O'Donnell, the guest announcer, the event would have been missing a certain something! While the spirit of competition raged on the sports pitches, many made their way round the various activity stands, static displays and food stalls. Yet again, WO2 Griffiths and his travelling assault course proved an extremely popular event with the younger children, while Lt Galle and his 'dunk tank' and London Irish's inflatable rugby field satisfied the more athletic junior soldiers. Brigadier Mathews presented the various prizes and drew the afternoon to a close. Particular thanks go to WO2 Griffiths, SSgt Meynell, Sgt Shaw and all members of Carlisle Company for erecting tents in the driving rain!

The Fun day raised just short of £1300, to be spent on welfare and support facilities within the garrison.

IN THE RECOVERY POSITION

By Bob Castell (64A)

It was 1973 I think, but I'm not sure what month it was, only that it was very cold. It was the time of year when the weak sun never rose much above the horizon. The short days ending in damp mists that crept through clothing, chilling you to the bone and forcing your breath out in clouds of steam.

I don't even remember exactly where it was. Somewhere south of Londonderry towards the Badlands I think, where it wasn't too wise to venture. In a sloping country lane with high banks winding its way between the sodden fields.

I was a VM posted to 46 Command Workshops at Lisburn, south of Belfast. The particular detachment I was with was based at Shackleton Barracks, Ballykelly, about fifteen miles east of Londonderry. Shackleton barracks was in fact an airfield, I believe ex RAF and once used as a base for the maritime reconnaissance aircraft of that name. The only aircraft that ever came in now on the long concrete runway was the occasional army Beaver or a Sioux helicopter, from the flight that was also based there, which would land with a clatter of rotors next to the workshops.

The huge airfield was also home to an infantry battalion who would regularly have to patrol the streets of Londonderry in their Humber 'Pigs', an aptly named vehicle. The pig was a heavily armoured Humber 1 ton truck being used as a stop gap APC. Unfortunately when the heavy steel armour plating was added the transmission was not upgraded to take the extra weight and would fail with monotonous regularity, snapped half-shafts were a favourite. Our detachment's workshops was in one of the aircraft hangers, vast and cold. When the huge doors were opened to let vehicles in or out the north Atlantic wind would sweep in from across Lough Foyle destroying any heat that had built up.

As part of our detachment's duties we had to provide an out of hours Duty Recovery service for MOD vehicles in the Londonderry area, with the main workshops at Lisburn providing cover for the Belfast area. As few vehicles actually ventured out in our area out of hours, our service was little used. Whoever was on Duty Recovery had to remain in the workshops, sleeping there overnight in the accommodation provided. A bit of an inconvenience really but better than doing Guard Duty, we were after all REME and

could rough it as well as anyone else.

Besides, the hanger also housed the workshops bar!

Our recovery vehicle was an AEC and it was Saturday afternoon and I was on Duty Recovery and the phone rang. It was the guardroom,

"Tiffy", came the voice of the Orderly Officer, for some reason this particular infantry battalion referred to all REME personnel as 'tiffy'.

"Sir?" I replied.

"We've a recovery job for you." My heart sank. "I'm sending across a detachment to escort you. The sergeant in charge has the map reference and all the information - should be easy enough."

"Sir," I said. The phone went down.

I put my combat jacket on over my coveralls and went to the hanger doors, pressed the button and, as the big electric motors rumbled open the huge doors, climbed into the cab of the AEC and drove it outside. Speeding down the runway towards me were two long wheel base Mk 9 Landrovers bristling with radio aerials and full of infantry, complete with SLRs, SMGs and flak-jackets, I felt quite naked. They stopped and the sergeant in charge got out of the lead vehicle and came across to brief me, I climbed down from the cab and after I had closed the hanger doors he told me about the job in hand.

We had been requested by the RUC to recover a civilian car that was sideways in a ditch near a farm, why we had been asked to recover a civilian vehicle I had no idea and to be honest, didn't really want to know. (There was also at Shackleton Barracks a hush-hush plain clothes RUC detachment that used 'civilian' cars, so perhaps it was one of theirs). The car had been cleared as not being booby-trapped and we were to bring it back to the barracks - simple!

We set off, a Landrover in front and one behind, as we drove further and further south, the shadows growing longer as the afternoon wore on, a feeling of unease crept in, how much further? And would I be back in time for the bar to open? And should have I brought my flak-jacket? By the time we reached our destination the sun was nearly down and the temperature had dropped dramatically.

The sergeant's Landrover stopped in a country lane and our other two vehicles came to a halt behind him. We

dismounted, the infantry spreading out to take up defensive positions, I walked over to the sergeant, slipping on the icy surface and nearly falling. We had stopped at the top of of gentle slope downwards, with the gradient increasing rapidly towards a left hand bend at the bottom around which the lane disappeared between the banks of the fields. Each side was open farmland and in the distance was a farmhouse, smoke from its chimney curling upwards in the evening gloom. The lane was not wide and down each side was a shallow ditch, heavy with slowly running water which was starting to ice over.

The car was only just visible in the failing light, it was at the bottom of the slope, in the ditch on the right of the lane, leaning gently on its side and facing away from us. It would seem that the driver had taken the bend too fast and slid it across the lane and into the ditch. After discussing it with the sergeant I decided to attach the winch rope to the rear of the car and simply draw it slowly up the slope, however I would have to get closer.

Avoiding again slipping on the ice I climbed into the cab, started the engine and drove forwards to a position which I judged would be within winch range, applied the hand brake, switched off the engine and climbed down in order to pull out the winch cable from the front of my vehicle. As I surveyed the scene the sergeant shouted and a movement caught my eye, I turned quickly only to see the AEC, silent and driverless with its rear wheels locked, sliding past me on the sheet ice and down the slope, gathering momentum as it went.

I scrambled into the cab and started the engine, hoping to throw it into reverse and avert disaster, but it was too late, all six wheels spun but the ice was in charge. As I could never hope to get round the bend at the bottom of the slope I was now faced with a choice, either end up on top of the car I'd been sent to rescue, or steer the AEC into the nearside ditch halfway down the slope. The former would be too humiliating and the latter did leave the possibility of me being able to extricate myself, I opted for the ditch.

The AEC splashed down into the icy water and came to a rest with its nearside wheels up to their axles in muddy water, I tried reverse, six wheel drive, low ratio and diff locks, all to no avail, she was just digging herself in. I climbed from the cab which was leaning at an alarming angle.

"Was that supposed to happen Tiffy?" the sergeant asked.

I was by now very cold, cheesed off and humiliated.

"Not quite," I replied.

"What now Tiffy?" asked the sergeant.

He did keep asking a lot of questions! Actually thinking back our situation was fairly precarious. There we were, about a dozen lightly armed troops, after dark, in Indian country with a stranded vehicle, no wonder the sergeant was getting anxious.

"Well," I said with a confidence I didn't feel, "if you get some of your men to fetch a few bales of hay from that field we can pack them under the nearside wheels so they can gain a purchase and I can drive it out."

The bales were collected and packed as best as possible around the wheels, with not a little difficulty due to the angle of the vehicle and the freezing cold contents of the ditch. I climbed into the cab and started the engine, engaged reverse, six wheel drive, low ratio and diff locks. The wheels turned, churning the bales of hay into the mud and ice water, splitting them and splattering them in all directions, the AEC didn't move. I climbed down from the cab.

"What now Tiffy?" the sergeant asked.

"Well," I said, "I'll have to winch myself out."

Unfortunately the winch on the AEC was at the front of the vehicle and remembering the Recce Mechs golden rule 'Pull it out the way it went in' and the prevailing conditions I had no choice but to try and get the winch cable to the rear of the vehicle and then find a suitable anchor somewhere beyond the top of the slope to which to attach it.

Provision was made to take the cable to the rear of the AEC by a series of rollers just above the wheels, the nearside wheels, which by now were nearly submerged in a mixture of mud, ice and straw. I struggled up to my knees in this mixture to get the cable through the rollers, having to bend down into the freezing mire under the precariously leaning vehicle in order to get the reluctant cable through each roller, emerging at last, covered in mud and straw, at the rear of the AEC.

Now to find an anchor. I walked up the icy slope pulling out the cable behind me, with some help from the sergeant, looking for a suitable tree. I couldn't use a ground anchor for two reasons, first the boggy state of the ground and second because the anchor spikes were

housed in the front bumper of the AEC, which by now was firmly wedged against the side of the ditch.

We walked further, until we ran out of cable length and still we hadn't found a suitable tree, only a rather sorrowful looking object which I knew in my heart of hearts would not be man enough, but I had to try.

The cable was attached and again I climbed into the cab. I started the engine and engaged the winch, the AEC didn't move, I looked in the rear view mirror and saw the tree, quite upright with roots and all, steadily advancing towards me down the slope being pulled by the winch cable. I quickly disengaged the winch but it was too late. The ice had once again taken over and the tree gathered momentum eventually slamming into the back of the AEC in a flurry of tangled winch cable and mud. I climbed down from the cab.

"What now Tiffy?" the sergeant asked.

I had run out of ideas. We had by now been there several hours and need to get away as soon as possible, we were all very wet and cold. We needed help. There was only one answer, we had to call out the Duty Recovery from the main workshops at Lisburn.

"Call up Lisburn," I said, "call out their Duty Recovery." The sergeant went to the radio.

Some considerable time later we saw headlights in the distance and down the lane came another AEC accompanied by its two Landrover escort. The 'cavalry' had arrived. They stopped and again the infantrymen spread out to take up defensive positions alongside their colleagues.

The AEC continued driving forward to where I was standing at the top of the slope, leaving the engine running the driver got down from his cab to speak to me. I didn't know him but I had seen him before and knew he was a Recce Mech much to my relief, at last a professional! As he turned to face me his vehicle, rear wheels locked, slowly started to slide forward behind him as the ice once again took over. I shouted and he turned and was in the cab in a flash engaging reverse and six wheel drive.

The wheels spun as the AEC started its slide towards the tree which was still firmly stuck to the rear of my vehicle. Not again I thought. Then the first good thing that night happened, the wheels found a grip and slowly the Lisburn AEC reversed up the slope, precious seconds had been saved by leaving the engine running, a faint cheer went up, perhaps we were going to get out

of here after all.

Once his vehicle had been secured my new found friend and I surveyed the situation and decided that, once my winch cable was disentangled from the loving embrace of the tree, I would attach it to the front of his vehicle which would be away from the top of the slope and off any ice. His AEC would in turn be anchored to a substantial tree which was now within range of his winch cable, to make doubly sure the spade at the rear of his vehicle would be lowered into the road surface. Hopefully this arrangement would allow me to winch myself out using him as my anchor.

Once more I climbed into the cab, started the engine and engaged the winch. The slack was taken up gradually and unbelievably the AEC began to move backwards and out of the ditch, she rose slowly, like a monster from the deep with water pouring from where she'd been submerged and straw clinging to her muddy side. I was free!

"Well done Tiffy!" shouted the sergeant. I'm not sure if he was being sarcastic or not but I didn't care, at least it wasn't another question.

Things moved swiftly after that, the damp freezing conditions adding urgency to our movements. We wound in our winch cables and pretty soon we were all packed up, the shivering infantrymen back in their Landrovers, the Lisburn AEC returning to the main workshops and us to Shackleton barracks, all of us tired cold, wet and hungry and not arriving back till the early hours of the morning.

I must have looked like Worzel Gummage, covered in mud and straw. The AEC was filthy and we were picking bits of that damn tree out of the workings for weeks afterwards. We had been lucky that the local lads hadn't taken an interest in us, maybe they thought we were in enough trouble already. Who knows?

As for the car we originally were sent to recover, in all the confusion it was forgotten about and is still there for all I know, in that ditch somewhere south of Londonderry.

1939 AND ALL THAT
Part 2 World War II at Arborfield

By Joe Griffith (May39)

To continue onward from Part 1 (published in OBAN 18), as I write down these events, others come flying to mind, each stimulating the next with greater vividness, so it is difficult not to get carried away on waves of nostalgia.

"Do you take eggs with your bacon?"

The laconic tones of the duty officer's old civilian batman awakened me from a carefree sleep in the newly organised command post. My first stint as the runner was exceeding all expectations. Firstly, a long lie-in in my charpoy as duty runners were excused morning parade, and now this, a mug of tea and, "did I take eggs with my bacon?" Oh boy, Did I! Relaxing back into the warmth of my blankets I savoured the idea, fresh crispy bacon, officer style - eggs fried just right, served up with toast and brought to my bed. Gee! The officers had it all, didn't they? I waited, aching with sensuous taste buds for this undreamed of cornucopia. The door opened. with watering mouth I sat up to receive the tray. . .

