

OBAN



COMMITTEE

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Arborfield Old Boys Association News

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FROM THE EDITOR

Brian Hornsey (54A)

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Acknowledgements. Printed by Printing Dept, SEAE Arborfield

Issue 27. The target with this issue is for it to be ready for distribution at the Reunion weekend to all members attending and then sent on to those of you who are unable to be present on those days.

The distribution of OBAN 26 was delayed so that it could be sent out with this year's Reunion details. Unfortunately, we are still limited to publication in black and white because the cost for colour printing is so very high.

Please observe the change in format of Page (i). It was felt that the layout of the details of your contacts to the administrative members of the Committee needed clarifying.

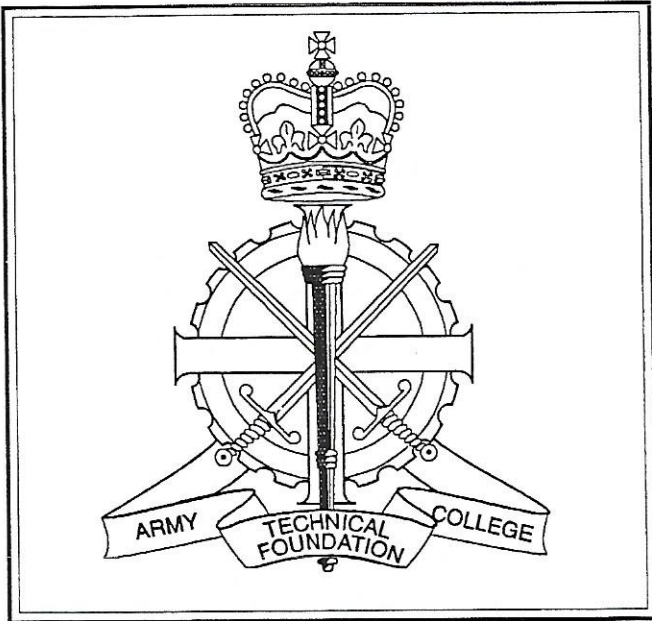
If possible, please continue to send your contributions on disk, preferably Word Perfect 5.1 (DOS version) or MS Word (DOS or Windows Word 6/95 versions). If you are using a later version of Word or whatever, it is usually possible to use the *Save As..* function to also select the type of file in an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

Would you also, please, always include your intake number against your name when you send in your contribution. I then, no longer have to look up the membership list to find out where you fit in the membership maze!

As I now will always repeat, for those of you who don't have access to a computer, I have had a very generous offer from Frank Fendick (45A) who has agreed to type out any articles (not letters) that have been written in manuscript, then he will e-mail the articles to me. Please send those articles to: 1 West End, Northwold, Thetford, Norfolk, IP26 5LE.

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.

Brian Hornsey (54A)



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome to another OBAN and my last article as the Commanding Officer of the College but I will have the opportunity to say farewell personally to those members able to attend the reunion weekend. I do believe that it will even outperform last year's celebration and that is some marker to follow.

The committee is diligently working behind the scenes and you will all be aware that the College's history and web site are taking shape very nicely. After thumbing through the nostalgia I was ready to buy a copy right then at the preview but alas we will have to wait a tad longer until the publishers are sourced and costs driven down. If you want the first edition then put your name down when the Performa's are circulated. The Web site will carry further details.

As covered in my previous article the future of the ATFC at the Arborfield remains uncertain. Indeed, I've