"Time to get up young fellow, clean yer bed space and then get out of it or his nibs'll be after yer."

The grumble of the old soldier batman shrivelled the images in my naive mind - I had been had. Bastard! Hiding my disappointment, I left and joined my mates, but never told them about my phantom bacon and eggs.

The onset of World War II was dramatically brought home to us the Sunday morning a *Junkers 88* swooped gracefully over the parade ground. Wandering back from the dining hall peacefully after breakfast, carrying the remains of toast and a mug of tea, I was feeling snug and content in the knowledge that my church parade kit was clean and polished and the next hour was mine.

"Look at that!" Suprised shouts went up.

There it was, on us almost before we could hear it, in the strange noiseless way that aircraft have of suddenly appearing. Innocently we looked up. I had never seen an aircraft so near and so low. Its black exhaust trail floated almost in slow motion behind its tail. The pilot's face was clearly visible. Apprehension was slow to dawn. Then we saw the large black crosses on the wings. Flashes of light sparkled from the front turret, followed by the unbelievable rattle of machine gun fire. Time stood still. I was frozen - not in fear, but in utter amazement. The black shape of a small bomb slid out and disappeared over our heads. Everything was happening in slow motion. Wing sergeants, bawling and shouting, came rushing out on to the square, disturbed at their breakfasts. "Take cover, take cover," was the fearful cry.

Slow to comprehend, our legs moved ahead of our minds and we bolted in all directions like a herd of startled sheep. Earwig and beetle-like, we burrowed our way out of sight under the barrack room floors and verandahs, forgetting the existence of the air raid shelters at the top of the square. They were too far away and I don't think we had ever practised air-raid drill at this early stage of the war. Now with fear palpitating through my entire body I waited for. . . what? I had no idea. No conception of the disastrous possibilities occurred to Me. To someone else, maybe, but not to me. There was a distant crump and shake from an exploding bomb. A lonely distant Lewis gunner sent up a brief, but ineffectual burst of fire. Then silence. I waited. . . . We all waited. . . Nothing happened. Would the bastard come back? Fear gave way to anger, but by then it was all over. No one had been hurt. There had been no damage. A miracle? One hour later, five Companies of His Majesty King George V's, polished and gleaming Royal Army Ordnance Corps boy apprentices would have formed up ready to march to church. Divine intervention perhaps? Who knows?

War or no war, the interminable activities of the School went on. For instance, Padre Squire's choir practice on Saturday mornings, where half the incumbents were grizzled older boys from Bramley or Didcot. Their bare-faced intent to dodge drill parade was never brought into question. We even had a choir boy's outing to a tea shop in Wokingham, where the indulgent and popular Padre plied us with tea and cream buns. It was the fount of democracy where the 'rough serge' sat down at the same table with the 'fine baratheas' to eat. But we never took advantage. We knew our place. It had been well drummed in. Our spiritual education was limited to a half hour chat by the Padre once a week. We didn't get too much theology, but it was a rest from square bashing and chipping & filing.

Masturbation was a frequent topic. The liberal minded Padre tried hard to relieve us of the guilt from which, I suspect, he thought we suffered. Amongst my little circle of pals I never knew anyone bowed with too much guilt. Later, the Reverend Pike, the red headed international Irish rugby player, took over our spiritual guidance. He was very hot and strong on the subject. In his rich Irish brogue, he would preach from the pulpit on Sunday mornings about the defilement of the human temple. We would squirm and smirk at each other as this literary elegance permeated our young brains, lasciviously imagining what the officers and their ladies in the front row were thinking. In later years, I believe he became Chaplain General to the Forces. I wonder if he carried these sentiments on to other units?

Keeping us entertained was a fairly hazardous task. The Commandant, Colonel Davies, introduced Saturday night band concerts. The band of the Kings Dragoon Guards entertained us with light classical music. I cannot remember what pop music we listened to in those far off years, maybe *Run Rabbit Run* or *Let's Hang Out Our Washing On The Siegfried Line*, or the heart throbbing Vera Lynn with, *There'll Be Blue Birds Over The White Cliffs Of Dover...* As

I write, these songs come back to me. In contrast to such delights, a Saturday evening spent listening to Von Suppe's Light Cavalry Overture together with a few of the Bandmaster's own compositions was not to the taste of a hard faced bunch of boy soldiers. Consequently, the first night was poorly attended and a bit of a flop. The Colonel was obviously disappointed and suggested to RSM Cook that a few more boys should be encouraged to come along. That did it!

The next Saturday night we were all paraded in service dress and marched to the gym, where the concert was held. There were no civilian clothes in those days. It was not a good move. After all, a Saturday night was a night of freedom. We were not allowed out of camp after 6 pm and usually spent the time playing cards, reading magazines and comics or scoffing tea and wads in the NAAFI canteen, not to mention a host of other delightful activities dear to the hearts of unthinking young men in those less complicated days.

Disgruntled, we sat stony faced awaiting the arrival of the Commandant, the officers and their families. Cheerfully nodding greetings to the assembled rank and file, they were escorted to their seats, only to be met by a barrage of boos from us. We were quickly silenced by the scowling Provost Sergeant, but the point had been made.

The Padre told us later that the Colonel was so angry that he was about to cancel Christmas leave and only relented when it was explained to him by the solicitous Padre that it was not him that we were booing, but the fact that we had been forced to attend. What happened after that I cannot remember, but I don't think band concerts continued on the same basis.

Life in the workshops and classrooms was far less regimented, but nevertheless intense. The two-pound hammers (ballpane) became the feared adversary. Bruised and battered left-hand thumbs bore witness to its bite. Gingerly holding the monster by the haft, just below the head and with ineffectual taps on to a disappointed cold chisel, I attempted to drive it into the resistant steel.

This lack of courage and firm resolve caused me to bash my thumb and numbly drop the chisel with a resounding ring on to the concrete floor. Mr Guppy, our gentle instructor looked on with patience and would then demonstrate the correct way to do it, with his mighty swing. He drove chunks of mild steel into the chipping screen, then handed back the hammer and cheerfully murmured, "try again."

Under our instructor's persistent tutelage an amazing array of precision articles flowed from our chisels and files - hexagon plugs & sockets, square plates, dove-tail joints and many others, all converted from black mild steel bar into shining objects of wonder. The best ones occupied pride of place in a glass cabinet in the shop foreman's office, to be admired by and commented upon by the Ordnance Mechanical Engineers - those lofty mandarins in elegant service dress. Wonderful and mysterious, these engineers

engaged us in serious and contemplative discussions. I remember the pride I felt as Lieutenant Sweibergk examined one of my jobs and asked my opinion on how much out of square it was. "How many thou', do you think?" he asked. He nodded with benevolent satisfaction at my nervous guess. Oh to be part of such an esoteric and learned clan. My aspirations leapt unrealistically ahead of me. They knew no bounds.

Filing & chipping became ingrained in my system. Of all the other skills I learnt - welding, tinsmithing, soldering, blacksmithing - filing & chipping remained the strongest. Sometimes, this was to my detriment as it took some time, when in the field, to realise that there were often easier ways of removing metal than with a chisel and a file. Nevertheless, to be able to file flat and square was a great asset.

The motor bike repair element of our training was more exciting. Enthusiastically, we pulled the old BSA bikes to pieces and put them together again. Success in getting the machines going again was rewarded by a wobbly test ride around the top end of the square. Supervising our wild antics, as we chased after the spluttering and veering bikes in the hope of getting a chance to ride, was a daunting task. Our civilian instructor always managed to prevent any major catastrophe. He had nerves of steel.

A trip to a motor bike scrap yard on the outskirts of Reading was a highlight for us. Armed with a few spanners and other tools, we rummaged among the filth and oil to rescue assemblies and parts. Blissfully, our overalls soaked in oil and surrounded with the fruits of our labour, we crowded into the back of our truck to return to camp. On the way, wildly and hilariously, we gave vent to song. As the truck jolted through the streets of the town, we waved and grinned with grimy, boyish faces to the shoppers on the pavements. I wonder who they thought we were? With pride and a vast sense of self-importance, we unloaded our trophies on to the workshop floor. Envious eyes of the not so lucky ones looked on.

Despite the defeat of our forces in Europe, our life at the School went on as usual - training, sport, education, social activities and leave. There were occasional scares and sometimes we spotted some hapless character wandering around our cross country running areas or around the California holiday camp - our swimming lake. We would enthusiastically report these sightings to our Company Commander Major Hughes, MC & bar, South Wales Borderers, nicknamed, 'Captain Reely Foul'.

This gallant major, then stroking thoughtfully on his luxurious moustache and with feigned gravity in order not to subdue our enthusiasm, would then seriously interrogate us in his upper crust drawl. We felt very important indeed. But that was always the last we ever heard of it. I doubt very much if the whole resources of Field Security were swung into action on these occasions.

One tragic consequence of the threatening invasion was the death of one of the boys who was shot accidentally by one of his pals in his barrack room. To help counter possible paratroop landings, those over seventeen years old were issued with rifles, but no ammunition and were allowed to keep them in their rooms. The inevitable happened. Back from leave, someone brought a souvenir World War I .303 rifle-round from their mantle-piece at home.

Messing about playing at loading and unloading, the round was left in the weapon and forgotten about. That evening the unfortunate boy was playing his accordion when his pal picked up the loaded rifle and said that if he didn't stop the racket he was making, he would shoot him. He squeezed the trigger and the boy was killed instantly. The School was electrified by this. Everyone was 'stood to their beds' and all rifles were collected, but of course it was too late.

No account of my few short years at the School - at fifteen they seemed interminable - would be complete without the story of what I would call 'The Great NAAFI Robbery'.

For several consecutive nights the canteen had been well and truly rifled. Large quantities of delectables had disappeared - chocolate, shoe polish, brilliantine and all sorts of marketable goods. But Ben was to set a trap!

On the third night in succession, long after lights out, the ever cheeky band of 'hair-brained' robbers struck again. With the aid of a skeleton key, they slid into the canteen hall with mouse-like cunning. All was quiet and clear. The counter shutters were skilfully prised open, the eldorado revealed. Then the lights came on. The nocturnal warriors went to ground, diving under the furniture like the skittering rats they were. To late. The game was up. Taking his ease in his bedroom slippers sat Ben, powerful and menacing. "Got you," he roared as he rose to his feet. The Regimental Policemen, silently lining the inside of the canteen moved to block the exits and gleefully collared the lot.

The news broke the next day. With unveiled admiration the story was recounted vicariously around the School by groups of unrepentant apprentices.

Colonel Davies was very angry. Shame on a boy who could use his technical training to make a skeleton key and rob to satisfy his inherent criminal tendencies. All the School was assembled to listen to him. He was determined to make us see that the perpetrators were not heroes and waxed fiercely on this theme. What the outcome of this incident was I cannot now remember, but in my time at the School, it did not happen again.

The war situation became more desperate. The Army had been chased out of France and was now being overrun in Greece and Crete. In Libya and the Western desert, the conflict with Rommel and the Afrika Corps see-sawed back and forth. Tobruk, Benghazi, Buq Buq, these were names much in the news. Many of the boys had fathers or older

brothers engaged in these conflicts. Bill, one of my friends, anxious and proud, told me that his father had been wounded in the desert, "a bullet in the back", he said. There was not much despondency among us. It was totally unbelievable that the British Empire could be beaten.

Smugly we knew that 'the British Army always wins the battle'. So my father had told me and what more authority did I need. Nevertheless, I admit that my confidence was badly shaken when the news came that the mighty battleships HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Renown had been sunk defending Singapore against invasion by the Japanese Air Force.

I felt sick in my stomach for days afterwards.

Closer to home, the Luftwaffe was laying waste to many towns and cities. From the comparative safety of rural Arborfield we only heard and saw signs of these terrifying events.

With all this going on, it was fairly obvious that some of us would soon become involved. It was then decided that boys who had reached seventeen years of age were to be trade tested and if successful posted out to field units in the UK, mostly RAOC Divisional AA Repair Workshops.

Colonel Hillbourne was now our Commandant again, after being posted away at the start of the war. He interviewed us before we left. I remember as a successful and proud fitter, class three, with a highly burnished hammer & tongs badge on my sleeve, I sat expectantly with potherers in his office. In his paternal and benign way, he discussed with each of us in turn our concerns for the future and read out the first of available postings. The first person to raise his hand would get the posting. The biggest and loudest was not necessarily considered first.

A posting somewhere near home was considered a prize by most of us and occasionally that would cause competition, but we were all keen to go. The freedom, extra money and excitement of the unknown beckoned with deceptive allure.

*(This article and Part I was passed to me by Peter Beaken, the Editor of **The Craftsman** with permission to publish it in OBAN, if so desired. Both articles have been extracted from an autobiography written by Captain (Retd) Joe Griffith, Intake May 39.*

*The complete autobiography will be lodged in the REME Museum Documentary Archives. Joe Griffiths hopes to expand his story with a view to having it published in book form. A section of his writings is to appear in **The Craftsman** in serial form, under the title *Trials & Tribulations*.*

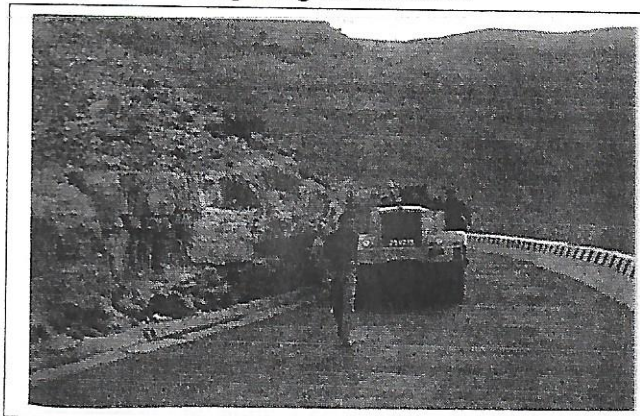
THE (GHARYAN) GARRIAN PASS & ONE OF OUR TANKS IS LOST OVERBOARD

By Don Walker (45A)

A brief background to the story. In 1954 I was posted to the Canal Zone. Arriving at REME Depot, I was put in charge of a dozen young lads from REME Paras, and duly arrived beside the Canal. On interview by a Parachute Officer, the first question was, how many jumps had I done? "None" replied I, "I am not a Para." We will soon get you through the course I was told, whereupon I declined the offer, saying I was happy to keep my feet on the ground! After much hassle, I was posted to 44 Tank Transporter Company RASC in Shandur, where I had an induction in the art of keeping old Diamond Ts and 32 wheeled trailers on the road!

Nine months in Shandur and I was on my way to Barce near Benghazi, Cyrenaica, where I became the REME support for A platoon, 44 Tank Transporter Company RASC. The Tank Regiment at the time in residence at Barce was the Royal Scots Greys and we spent many a "happy day or two" taking them out on exercise on the next plateau, up twisty and steep roads. The Platoon only lost I tank over the side whilst I was there, but several near misses!

It was just before Christmas 1955 that the young RASC platoon OC, Lt. Boxall, informed the Platoon that we were going to Tripoli, by road with the Diamond Ts and trailers to take part in an exercise with the Hussars, and we would be leaving a week before Christmas! Working days and a lot of nights with two National Service VMs and one young regular VM, we managed to get most road worthy and duly set off for Tripoli, travelling along the coast road.



Diamond T and Trailer - Lt Boxall in front!

I think it was Christmas day we had a longer rest day than usual, and had a dip in the sea! Time (and old age) dims the memory of how long we took to get there, but it was many days of slow motoring, stopping for the odd puncture, on a pretty awful road. We created interest from the locals at the small towns we passed through, such as Crispi, Homs, Garibaldi, and passed under 'Marble Arch.' We arrived late afternoon at the Hussars barracks, (I believe it was the 13/18th).



On The Road - Barce to Tripoli

Everyone looked a sorry sight and I did not get much of a welcome in the mess, but at least managed a shower and change for dinner.

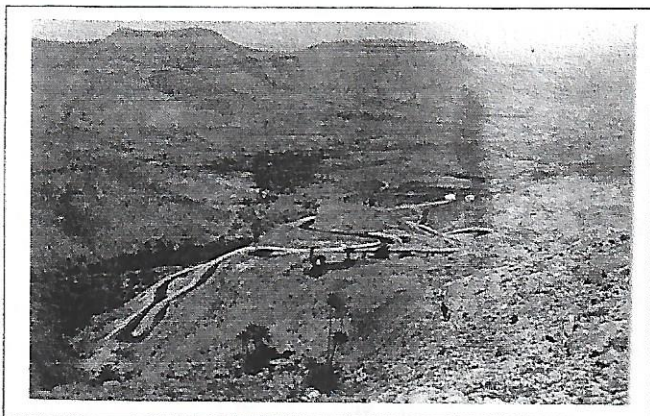
We loaded tanks eventually and headed out in the middle of the desert, or so it seemed, to drop them off. It was then that the OC said that we were going up the (Gharyan) Garrian pass. He said that tank transporters had never gone up there, it was not possible so it was rumoured, but A Platoon would do it!

Arriving at the base of the pass, the OC, the RASC platoon sergeant, Norman Hadley, and myself took a trip up the pass to see what it involved! It was hard work for the Land rover, so I did not hold out much hope for the old Diamond T and trailer. The other important problem was with us going up, no one could come down, and the pass road was not built for our size. Presumably we must have acquired permission for this venture because we had to block the top of the pass and send the transporters up two at a time



Christmas Day Swim - On The road

It involved a lot of manoeuvring around the bends, but the first drivers up questioned the wisdom of the exercise. The OC was adamant we all get up there and after about 12 hours, with opening and closing the pass, all Diamond Ts and trailers were at the top of the (Gharyan) Garrian pass. I arrived last in a 15 cwt. Truck. Having arrived at the top, there was no way we were ever going to evacuate tanks down the pass on the trailers! We arrived at the HQ area, tired, weary and wondering why we came up the pass.



Gharyan Pass - from the Top

Plenty of maintenance to do, and repairs, so we got stuck in. Of all things, I had to change a rear spring on a Diamond T, which was a task in the desert. The ballast had to be removed from the back, dozens of 28 lb. weights, and had to try and make the ground stable to jack up on. Task completed, we sat waiting for something to happen. Tank broken down at map reference xxxx we were told, needs recovery by transporter. Not far to go looking at the map, so we sent a Diamond T and trailer to pick it up, with one of my VMs.

As we normally operated on roads, or what was classed as roads, and not having to venture into the desert, we did not have radio installed!

With no sign of the transporter the next morning, and HQ could not raise the tank on radio, I set off with a VM to see what had happened. I came across them about two miles from the original map reference. They had loaded the tank, but then found the track was not suitable for the weight. The only solution was to unhook the trailer with the tank on, connect the winch rope and drive the Diamond T to the furthest extent of the rope and winch in, repeating this operation over and over. This was taking some time and effort. By the time I arrived it was just about approaching a harder piece of road track, and eventually could re-couple the trailer, driving back to HQ.

The process of going back down the pass was repeated as coming up, an all day job, and it was with relief we arrived back in barracks and made ready for our return trip to Barce. This was accomplished without a hitch, or only minor ones, and it had taken about six weeks from start to finish.

In the foregoing story, I made a remark that A Platoon, 44 Tank Transporter Company RASC, did not lose many tanks off their trailers!

It was in the middle fifties that I had the dubious pleasure of being in Barce, SE of Benghazi, looking after the old Diamond T and Trailers. We were the transport for firstly the Royal Scots Greys and later 5 RTR. Our general aim was to take them up the Tecnis Pass for exercises and back down again. It was a full time occupation keeping the Diamond Ts on the road, and I had some very good National Service VMs

with me, and one regular. The RASC drivers were, in the main, pretty good but as with everything sometimes things went wrong. Such an incident occurred which, whilst the original intentions were well meaning, backfired!

One of the National Service drivers (I will call him Jones) was due to go home in a week, but the OC Platoon insisted he went out with his Diamond T. He asked me if he could take the first tank that needed back loading from the exercise so that he could get ready for home. With a little collusion with the Platoon Sgt. common sense and sympathy I said yes, and had him standing by.

A couple of days later, we had a call to evacuate a half-track back to the tank park. I told Jones 'your load' and left it to him. A few minutes later we had a call to evacuate a tank. Jones had not loaded, so I said to him, "As it's your last trip, take the tank and leave one of the newer drivers to take the half-track." This he did, and they set off for the Barracks. Around two hours later, the Platoon motorcyclist came screaming into our position. Jones has dropped the tank over the pass he said in so many words in typical army lingo!

"Anyone injured?" the OC, the Platoon Sergeant and myself shouted. "No, only that the tank is over the side and the trailer tipped on its side, and the tank is upside down. Jones is rather shaken." Needless to say, there were not many happy faces from either the Royal Scots Greys or ourselves!

Going to the site of the incident, it was quite a remarkable scene. One tank upside down in the pass at a sharp 'U' bend, and everything halted. The trailer was righted and 'bonded' for inspection in the tank park and LAD Royal Scots Greys had the task of recovery of the Centurion tank.

The next problem was that the ARV could not keep a grip on the road surface in their attempt to pull it up once it was righted onto its tracks. They called for help and we sent Diamond Ts to the scene. These were used as additional anchorage, to hold the ARV when it was winching. The operation took about three days I believe, and the road became pretty chewed up!

Jones, the driver of the Diamond T said that he missed his gear at the start of the bend and the brakes failed to hold, he took the bend too quickly and the tank broke away from the trailer shackles. The outcome of it all was that Jones had to delay his departure home by weeks waiting for the court of inquiry etc. and one badly damaged tank! The original good turn didn't quite have the desired effect I anticipated for Jones.

TRAUMATIC OCCLUSIONS

By John Pewsey (45A)

I will now unfold the Saga of 'Pewsey the Jeep' and the 20mm Cannon Shell.

It all started with a spot of blatant nepotism, whereby a fully unqualified 14 year old obtained, through the good offices of Col H.C. Pewsey RAPC, secured the position of Junior Acting Under-Clerk at Barclays Bank, 5 Station Parade, West Worthing. Junior, most certainly I was; everybody else was retired pre-war vintage who were not too familiar with these new fangled fountain pens which had recently superseded goose quills. Under-Clerk was also fairly accurate - there was certainly nobody reporting to me! - and Acting? I lasted, in that north facing office, exactly the length of that glorious month of June 1944. After which, the Allies were firmly ashore in France and the Manager of the W Worthing sub-branch would no longer tolerate the inky-footed spider excursions all over ledgers etc., handled by the (now, Ex) J/A/U-Clerk Pewsey; In short, fired!

Back to school; some more avuncular advice at a significantly lower level of expectation and, on 21st February 1945, after promising to do my best for King George VI, his Heirs and Successors, I was entrained from Brighton to Wokingham via Redhill. I found myself in D Coy, Spider leg E3(?) together with sundry assorted Dukies, Queen Vics, Gordon Boys, one Dr Barnardo's (of whom, more later) and others. One 'other' was Roddy McNally, of whom you may have read and another 'other', named Pauling, achieved fame shortly thereafter as the 'Sergeant' of the Toy Soldiers in the first post-war Royal Tournament. As an aside, the Toy Soldier 'General' who was also in 45A but in C Coy, one Barry Keast, may also be known to later generations of apprentii?

Careers developed. We sorted out 'hay-foot' from 'straw-foot' and started rummaging through big and small packs looking for the FM's baton we were assured we were all entitled to.

We listened to 'Midnight in Munich' on AFN Munich/Stuttgart whilst waving lighted fags about under our beds to avoid detection by passing Ord'ly S'arnts. 90% of all the apprentii went AWOL on VE-Day. Some beat hell out of each other in the Camp Hall boxing ring; I read books in the middle row but cheered between rounds with the rest of them. Some played football or hockey; I, the complete masochist, ran cross country.

After the second term and home on leave, my Guardian, ex-RB - commissioned in the field and fairly well peppered with GSWs during 1914 - 18, casually asked if I'd done any shooting - small or full bore? - to which I airily replied that I wasn't terribly interested in shooting. He was only about 5ft 6in tall but, after I picked myself up from the floor in the corner, he suggested that if I wasn't interested in shooting

perhaps I also wasn't interested in going home on leave and would I care to make other arrangements in future - or become a marksman by the end of the next term? Since I had 'interests' (nubile) in the home area and uniform still had a certain cachet there, I didn't want to lose out on home visits; so began to take a service-long interest in shooting - in particular - and things that went - BANG! - in general. Unfortunately, having set my sights on becoming an Armourer I got myself mustered as a Tele Mech, so the interest in things going bang had to become a hobby.

Being in the School Cross Country Team carried with it the obligation to be a Senior Intake Fag Runner. This involved dressing the part and going out for Practice Runs - usually under the wire and in the ditch at the back of the 0.22 range (which is now cunningly routed through a square block of 3 inch drain pipes) - and usually at night. The run rarely extended further than the shop in the 'Robinson Crusoe' - well, I suppose it was meant to be a 'night club' at the time - but sometimes one found oneself quite a way down the Nine Mile Ride (NMR) in the quest for Woodbines (for sale to Juniors) or Players (for Senior intake plutocrats)

In late '45 - early '46 there were, at regular intervals along the NMR roadside, small corrugated iron shelters - which, I swear, in later years were sold off to farmers as Government Surplus Des Res's for Pigs! - they had actually been used in the run-up to D-Day to store ammunition for shipment to France. This intrigued us dedicated sportsmen.

What to do on a fine but boring Sunday afternoon, after Church Parade and a large plateful of Capt QM Ben Cook's Special NAAFI-cake-and-Custard Trifle (From a deep square tin per table and with the hope that the Boy NCO i/c Table wasn't a greedy pig!) Answers:

- 1- walk it off.
- 2 - investigate small pig shelters along NMR.

I had different companions on different Sundays - depending on who wasn't too bloated with trifle to travel. One was Billy Fagen, 45A (D), who was finally posted to RASC and never heard of again, (more of him later) another was R A L Harris (Pronounced 'Rahl' as in 'Raoul Dahl' - you never called anybody 'Robin' in those days unless you were prepared to fight) - also 45A (D). He later became A/T Cpl.

So, this particular Sunday, BF and I walked off to where, nowadays, the Road Research Laboratory is located. We had noted that the pig shelters were boringly empty and decided to leave the main road and take one of the firebreak sand tracks through the re-afforestation plantation towards Crowthorne. A few hundred yards from the NMR we came across a barbed wire fence with a gate, which was open. Inside was a full sized Nissen hut (I only remember one but there may have been more.) The door to this hut was not locked and opened to a turn of the doorknob. Inside was an ALADDIN'S CAVE - of ammunition! These ranged from 4.5 inch AA shells down through pyrotechnic devices (flares to you - and me) and Mills 36 grenades - not far from boxes of 3 second

grenade fuzes! - and any amount of .303 bullets; ball and tracer. Finally; 20mm Cannon shells. Not a soul was to be seen in the area - in fact, all the way to the Crowthorne to Wokingham road where we finally emerged from the forest. We later worked out (with help from a very worried Ordnance Corps Captain) that whoever manned the Ammo Testing Station realised they might be late for their boat to France, put out the lights but forgot to lock the door. Back to camp to discuss this find and to make plans. The plan was simple; return to Aladdin's Cave the next week end - with small packs.

Early in 1946 we D Coy 'apprentii' in E3 were moved across the square to J6. Billy F couldn't make it the next Sunday but RAL H could. We returned later (under the wire) with our small packs bulging with - not to put too fine a point on it - explosives. Where to stash it (criminal jargon) - where else but behind the tongue-and-groove boarding of the wall (behind our 'Dolly fashion' greatcoats at the head of our bed-spaces) in the cavity formed by the 4 x 2 timbers and the outside corrugated iron wall.

That night we (cautiously!) threw open the fire doors at the far end of the room and took turns to let off signal flares - vertically. There were single 'Reds', Double 'Reds', ditto 'Greens' and, I think, plain 'Whites'. No reaction from anybody in authority - just 'Oos' and 'Ahs' from surrounding barrack rooms. After a couple of nights we got bored with vertical launches and tried a horizontal launch instead. J6 was across Stevenson (?) Road and a plot of Ben Cook's agricultural land, from - the Armourer's Shop. Launch No 5 or 6 of the series was elevated a bit too high and not only carried the road and agri-patch but also took out a window pane in the Armourer's Shop. End of Night Firing; Collateral Damage not allowed! (Where did I learn that phrase!)

What now to do with a couple of 20mm Cannon shells? Well, table lighters, of course! People today may well ask, "Why does he want to light a table? - not even today's vandals go as far as that!" Somebody, relatively ancient, please explain. Separating the round from its cartridge didn't present a problem; those telescopic beds were designed to double as a vice for holding one end while one worked t'other end loose. The cordite released from the cartridge added to our pyrotechnic store. Removing the main charge from the round was slightly more difficult and involved careful unscrewing of the detonator and primary charge with electrician's pliers. The main charge was chipped and scraped out with 'eating irons'.

One must realise that, ultimately, the detonator had to be bored out and replaced by a wick and flint wheel assembly - retrieved from any old petrol lighter that happened to be lying around. The detonator was duly marched from muster parade to the Electrician's Shop in my pocket.

At the time, in workshop practical, we were all making dinky little knife switches which might just manage to conduct 250 mA to light a torch bulb if all working parts made good contact. Part of the manufacture involved a No 60 wire drill,

which had to be signed for from Taff the Store. Mr Brooker, the civilian instructor was supervising someone down the far end of the shop and Grimbo Grimsby (ex-Dr Barnardos) was using the No 60 drill on a pillar drill. When Grimbo had finished his hole I asked him to leave the drill in the chuck and go back to his bench. He lingered. I held the detonator on the drill bedplate with my left forefinger and thumb, squirted a generous spurt of emulsified oil onto the 'stalk' of

the primary charge tube and started drilling. Pausing every other microsecond to squirt more coolant onto the job. I got through the primary charge - to the Mercury Fulminate detonator and "Traumatic Occlusion of part of left forefinger and thumb", as they say. (shown herewith)



My Traumatic Occlusion

Grimbo, with a thin trickle of blood running down his nose from his forehead, exclaimed in fluent Lincoln-ese, as he surveyed his right-angled No 60 drill (which he would have to pay for) - "Ooh! Pongo, what have you done?" As one does at such times, I sought privacy - towards the bogs. Taff the Store came out, took in the situation at a glance, went back into the store to fetch a clean hand towel, hustled me into the washroom, stuck my hand under a tap and told me to keep it there. Taff then sped off to do some phoning and in very little time at all I was en route by ambulance, watched by awe-struck A/Ts, to the MRS at the back entrance to the School grounds. A short wait there, during which I relieved the RC Padre of his stock of fags, and I was off to Cambridge Military Hospital at Aldershot where I was put out and Mod Strike 2 was carried out on my thumb and forefinger (Mod Strike 1 was involuntary, you understand!) I had to stay in the Cambridge for a couple of weeks to have some bits of brass taken out of my left eye. This was turned to good advantage by:

(a) The eye surgeon, who was absolutely top of his profession but, normally, oh! so shaky - until he was handling a Crooke's (?) knife on my eyeball! He was always wanting petrol for his car; he Colonel, me A/T - I fetch jerry cans of petrol - and,

(b) when I had Atropine in, or bandages on my eyes, I had to be led about - and who better than by Delightful Sister B. who was so-o-o cuddly to hang onto on the longest route I could find from X to Y!

Meanwhile, as they say, 'back at the ranch', Courts of Enquiry were top billing. RSM McNally, no less, came to J6 and ordered all tongue-and-groove boards behind greatcoats to be opened. Everybody had the common sense to put everything explosive behind my bed. Tara was last seen, ashen faced, with bucket full of things that-could-go-bang-

at-any-time, held at arms length, off to School HQ. The only other casualty was B Fagen. He had 'liberated' - for private study, you understand - an electric doorbell from trade classrooms and hid it behind his greatcoat. He was thrown into the guardroom and the key melted down prior to his being arraigned before first, his Company Commander, who decided it was far too hot to handle and then the CO 'Chalky' White who awarded BF '14 days to barracks'. Apart from being interrogated by the aforementioned very worried Ordnance Corps Captain, I too was similarly arraigned and was told by 'Chalky' that I had had enough punishment already and not to do it again. I more or less stuck to that promise - only lapsing once by stuffing cylindrical tins (designed to preserve 50 x Woodbine ciggies in panclimatic conditions) filled with cordite and with very long fuzes, into termite heaps in Trincomalee to see if we could level them. Answer - No. I did, however, achieve marksman status almost every year until I retired and even (just) got into the Army Hundred in 1959. I was so overjoyed that I completely blew the Methuen Cup practice so I didn't shoot for the Corps!

Footnote: When I was being re-mustered into REME at the end of apprenticeship, I had a series of tests and interviews - as, indeed, did everybody.

After I had disassembled the bicycle pump and reassembled it, I was sent to the table of a twitchy character who fidgeted with a pencil throughout. He was the 'sick tricyclist', who scanned my paperwork and then asked me, haughtily, "Pewsey, I see that you were never promoted from A/T - why was that?" To which I have spent the intervening 55 years wondering why I replied to the one person who probably determined my entire Army career - "Because I had too much fun, Sir". On mature reflection, I don't think that was either the most sensible or politically correct answer I could have given at that time! One last admonition to any young 'apprentii' who read this and might think of emulating my youthful idiocy; forget it! The Army is short of ammo and the HSE frown upon unsupervised use of tools.

**Company Contributions Extracted from The
Arborfield Informer - October 2001.**

B COMPANY

**Checkpoint One, Bourne Wood car park, 10 Points,
by Capt Hamlin, OC 6PL**

With map in one hand, compass in the other, OC B Coy, OC 6PL and 15 ATs, mostly from 6 Platoon, set off for a Saturday morning orienteering event. The first challenge was to find the course, which despite being advertised on the internet that morning was, we were soon to discover, actually postponed until the following week! Not to be deterred, however, the symbols used on orienteering maps were pointed out on the ground as the eager teams puffed up to the top of the steepest hill the OC could find. Then toilet paper was 'used' as the markers and the ATs rolled back down the hill in different directions placing their markers in different locations for others to find. Maps to these locations were produced by the ATs showing the contour lines and features,

including the north pointer. Further exercises using the compass saw ATs disappearing into the thickets and dense copses, emerging with soggy clothes and big grins. Challenging their partner to find the markers left 200m away on the bearing of their choice, more ATs headed off into the unknown. Most returned triumphant and the final confirmation of the success of the morning was achieved when all managed to find their way back to the minibus unaided! After the initial disappointment of finding the official orienting event postponed, the morning activities proved to be a great opportunity to introduce the sport to the ATs who found it enormous fun and came away knowing more about relating the map to the ground than when they had set out. There will be plenty of opportunity to put these new talents into practise throughout the term at both future orienteering events and on exercise.

C COMPANY

My First Week, By AT Minshull, 12 PL

Before I came to the ATFC I expected something a whole lot different to what I got when I arrived! I discovered jobs I never thought I would be doing, ranks I had never heard of and the earliest hours of the day I had never thought I would see (*nothing has changed!* - Ed). However, to find some good points about the ATFC is not hard either. Everyone is in the same boat, nobody has any real problem speaking to each other whether it be in a room, as a section, as a platoon or as a company. The section commanders seemed a bit harsh at the beginning of the week, but after listening to what they say it is not hard and just needs a bit of motivation and common sense. Exercises we do, such as drill, seemed slightly unnecessary at first, but I have recently come to understand its importance. Finally this week everyone has had to do a lot of adapting to a change of life-style and most have coped well. I am looking forward to the next week and the rest of my time at the College.

D COMPANY - Brunel Platoon, by Pte Flemming

I joined the ATFC in January 2001 and passed out in August 2001 and am now a member of Brunel Platoon awaiting surgery and undergoing rehabilitation. There has been a complete change to the way Brunel is run since September. Previously ATs reported to Sgt Lewis for admin in the mornings and SSgts Shaw & Breary for rehab in the afternoons, largely being left to our own devices. However, now the College has been restructured, we are part of D Training Support Company with Captain Tallack our Officer Commanding. Our afternoons now include rehab in the gym and a program of lessons including MSD, TSD, field craft, first aid and skill at Arms. In rehab we do exercises to help our injuries and we also work to keep up our fitness so that we can rejoin our training with optimal fitness. Hopefully now that Brunel Platoon is being run with a firm structure, people will have a better perception of us.

FACES, NAMES AND FADING MEMORIES

By Peter Langley (Intake 41)

At the outset of this piece I acknowledge that long-term memories can play strange tricks. However, rather than keep saying 'as far as I remember' ad nauseam, I shall write everything as though carved in tablets of stone. There will be someone out there to put me right, I have no doubt!

It is a dreary March morning, the time of year when winter has hardly gone and spring has hardly begun. A strange sound penetrates my consciousness, a sort of moan, maybe the distant bellowing of an animal in distress. As I listen, it acquires a certain rhythm. Di-Da-Di-Dah! Di-Da-Di-Dah! Di-Da-Di-Da-Daaah. Then a tiddly bit. It goes quiet and I sink back towards oblivion.

There it is again, closer, louder. I force my eyes open, realise that I am in a strange bed, one of many in a large, dark, room. All around, the occupants are stirring. I remember then where I am, and why. I have just heard my first Reveille. Any doubts about its meaning are dispelled when the door of the barrack room bursts open, and a stentorian voice invites us to rise from our beds. Its message is reinforced by a lashing of the steel utensil cupboard just inside the door, with a stick of some sort. Sleep has gone and I have awoken to my first morning as a soldier, a-serving of His Majesty the King. Given the substantial part of my anticipated life span that I had but recently signed away, I might have expected 15 more years of such awakenings but no - there was never another quite like the 18th March 1941.

The previous day had been one of travel, further than I had ever been on my own: a stressful day, full of apprehension. I had climbed aboard a train at Chesterfield, en route for Reading. Among the others in the compartment was a lad of about my own age, fourteen, maybe fifteen. We had eyed each other but neither spoke. We were nearly at our destination before we each, deliberately casual, pulled out and studied our identical travel warrants, speeding us on our way to new and alien life. With that link established and the barrier down, we chatted to each other for the remainder of the journey. His name was Bill Hunter and he hailed from Glasgow. We became close pals during our time at Arborfield: I never saw him afterwards.

At Reading, the train disgorged a number of other boys, all similarly bemused, dishevelled and apprehensive. I wonder now why someone didn't have the bright idea of putting us in the same carriage. How different might we have felt? On the station forecourt, in blacked-out wartime gloom, we were herded onto a bus, and driven to Wokingham Station. It goes without saying that no-one thought to tell us just what was happening.

At Wokingham, I had my first real shock of the day. Several lads, depressingly large, noisy and confident, climbed aboard. They were dressed in military khaki uniform but wearing shorts! My heart sank. Only recently into long trousers, was I to be condemned to shorts for the next three years? They were, of course, Dukies, from the Duke of York's Royal Military School, and that was their customary mode of dress.

Details of our arrival at Arborfield are mercifully vague. At some stage we were led into the cookhouse, a dimly lit, noisome cavern, where we ate. Of what we ate, only the duff, solid stodge, rendered edible by a spoonful of watery custard, remains in my memory. Its consistency was such that it could have been - and maybe was - used to construct air raid shelters. Suffice it to say that I was constipated for the first ten days of my army career!

Eventually, and much later that evening, we arrived in our barrack room, our home for the foreseeable future, and I received a second shock. The beds were only three feet long! Tired as I was, it took long seconds to realise these were truckle beds, where the bottom half pulls out to the required six foot length, and somewhat longer to work out how to convert them into something that one could sleep on. I don't know how I managed it but I did and, thoroughly exhausted, crawled under the blankets. And slept!

I was later to find out that you could, if so inclined, sing to that dreary Reveille sound. The words were 'Get out of bed, get out of bed, you lazy bastards!' and I later became accustomed to the cheery greetings offered by the more vocal of our early morning tormentors. Like, 'Wakey wakey, rise and shine!', 'Come on, let's have you, out of your pits. The sun's scorching your eyeballs out' or, from the more imaginative, 'Hands off cocks and on with socks!'. I had a very early introduction to the coarse ribaldry that was part of the common currency of communication. On my second night at the School, I got out of bed to go to the loo and, not yet accustomed to the casual nudity that was the norm, put on my greatcoat to do so. A senior boy jeered 'What's up - afraid of losing your ring?' My upbringing had not encouraged familiarity with that or such-like topics and I had not the faintest idea what he was talking about! Eventually I thought nothing of it.

After that first rude awakening, there was an important lesson to be learned. Only the first few boys to the washroom had hot water and that at the only three of the dozen or so basins to dispense that rare commodity. Eventually, bewildered by the ordered chaos of the older boys, and largely ignored, we were herded outside and taken to the cookhouse.. Note - taken! Just that once. Ever after, we marched, and woe betide any absentees! 'Not hungry, Sergeant,' was not an option. In fact we were always hungry, which was just as well, given the quality of the sustenance on offer. 'Never mind the quality, feel the width' has nothing on Arborfield food in 1941.

We were an unusual intake, comprising exactly 100 boys, all destined to become armourers. We were divided equally, between A to D Coys, E seeming to be the preserve of very senior boys, notably the mighty Hilsea contingent. (who remembers the 'Hilsea Crawl'?) We were D Coy, which occupied Blocks J and H: half of us were in J4, including me, the remainder in J5.

I began to take stock of my fellows. In the coveted corner bed space behind the partition was 'Dusky Clements', a senior boy and therefore greatly to be respected, if not actually feared. I suppose now it would be considered non-PC to address him thus but no one then seemed to worry, least of all the lad himself. Oddly enough, I don't recall any other senior boys, though there must have been some in our room. Having discovered what Dukies were, I now had to get used to others of a similar cast but from north of the border. They were from the Queen Victoria Military School at Dunblane and were known as QVs. We had three in our room; Harry Warburton, Ian Duncan and Rod 'Joey' Mathieson. Rod hailed from Wrexham, which didn't seem to fit in with his Scottish connections. All played instruments; two cornets and the clarinet respectively. We did have one Dukie, Pat McCarthy: he played trombone! Did they learn nothing else at those schools?

We had two Irishmen, Silcock and Maton and another Scot, 'Ginger' Paton. A gangling youth with flaming red hair and an impediment in his heavily accented speech, he was a natural for a certain amount of bullying. He laid claim to the names Benjamin Loch Burns Denim Kethel: I think I might have kept quiet about that! The poor lad was one of the first to reduce our numbers from the original 100. After a few weeks he was invalided out with a serious bone infection. But not before he had been 'invited' to another room for some sort of initiation ceremony. He came back, grinning bravely, his nether regions liberally covered with red ink! To his credit, he took it well.

We had arrived at a rather odd time, just before the rest of the school went off on leave. This left us at the tender mercies of our Regimental staff, with nothing better to do than chase us around the square in bundles of three, day after day. The bane of our young lives was Sgt 'Turkey' Cooper, KOYLI. He acquired his nickname by going very red in what seemed to be a very long neck. It only happened when he was angry so he was only red-necked most of the time! On one occasion, we had committed the heinous crime of using our own initiative - I'm not sure if I wasn't the ringleader! Several of us went to the tailors' shop to ask if our drainpipe trousers were nearly ready. Turkey was apoplectic and doubled us endlessly round and round that patch of tarmac. I collapsed next morning and ended up in the Sick Bay for several days. 'General Debility' entered my vocabulary!

Ah, those drainpipe trousers! No, they were not the forerunner of Teddy Boy outfits but surplus stock left over from the glorious days of knee length puttees. They were eventually all modified to full bottoms but before that happened, we

were allowed out! Why, I can't imagine, considering the awful sight we were. Was it, perhaps, because the school was officially closed? In my case I turned up at the Guard Room in my horribly new cheesecutter cap, atop my horribly new shorn scalp, courtesy of Lance Corporal Sweeney Todd (protection tapes, we reckoned) my drainpipe trousers - and shoes! 'But boots hurt my feet, Sergeant,' and I got away with it! A crowd of us, all looking equally 'orrible, (though I assume everyone else was booted) set off for Wokingham, where the local populace, probably inured to such horrors, paid little or no attention.

Not long ago I was watching a series of TV programmes about the training of young Army recruits. I was appalled at the sheer brutality of their treatment and the foul language of the instructors and it occurred to me that we really saw very little of that. Our drill instructors did indeed get very cross at times and I recall the occasion when we drove dear old Sgt Hodge, Royal Berks, to the end of his tether. 'Youse ain't boys!' he cried. 'Youse bloody shithouses!' He was also heard to declare 'I've told youse once. I've told youse twice. I won't tell youse a second time!' He was really a gentle old buffer, fatherly, I think I'd say. We must have tried him sorely that day.

As part of caring for our bodily well-being, we were, at one stage, carted off to an itinerant dentist, an unforgettable experience that I had, and still have, no desire to repeat. His equipment came out of the Ark and I had to endure several fillings carried out with the aid of a foot-pedal driven drill! At least it made me thankful for fairly healthy teeth.

It never occurred to me at the time, but with hindsight, it's pretty obvious that most, if not all, the Permanent Staff were in some way unfit or unready for more active service. There was, after all, a war raging somewhere 'out there'. Many were reservists. Along with messrs Hodge and Cooper we had Sgt Sammy Salter, Hampshires, who lived in H block and was known to many as Slimy Sam. At various times we were staffed by an RAOC Cpl whose name I can't remember, a little DLI Sgt - my first encounter with a Geordie - and Cpl Jock Elsmore. He wore the treds of a Lowland Regiment and had a speech impediment. His pronunciation of the boys' title for Colonel Bogey often reduced us to paroxysms of unkind laughter.

Towards the middle of J4 was Bob Holles, later to become a professional writer. 'Now thrive the Armourers', a title that probably chose itself, was his account of the Glosters in Korea. His first names were Robert Owen, after the poet, he said. Owen somehow became corrupted to Obadiah and he was thereafter known as Obad. He made the mistake of saying the he had once won a Silver Spoon at school for boxing. Inevitably he ended up boxing for the company, when he learned the awful truth, namely the difference between what his school had regarded as the Noble Art and the authorised thuggery that usually passed for boxing at Arborfield. Writing this, I am reminded that in those days we were not allowed to cheer, or indeed make any noise at all,

during the rounds. It wasn't an Arborfield thing: it was common to the Army at large. Apart from his writing, the last I heard of Bob Holles was that he had been 'done' for shooting seagulls from a cliff top. With a Bren gun!

Jed Clifford, from Gravesend, occupied the bed space one side of mine, Pat McCarthy the other. Pat, I recall, hailed from Faversham in Kent. Across the way was a tough lad from Aldershot, Spud Taylor. His favourite joke, heard more than once, was that he had been an electrician in a gasworks! Now that was quite something: a boy who had actually worked! As far as I knew, we were all straight from school. At the far end of the room was Pat Hart, who was some days late joining us. He was a large amiable youth from Oxford; amiable, and naïve to an almost embarrassing degree. One evening he went to the NAAFI and bought a bright new yellow duster and left it on his bed. It disappeared so off he went to the NAAFI and bought another one. He left *that* on his bed and it, too, disappeared. (he was obviously using money he'd brought with him) Having bought a third duster, he finally got the idea of putting it in his locker! It was about then that poor Pat was subjected to some fairly lengthy baiting. One could hardly call it bullying since no physical force was involved, but he ended up being evermore known as Gangster. I wonder who else felt a bit ashamed of this episode, yet was too overawed to do anything about it?

Our room NCO was 'Big Nick' Nicholls: can't remember his first name. He was tall, handsome, well spoken, arrogant and a very good NCO. He was a Cpl when we arrive but soon became Boy Sgt. He was an athlete and a good boxer. I reckoned he looked after us pretty well. Very early on he spoke of those boys who might be used to kneeling by their beds at night to pray. He said they were to carry on, and let no one interfere! Pat and I were the only ones to do so. I don't know his thoughts but in my case it was because my parents wanted me to. My heart certainly wasn't in it and it didn't last long for either of us!

Others I remember in J4 are Taffy Howell, Duggie Brandon, Vince 'Dick' Coultas, 'Porky' Griffin and, of course, Bill 'Toby' Hunter. With hindsight, I wonder if they *were* all in J4. There seems to be a lot of them! I can't remember how many boys there were in a room anyway. Dick Coultas acquired his nickname by one of those bizarre twists of Arborfield humour. Coultas became Cold Arse, became Cold Dick and there it was. I know you are still around Vince: I hope you will pardon that revelation. I last saw Porky Griffin on the WO's and Sgts' beach at Fayid. As he approached he said, through clenched teeth, 'And don't call me Porky!' Given his then mature bulk and height, I was only too happy to comply! Oh, there was one more, 'Chunky' Carter, from Gorleston.

In those days, the army had three levels of educational achievement: Army Certificate of Education I, II, and III. The exam we sat at recruitment passed as ACE III. ACE II was easy meat, achieved soon after arrival at the School: ACE I offered more of a challenge. Encouraging us through

these endeavours were a number of 'Schoolies', members of the RAEC, in whose ranks was nothing lower than a Sgt. (now there's a double entendre!) I had good reason to remember Sgt French. Not only was he one of a family that ran a pub in the village where I grew up, his brother married my erstwhile English teacher! We boys lived in an atmosphere of xenophobic anti-Americanism, so I was surprised when, on the entry of the US into the war, he said 'Good! Now we shall win.' Wise words of course. Another schooly was WO II 'Lofty' Armstrong. He had a physique that would make a split pin look voluptuous and his favourite – maybe his only – joke was 'I've got a brother at home. He's taller than me but not so well built!'

There was another layer of educational achievement, the Army Special certificate. It was something like the four-minute mile, in that no-one had ever passed it, until Ralph 'Mesher' Elliot came along. He was a senior boy, near the end of his time – in fact he was allowed to stay on in order to sit the exam. By dint of intense studying, he passed, after which, any number of boys, led by one Drennan (Jan 42), obtained the certificate with seemingly little effort!

Next door, J5 seemed to have more than its share of Dukies. Stan Dunning, perennial punster, played the clarinet and Peter 'Chang' Ivens – another non-PC sobriquet! – a brass instrument of some sort. Among the other, non-musical, Dukies were: Bill Wenborn, George Hayward and Alfie Potter. I last saw George as a Captain RAOC at TEK. Potter was a mild mannered youth whose physical appearance and name left him open to a degree of ribbing. Till someone tried it on – and found out that Pansy packed a punch!

I have never met Bill Wenborn since Arborfield but I have three reasons for remembering him. During one of our very early days on the square, he and I were marching alongside each other. He looked down from his great height, both physical and psychological – he was, after all, a Dukie – and, from the corner of his mouth asked 'Are you finding it cushy yet?' I can't remember my response, but I wasn't!

Bill fancied himself as a cross-country runner, as did I, and on one occasion we found ourselves in the School team running against the Navy Boys at Pangborne, near Reading. Our hosts, craftily but understandably, had the course starting with a long narrow path, hedged on both sides. Their good runners shot off along the bottleneck, leaving a number of 'blockers', whom we were unable to pass. A bit later, Bill came pounding up behind me. 'I'm going to get one of those boys in blue,' he gasped, 'if it kills me!' He didn't; it didn't and we were soundly thrashed.

My final memory of Bill Wenborn dates from the time when we were very definitely Senior Boys and had progressed to room J6. In the early hours of one morning, we tiptoed down to H block, crept into H4 and, starting at the far end, 'tipped out' every boy in the room. We then did the same to H5 and H6 and were back in bed 'asleep' before the Duty NCO was able to investigate. Why did we do it? Goodness knows!

Some sort of bravado I suppose. Incidentally, it says a lot for the uniform layout of the rooms that we were able to do it all in the dark!

Tipping out, of individuals, was fairly common. Sometimes it was just a prank, maybe a way of 'getting back' at someone: sometimes it was done with malice aforethought. Another trick with a truckle bed was to so finagle the latches that a casual nudge against the bed would cause the bottom end to collapse. This was a source of great merriment to the perpetrator: somewhat less so to the victim, especially if he was pressing his SD at the time! For we had no irons and the accepted way of pressing anything was to get sheets of cardboard from the cookhouse, soak the appropriate creases and lay the garment(s) between the card and under the mattress. It was possible to press two suits of SD and a greatcoat at the same time.

Some boys were memorable because of certain traits, or their ability to perform what I might call party tricks. One such was 'Gaffer' Newbold. He lived in J5 and was able to walk from the far end of that room, out into the corridor, along and into J4 – on his hands! No mean feat. I met Gaffer some time later, whilst in some form of transit. I was on my Tiffies course at the time. Gaffer, already sporting his fried egg, was dismissive of the Artificer's route to stardom. He told me of meeting Bill Hunter in India. Bill was still a junior NCO when he called on Gaffer in the WO's and Sgt's lines. Gaffer was indignant. 'He came and sat on my bed!' he exclaimed.

It goes without saying that there is little point in direct comparison of our pay with whatever princely sums are earned today, but it may be of interest to know how we eked out our weekly two shillings (10p) Two shillings was 24 old pence. (24d) Out of this we had to buy our own soap, metal polish etc, our 'char and wads' in the NAAFI at d each, writing paper: in fact everything necessary for survival. The iniquitous Barrack Damages ate further into our meagre funds. And in Wokingham, of course, everything cost more! We walked there most weekends – the return fare would have used up nine of our precious pennies – where we might just manage a trip to the cinema, though much time was spent in one of the several 'canteens', where food and drink was cheap, if not free. The Church Army, Salvation Army, WVS (no 'Royal' then) come to mind, plus after-service teas at the Baptist Chapel on Sunday. Our actual pay, initially, was 11d a day but we were only allowed to draw the said two shillings. The rest we got, less 'stoppages', when we went on leave. From time to time, we received an increment – and that was another new word: what was wrong with 'increase'? – of 2d a day. Yet somehow, I didn't feel all that hard up. Mind you, we could have done without the periodic barrack block raffle to which we invited to subscribe by a couple of heavies. The prizes never varied. A coat hanger, a cigarette case and a cigarette lighter. The lucky winners ended up with a 2 inch nail, an empty bag packet and a match!

'Bull', to give it its shorter and more polite name, was said to baffle brains and was an integral part of life. J4 was good

at it, encouraged, if that's the right word, by Big Nick and so was frequently the 'best room' for the week. This meant we had the wireless for the week. The wireless, note: there was only one for all six rooms! One memory is of lying in the dark, listening to Vera Lynn, accompanied by derisive hoots and jeers from many of the boys. How many of us, I wonder, used that, under the cover of darkness, to conceal an inevitable sentimentality? Homesickness maybe.

The Technical Training staff, civilians all, had its share of characters. Ernie Goode was a squad instructor in the Fitting shop where the Lord High Panjandrum was 'Oily' Brownbill. One of our tasks was to make a straightedge. After many hours of diligent filing and scraping, we would present it to Oily, feeling certain he would not notice the minuscule gap between it and the master gauge. Huh! Oily could survey the entire workshop through it! Back to the bench! In the Armourers' shop, we had a selection of memorable individuals. Sandy Erskine was a known Bisley shot, one of several similarly talented brothers. He taught rifles, in particular the polishing to a high standard of the woodwork, absolutely essential in wartime! Over in the far corner was Pete Ember-ton, a portly chap with a falsetto voice. Next to his little domain was Perce Warren, machine guns. One day, Pete, greatly aggrieved, went across to Perce and squeaked 'That boy called me a c***!' to which Perce replied, 'Well, you are a c***, aren't you?' Collapse of stout party! Mister Gough – never knew his first name and he didn't seem to have a nickname – was a soft-spoken man who just got on with his job of teaching. 'Dormouse' Unsworth, an ancient little man, was known to fall asleep whilst viewing a rifle barrel while over the road, in the Blacksmith's Shop, 'Black John' Sullivan held court, regaling us with perpetual complaints about his piles! And I never did master the art of forge welding.

Who, I wonder, remembers the 'browning' procedure? Browning was the then technique for imparting a rust resistant finish to the metalwork of all small arms and machine guns. I wouldn't be surprised if it was a relic from Napoleonic times! In brief, it consisted of boiling the parts in a tank of noxious liquid whose constituent parts I no longer remember and then brushing off the gunge that had adhered to the surfaces. This was a week-long process and squads of five or six boys were periodically detailed for the task. There were perks. First, it was a break from routine classes. Then, we were allowed to be extremely dirty – it was a *very* dirty job. Because the boiler had to be lit early and because the job went on all day, we had breakfast early and midday meal when we were ready – much bigger rations! – and finally, we were excused parades for the week!

Some fifteen years later I was stationed at Hilsea. In the old Armourers' shop was a team of Work Study engineers, looking at ways of making that self-same procedure more efficient!

For a while, we played a bizarre game in the barrack room. It consisted of a boy standing behind another boy, his arms

round his chest. The boy in front then took a huge breath and held it while the lad behind squeezed as hard as he could. The result was instant unconsciousness! It only lasted seconds but it seemed much longer and was considered to be fun. Thank God we all had a robust constitution. The possible result does not, with benefit of hindsight, bear thinking about. Fortunately it didn't catch on.

There was little evidence of overt bullying in the barrack rooms but there was a certain amount of baiting. One evening, poor Pat Hart got it in the neck again. In a way, I suppose I started it. I was sent to the duty NCO's room for a long-stand, only it didn't provide the anticipated fun because I soon realised I was being had. Whatever, it inspired some bright spark to get Hart out of bed, whence he had gone somewhat earlier and was sound asleep. It was his turn, it was decided, to go for the room's ration of tartan paint. So off went bleary-eyed Hart, dressed in winter nightwear of long johns and jersey pullover, to return shortly with the message that we could only have it in exchange for a bottle of pigeons' milk! You all know the game, hilarious to the instigators, not quite to the unfortunate butt! Having sought in vain for rubber rivets and a glass hammer, Hart's ordeal came to a sudden end when, in desperation, he asked the duty NCO, on his rounds, where he had to go to get a wanking spanner! Something very close to bullying would be what I suppose one could call institutionalised tyranny. It was probably practised by every same sex school in the country and consisted of older, and bigger, boys getting the best of whatever was on offer. A good example was the 'dividing of the duff' or indeed the serving of any part of the midday meal. Food was brought to the table and served by nervous room orderlies under the watchful eyes of the room NCO and the senior boys. This resulted in the younger, smaller and more timid boys getting substantially less than their fair share so that their 'elders and betters' could gorge themselves. Needless to say, no one ever had the temerity to complain. And yes, of course, we all eventually became senior boys.

Being always hungry, we ate what was put before us, giving little thought to its preparation. The cookhouse was run by a gang of cut-throat civilians whose idea of food handling was, I feel sure, somewhat basic. One of our number found himself on cookhouse fatigues one day and came back with this tale. He was directed to a boiler thickly encrusted inside with stale porridge and told to fill it with water. The boiler was then switched on and the lad thought, with some repugnance, that he was going to have to clean the revolting mess. But not so! When the water boiled, the 'cook' chucked in a few handfuls of tea-leaves and brewed the next meal's tea! And on one occasion, I watched, horrified, as a fish's tail emerged from the spout of the teapot and into someone's mug.

One of the more memorable staff members was the Provost Sergeant. Provost Sergeants are, by nature, unlikely to be popular and Sgt 'Grockle' Hotchkiss, Cheshire Regiment, was no exception. Boasting that 'I got me own brother seven days when I was in China!' he could have given lessons to

the Marquis de Sade. One of his favourite tricks was to make the janker wallahs produce a full kit layout for the 10 o'clock call - that's 10.00 pm - and woe betide any who were the least bit late. I have seen boys with their entire kit in a wheelbarrow, waiting just out of sight of the guardroom, to make sure they got there on time! It goes without saying that this procedure required the assistance of large numbers of willing room mates.

Undoubtedly the best remembered staff member was Ben Cook, RSM turned Farmer! As RSM, he was the epitome of what a Regimental Sergeant Major, and a Guardsman to boot, should look like. His successor was a pale shadow! Tales about Farmer Ben are legion: I'll add just one. During an agricultural stint one morning, I, along with Harry Warburton, was instructed to collect weeds from a vast plot of potatoes and 'Bring them to me!' Ben returned in the afternoon to see what we had all been doing. 'Where's your weeds?' he demanded. There was a short shuffling pause, then Warburton said 'In the bur-r-r-n, Sir,' - he was, after all, a QV - 'In the what?' 'In the stream, Sir,' I translated. 'Then you'd better go and get 'em, hadn't you!' So off we went, returning with a few bedraggled hanks of greenery and Ben pronounced himself satisfied. I am convinced he knew exactly what he was doing with his eccentric ways and that his tongue was firmly in his cheek most of the time. I first met Ben Cook when, when he was still RSM, before his chest slipped into his trousers. He came and spoke to all of us new boys on the square one day. He asked me what my father did for a living. I was not yet wholly familiar with the Army's interpretation of 'tradesman' and I answered 'He's a tradesman, Sir.' 'What sort of tradesman?' 'A Butcher, Sir.' He laughed. 'That's not much of a trade, is it?' he said, not unkindly, and passed on the next boy. I think the reason many of us had a sneaking regard, if not affection, for Ben was that he disliked Grockle Hotchkiss almost as much as we did. He would stand at the far end of Nuffield Road and call him. Given his stentorian voice, maybe 'call' is too gentle a term but call he did - 'At the double!' When the panting Sgt Hotchkiss arrived, Ben would say 'Just wanted to see how long it would take you!' Use of the Guardroom bike was not an option. Hotchkiss claimed some skill as a bricklayer and so was deputed to build a greenhouse, as part of Ben's agricultural domain. He built the base, himself inside, and, to our delight, forgot to leave a doorway. I'm sure these stories are apocryphal, but they do give a real sense of those times.

Our being marched to the Camp Hall now and then to see a film enlivened our routine. A technical training film I hasten to add. I don't think they did anything for our development, certainly not mine since the only one I can recall was about the Epicyclic Gear, shown *ad nauseam*. Certainly I never saw anything remotely connected with my chosen trade. There was one bizarre occasion when some of us - selected in the mysterious fashion favoured by those on high - were summoned to the Camp Hall .. for dancing lessons! Ballroom dancing! And I thought we were preparing for war! Our tutor was a lady of great age - forty if a day! - wearing a purple

dress and aggressive perfume and she taught us the rudiments of the waltz and the quick-step. Since there were no girls present, we had to take our turn at being the female partner, an affront to our burgeoning masculinity. There were two or three weekly sessions, after which I was wholly competent – with the rudiments of the waltz and the quick step. Talking of films reminds me of an unforgettable episode involving a film about the School and its denizens. After being filmed in a series of carefully staged spontaneous activities in various areas, we were herded into a corner at the top end of the small playing field behind the Camp Hall. We were wearing our *best SD and white belts* and clutching our eating irons! The camera was at the other, diagonally opposite, corner. On a given signal – this would be the ‘cookhouse’ call in the finished film – we rushed excitedly towards camera, brandishing knife fork and spoon and cheering like the idiots we felt. We were later shown the film, uncut. It was hilarious and duly greeted with the derision it deserved. Why was it made? God knows and he won’t tell.

Our PT staff had its own crop of characters, celebrities almost, since established sportsmen were drafted into the APTC. One such was Denis Compton, Arsenal and war-time England footballer, and post-war England cricketer. Brother Leslie, also an Arsenal player, was at the School briefly. Denis generated some hostility among the boys but I never knew why. I suppose he was somewhat arrogant. He played rugby for the School and was heard to say it was his favourite game. Alfie and Arthur Danahar, professional boxers both, gave a demonstration bout, which we all thought was tame and S/Sgt Cunliffe played pro football for Aldershot. Among the red-stripe-jersied PTIs was one Cpl Peacock who introduced us to ‘Bingo!’ It had no connection whatever with the misnamed game now played in countless disused cinemas throughout the country. Dear me no! The windows in the gym were high up and the blinds were operated by long cords. At the end of each cord was a wooden ‘acorn’, which gave rise to Peacock’s idea of fun. As punishment for any minor misdemeanour, real or imagined, we were made to line up along the wall bars. He then came down the row and, holding a cord like a conker, would bop us on the head with the wooden end, shouting ‘Bingo!’ as he did so. He thought it was funny!

Given the circumstances of our lives, it is hardly surprising that we were ruled by routine. Apart from the obvious advantage to ‘authority’ of knowing where we were and what we were doing, I feel that we ourselves were grateful – albeit subconsciously – for leading controlled lives. Outside of personal worries, fears even, we hadn’t a care in the world. We became used to getting up when called, carrying out the necessary room cleaning tasks, parading for this that and the other, going to the NAAFI in the evening for tea and a wad and going to bed when so directed. Well, that was the general weekday pattern. Saturdays provided diversions, usually in the form of inspections of some sort, and organised sport in the afternoon. Sundays had their own rigid routine. Who can forget? One might have expected a lie-in but no! That was the morning most frequently chosen for ‘blanket shaking’,

when the duty NCO would rouse us at reveille and chase us outside with our blankets for a periodical cleansing session. There was little incentive to go back to bed, certainly not for the RCs, the Rat Catchers. For reasons I never fathomed during my time at Arborfield, they trotted off to Church *before* breakfast. Barbaric! Next to perform their obligatory worship were the UBs’, United Board, which roped in Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, you name it. In practice it was any boy, other than the RCs, who had professed a specific ‘religion’ on enlistment. All others were lumped in with the genuine Anglicans. It was a sort of punishment for having ‘nothing to declare’ on enlistment. Reared as a Baptist, I joined my fellow UBs in a leisurely stroll, albeit in threes, to the Camp Hall for our service conducted by a civilian Padre. Back in the barrack room we watched as the C of E’s, by far the majority, embarked on a full-scale parade, to be marched off to the Hall with the School’s military band at their head. After that main service, the entire School marched out of the main gate, up the road and back into camp via the gate near the Sgts Mess. Somehow this involved all three bands, Corps of Drums, Pipe Band and the Military band and a March Past. I suppose it all meant something! Sunday afternoon was free time. I recall one particular Sunday when I shunned the fleshpots of Wokingham and visited a pair of elderly aunts in Sunningdale. Mindful of the paucity of civilian rations, I stoked up on cookhouse stodge before setting out. Having cheated the railway of its due fare in one of the nefarious ways in which we were all highly skilled, I arrived at Sunningdale station and called on Aunt No1. She had prepared an enormous traditional Sunday lunch! No matter, I tucked in and felt rather more than merely replete. I was then hiked off to see Aunt No 2 who had – Sod’s Law at work – prepared an enormous High Tea! Resistance was futile: I just had to eat. I never thought an Arborfield boy could be defeated by food but that day I was close to total surrender! All of which has nothing to do with the School.

I have suggested that most of our regimental staff were unlikely candidates for more rigorous service. A notable exception was a young and seemingly able, infanteer subaltern named ‘Butch’ Rowan, who spent some time with ‘D’ Coy. During his stay, the entire School went on a cross-country run, just another way of passing a Saturday afternoon. ‘D’ Coy was decisively and ingloriously last, due to all the junior boys, the Jeeps, strolling the course, declining to even break into a trot. Afterwards, Lt Rowan had us all on parade for a dressing down. In conclusion he said, ‘When I was at Sandhurst, if anyone let the side down, he was taken out to the rugby field that night and . dealt with.’ They may not have been his exact words but the meaning was taken, to the extent that that evening, a number of boys from ‘J’ block descended on ‘H’ block and, to be a little euphemistic, dispensed summary justice! Beatings, punch-ups, cold showers, no holds barred! The Provost Staff had to be called in to halt the mayhem before any really serious injuries were suffered. None of the senior boys seemed to have been in any way damaged! Did I take part in this episode? No, I was carefully honing my skills as a practising coward. Oddly enough, I

don't recall any disciplinary action being taken as a result of this incident.

So what of the writer, this 10542982 Langley P? I did not enjoy a particularly distinguished career at Arborfield, a feature of my entire Army service, if I'm honest. I passed the whole three years without doing jankers, due to good luck and skilful evasion. I was not over adventurous and, apart from a brief indeterminate fight with Paddy Silcock, soon after we joined, I avoided confrontation as much as possible. I only once broke out of camp, climbing the wire mesh fence around the playing field along with a couple of others. I don't really know why, apart from a feeling that it was something one ought to do. Getting back in, I tore my greatcoat and consequently spent several hours doing some rather clever 'invisible' mending!

Sometimes I would climb a high tree down on the playing field with a book, to get some uninterrupted reading. Once, while we were playing football in Faraday Rd, between the workshops – where else? The playing field was much too far away, all of 150 yards! – the ball went up on to the roof. I volunteered to get it and set off up the downspout. Seconds later I was deposited on my behind on the tarmac, clutching a length of drainpipe! Clearly it had been tried before: for all I know, the ball is still up there.

I had ambitions to be in the School gymnastics team but I chickened out at the (very) high horse. I did run a bit, cross-country and the mile. I ran the mile for 'D' Coy in the last gymkhana before the temporary closure. That was the year it all took place on the field behind the Camp Hall. As a result the mile track was an untypical 5 laps, more or less, and it took me over five minutes! (so what do you make of the others – I won!) I followed that by leading a Musical Bicycle Ride. I still cringe at the memory! And I once ran the mile in Reading Stadium: I came 3rd of five runners, so earning a five shilling Post Office Savings Certificate.

General Montgomery came to the School one year, at the height of his unpopularity, to dispense ACE I's. General Cunningham gave me mine the following year. 'Terrible salute, boy – terrible!' RSM McNally growled in my ear as I turned away. To my surprise, no retribution followed – maybe I was already a lost cause! With the School closure impending, our last weeks of training and Trade Tests were somewhat concertina-d and we duly passed out as 'proper' soldiers. Our last evening was spent in the obligatory boisterous fashion. Were we really drunk? Or just wildly high-spirited? Our efforts to hoist a rose bush out of the ground and up the flagpole as we 'marched past' only resulted in a broken rope and a dead rose. Next morning saw us in a soberer mood as we boarded trucks and set off on the next stage of our careers, in my case to 13 Cmd Wksp at Aldershot, Parsons Barracks.

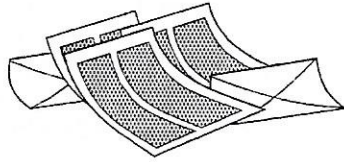
So there it is – *Faces, Names and Fading Memories*. I have many more memories, not all palatable, but I have to stop somewhere! If I now met any of my contemporaries in the

street, would we recognise each other? I doubt it. Inevitably, we only remember how we each looked then, fifty or so years ago. For instance, twenty plus years into retirement, I became involved in a small amateur dramatics group. The woman producer said on several occasions that her husband had been in the Army: I decided to say nothing. I met him several times, chatting, helping him drink his home brew, and then one day she referred to Arborfield, and it clicked. Of course – Nick Carter! Same intake, March 1941! Three years at the School together, yet neither had recognised the other. Mind you, he was one of the lesser mortals from A Coy!

**Contributions Extracted from The Arborfield
Informer - October 2001.
The Apprentice Old Boys Reunion
by Sgt Sands, Drum Major**

Like an annual migration, they walked, drove and made their way to their former barracks, some of the ex-apprentices had been here in 1939 and others as late as 1989. Their ages were as varied as the locations that they had come from, with the furthest arriving from Canada. The event at the ATFC is a yearly gathering that lasts a weekend and starts with the Old Boys (as they like to be known) arriving on a Friday evening (after the present intake has departed for their leave period) to be met by the President of the Arborfield Old Boys Association. The members were then allotted their accommodation, their programme for the weekend and nametags and where possible, members from the same intake were billeted together. Here a transformation was seen in many rooms as the years slipped by. On Saturday morning, everyone formed up to march back through the College gates that they had once so proudly marched out of to join the field army. The RSM, WO1 Collister MBE was presiding as the REME band struck up a rousing march tune and the parade stepped off. Although it had been many years for some of the Old Boys they maintained the correct step, finally halting at the memorial garden. They were met by Padre Captain Boshier and took part in a Drum Head Service to remember those Old Boys who had fallen in conflict or had died simply from old age. A lone piper played the lament, 'The Flowers of the Forest' and the bugler played The Last Post. The parade then marched to the old parade square where the inspecting officer, Colonel Peregrine, REME Regimental Colonel and Lt Colonel McAvoy inspected the Old Boys. Following a barbecue in the Sergeants' Mess, the Old Boys visited the REME Museum in the afternoon. Later, a fantastic spread had been prepared for the evening dinner and the Padre blessed this before they all tucked in. There was more opportunity to recount the past back in the comfort of the Sergeants' Mess, once the dinner was over. On the final morning a church service was held before everyone said farewell. This is an on-going event and can only be made possible by people actually joining the AOBA and that means any ex-apprentice can join. I, given the opportunity, would happily join!

LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR



✉ *Bill Freeman (48B) writes*

Whist attending the last reunion, it was mentioned that there were some names scratched on the brickwork of the last remaining old small bore range building, still standing from the 40s. Three of us decided to investigate further on the Sunday morning.

Ray Derrick's name had been put forward as a possibility but he swore he couldn't even remember carving anything there. In any case, we all three set to work searching brick by brick and sure enough Ray found his name clearly inscribed, even though he didn't even remember it. It goes without saying we carried on the search for our own names but without success. Nice way to finish off a memorable weekend?

(Bill, in my day our intake (54A) also scratched their names onto this brickwork, but wasn't this the old 30 yards full bore range? When I was the Pictorial Archivist in the Museum, I took a number of photos of all the names I could find and donated the photos to the AAS section of the archives - Ed).

✉ *Ken Anderson (58A) writes*

As an A/T in A Company, I landed the job of Assistant Cinema projectionist. There was an adult full time projectionist (RAOC national serviceman whose name I cannot remember).

While members of Duty Company got lumbered with setting out the wooden chairs in the Camp Hall for each show and then putting them away after the film ended, I had the cushy job in the projection room of preparing and showing the films.

We played gramophone records of the current pop music of the time before each performance. Immediately prior to showing the first film we would lower the lights and play the National Anthem when everyone in the camp hall would stand to attention.

On several occasions I would slightly lower the lights and then play Jim Dale's record 'The Piccadilly Line' (a take-off of the classic Rock Island Line) and this record started with a London Underground Train coming into a station. This opening sounded just like the drum roll at the start of the National Anthem, so that all the audience would jump up and stand to attention! Fortunately, I was well protected, hidden up in the projection room, so I always got away with it! Ah, Happy times.

✉ *Molly Pewsey (Née Cook) writes*

So - I read in your latest edition - my father's grave has been discovered by John Smithson (46B)! Yes, he has been lying their keeping an eye on everything and everyone since February 1978. He lies in an area close to the countryside - his fondest love - and in a bicycle ride's distance from his favourite pubs.

My brother-in-law, RSM Leo Kemp's ashes lie next to dad's grave so they can discuss Regimental topics at the dead of night.

Not only is Dad there, but the rest of us have our eyes on you all too! Pamela, my sister, Leo's widow lives in Arborfield. My brother Clifford, in Shinfield and my mother, Ben's wife, who is now 95, lives quietly in an elderly peoples home in Earley. I live on the Isle of White with John my husband. We celebrate 50 years of marriage on December 15th. Our daughter also now lives not far away, at Hatch Warren. *(Only the best people live there, Molly - Ed).*

As everyone who knew my father will know, he was a very complex character. We read, usually with amusement and knowing nods - "Yes, Dad would have said that and done that."

However, some years ago you printed a letter from an ex-Arborfield soldier who wrote, saying something to the effect that what he had to write would obviously hurt no one now, as it was so long ago. He then described my father and his actions. 'Those that are watching you' said, "Dad wouldn't have used that expression". Various other ex-boys told us that our father did not do what he was accused of by your 'far away' writer. Since that person wrote a lot of other things connected with Arborfield that were completely wrong, including names and places, one doubts his reliability. However, three of us fumed together, as indeed do other relatives of past members of the Boy's School.

Strangely enough, our daughter's step daughter now runs the Bell at Barkham. They have had no connection with the area in the past. Even so, they could see a chap on a bike ride up to meet old farming chums for a pint or two, a game of dominoes and a good old natter in what used to be a very basic pub. He could be in officer's uniform or civvies, depending on his mood - but he will always be a great 'ghost from the past' who made a substantial impact at the Boys School when he arrives in 1938 as the first RSM, eventually bringing his family to enjoy a life in the countryside instead of living in spartan married quarters in such places as Aldershot, Windsor and Caterham. We all loved the place. My best wishes to all

PS We have a daughter and three sons plus five grandchildren, so the Cook genes continue - there are more! - in fact 11 more!!

 Charles E Pepper (43B) writes

During Reunion 2001 AGM, there was a discussion as to whether the cap badge of the RASC should be one of those included on the back cover of OBAN. It occurred to me on reflection that 50 years have passed since Phase II removed the technical side of the Service Corps: the RASC Company Workshops are all but forgotten other than by those who were in them. I met many ex-RASC men at Reunion 2001 and yet there is little reference to their history which caused me to write the enclosed. *(At this point I should mention that Charles has contributed a 7 page potted history of his time with the RASC which I will publish as soon as I can find time to type it! - Ed)*. There is nothing of world shattering import, just memories of service in situations which probably seem strange to this modern age and may inspire other 'old codgers' to publish their experiences.

I read somewhere that when the RLC was being considered, that it was to include the REME. Had this happened it would have been a case of 'RASC is dead, long live the RLC.' The beauty of old age is that you can watch the roundabout go round and round, ending up at its starting point!

(Thank you, Charles, please be patient. I am doing my best - Ed)

 Alf Stubbs (55A) writes

Recently I have been doing a bit of historical research and came across St Eligius, Patron Saint of Artisans. He is also the Patron Saint of REME, his feast day being celebrated in REME chapels throughout the Army.

I have written a history of St Eligius that our readers might find of interest and enclose it herewith for future publication.

(Alf, you might like to contact the REME Museum. There is much info to be had from their archives - Ed)

 David Fisher (49B) writes

For some time now, I have been contemplating why I remain a member of the AOBA, having attended just one reunion back in the eighties. My thoughts about the Association past and for the future are bound to be controversial, but I feel they should be expressed and perhaps debated.

Let me deal first with funding and the proposal to raise subscriptions by 100%. When I joined the AOBA I elected to pay a life membership fee in preference to an annual one. So my thinking on future increases in membership costs is that they should be borne by annual and future life members.

Then we have proposals to donate £1000 and £500 to the College Trust Fund and the WVS refurbishment costs. Both OK by me. However, the £500 proposed to College expeditions, a definite NO. I am quite sure there are many more worthy causes and individuals that are more deserving. The apprentices of today are earning reasonable money, have so many sports, recreations and activities provided that I feel to indulge them further should not be our remit.

Now to the future. The Chairman questions whether the AOBA has 'moved on', suggesting that the title is already outdated by the potential female members passing through Arborfield.

My feeling is that the AOBA is what the title suggests, the Arborfield Old **Boys** Association and should remain so. This would mean, of course, a cut-off point for membership at the date the first female was admitted.

As I said at the beginning, these thoughts and proposals are bound to be controversial, but nothing goes on forever and a line has to be drawn.

Probably even more controversially, I suggest the AOBA withdraw from its close links with the present serving establishment. This should start with the reunion venue which in common with many other such events should be held outside the military environment.

I am sure that many will agree that the true Arborfield Old Boys have little in common with present day apprentices and even less patience with all the attendant political correctness heaped upon us.

Finally, I think we need to break away from serving officers who appear to require table tops to make speeches and statements.

So for now my membership will lapse.

(David, I passed on your letter to the membership secretary on receipt as OBAN24 is not to be published until April - Ed)

 Rod Crowder (44A) writes

At the last reunion I was sitting and looking at a copy of a group photograph of the February 44 intake and as usual we were commenting on the number of people we were unable to place. I personally found nothing strange in this as when I showed it to my wife and my 12 year granddaughter the both pointed unerringly at a completely different person to the one I had picked out for myself. Needless to say when I looked again I had to agree with them.

Someone, and I blame Colin Williams for this, said that we ought to find out how many could be identified. I agreed that it would be a good idea. That was a mistake as

I then got the job of doing something about it.

It was agreed that the first thing to do was to write to all the members of the intake listed in the nice new directory of members that we had been given only the day before.

First move was to obtain copies of the photograph and then put a number to each person on it (117 in all). Next, to prepare a list of all the numbers together with the names of the few we already knew. Then a letter to each member, including those overseas, with a copy of the numbered photo, a list, and the explanatory letter.

Then the wait for the replies. Most people did reply and the letters were very interesting, most containing either photos or references to incidents that some members would prefer to forget. Among the replies and photos was one from whom had been in Lagos with me in my brief period of contact with the REME and who also had a photograph of me from that period.

Ken Jenner did suggest that there was a picture already in the archives at the REME Museum. I contacted Bill Cleasby who checked the archives but could not find anything. However, he did come up with a list of all the apprentices who enlisted together with their dates of birth. This has caused some confusion as we now have 131 people who should be on the photograph. His list, however, also gave me a chance to try to find their first names rather than the initials by searching the birth registers at the Central Record Office with some success. In addition, it would appear that people's names are coming up who were not on Bill's list and at this stage I can only guess that they be 43B boys who had been put back an intake for one reason or another.

The next step will be to circulate everybody with the latest list of names to see if it kick starts anybody's memory for further names.

If anybody should read this and knows of any 44A ex-boys who are not members of the Association, I would be pleased to be told of their location so that I can get in touch and progress the search. So far we have names against 93 of the 117 listed, some with a query against them, some with two names.

Any information please contact to me on 01775 724615 or HYPERLINK mail to: Rodney.crowder@lineone.net

One small point before I close. If anybody has a photograph of their own group with no names on it, now is the time to start trying to find out before the memories fade even more. It would be nice to have a named photograph of every intake in the archives.

 *David Barrett (52B) and his Wife 'Misti' write from Bali, Indonesia*

I don't know how you managed to organise it but I received the past three OBANs in the post. I sent off a

cheque to Peter Gibson for £10.00 to help pay the postage and costs. I was bemoaning the lack of reading material here. Now if I ration myself it will last for ages! It did bring home to me that this is 52B's anniversary year. Not sure if I have time to get something drawn for you to include? I feel I ought to do something as I can't be there. Let me know if you think there is time?

I notice that your chief letter writer, Brian Conway has resigned from the AOBA - was it something someone corrected him on and worst of all THEY were right? I feel I have missed something. *(The less said the better - Ed).*

Must shut up and go. I am sending this as an attachment to see if it will work from this end *(It did! - Ed)*. Take care, be good.

 *Clive Soord (54B) writes*

Having had the time to reflect on the articles I sent to you, I now think that they are far too long and self-centred to be of general interest.

If you agree, I would like to re-write them, cutting the length by half and turning them into more of philosophical pieces on time flying, growing old and reflections on the influence which the 3 years at the Apprentice School had on us boy soldiers to pensioners.

I would also like to use the article to urge as many as possible from the intakes of 1954 to make it to the reunion in 2004, so perhaps it would be appropriate to publish in the autumn of 2003, if you have room for it

(Clive - Too Late! Part 1, From Army Apprentice to Civilian, is published in this issue. Your original part 2, could well be converted as you suggest, for 2003 - Ed.)

 *John Dutton (1943 April) e-mails*

I cannot believe what is written in the Summer edition of OBAN where there is a small block of 43 Intake listed on page 18. I agree with most of the intake listings, but the last three are quite wrong. Baxter and Dutton were 43A and Pepper must be 1943 October. When we joined, we were known as April 1943 or October 1943 and the current abbreviations used are now becoming slightly confusing. When the School dispersed for D day in 1944, and later reformed, not all boys returned to their original Companies. So, for instance, the abbreviation could now be 43AA/C, where the first part denotes that a boy joined as 1943 April and was in A Company and the second part that he reformed on his return into C Company - confusing isn't it? I would suggest that the membership joining forms allow space to show the Intake Year/Division/Group, as in my case 1943 April and A Company, initially.

NEW MEMBERS

Name	Intake	Living In	Joined
L R (Les) Adams	64C	Oxford	10 Nov 01
A B (Allan) Aikman	72C	Woking	21 Jan 02
J (James) Ainslie	61B	Haddington	4 Nov 01
K (Ken) Barker	39B	Sunderland	8 Nov 01
A D (Alex) Burnett	62B	Braintree	21 Jan 02
D W (Deryck) Deane	63A	Tiverton	8 Nov 01
I A (John) Grounsell	52A	Valla Beach	11 Feb 02
A W A (Al) Horlock	62B	Kingston on Thames	10 Nov 01
E R (Ted) Horn	52A	Yateley	10 Nov 01
L (Len) Horton	44A	Nottingham	4 Dec 01
A P B (Peter) Humpston	38A	Edgewater	9 Nov 01
B Z (Brian) Mansfield	77C	Billingham	21 Jan 02
R K (Keith) McMonies	68B	Rochester	21 Jan 02
M R (Mal) McWhinnie	70B	Perth	9 Nov 01
C S (Chris) Parsons	69B	Jalon	5 Feb 02
T (Terry) Reddin	52A	Downham Market	11 Feb 02
P J (Pat) Roberts	64C	Victoria Island	14 Nov 01
W A (William) Robinson	52A	Grimsby	5 Nov 01
E F (Eddie) Wakeham	52A	Plymouth	22 Jan 02
P R (Pete) Williams	52A	Plymouth	4 Feb 02

RECENT RESIGNATIONS

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

	Intake	Member No
C S (Chris) Hurd	85A	1540
F H (Fred) Ford	39A	1602
D E (Ginger) Hall	45B	1812

DECEASED

It is with deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following since OBAN 23: When members contact the Membership Secretary to notify him of the death of other members, they are requested to make the contact in writing.

Name	Intake	Member No	Date of Death
A T K Hunter (Tony)	53B	1625	12 February 2002

24126925 SSGT Doherty 1968 - 1992 writes: It is with regret that I have to inform you of the death of my father: 7601321 Sgt Edward T Doherty (known as Jim). Jim passed away peacefully on 13 Jan 2002 after a long illness. He was 76 years of age. He was cremated on 23 Jan 2002 at Telford, Salop. Jim joined Arborfield from the RAOC around 1940/41 and served in many countries around the world; he served his full term of 22 years. Jim leaves behind his wife Irene and three children, Brenda, Keith and Janet. So, if there are any people out there that do know about my father, especially between the years 1988 to 1996 when I lost touch with him, I would be pleased to hear from them. I know he was a member of the AOBA and attended the parades in London and Arborfield; he was also a life member of the REME Association, Membership No LM/59/3444. He gave his address as, 43 Bruce Walk, Windsor, Berks. If anyone can shed light on the address that would be great. One other point: Is the Captain Anderson (Retd), 'Gus' Anderson, if so I would like to hear from him. Please get in contact.

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, including the new yellow (D Company ?) colour, are available from the REME Association at the REME Museum (or the Hon. Sec.) (Tel. No: 0118 9763223 for ordering information).

In addition, the CD of the REDS School song, recorded during Reunion 2001 is now available.

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

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

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

Cheques for ALL the above items should be made payable to: **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, S031 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 74 Cedar Road, Hythe, Southampton, SO4 5PZ. 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

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

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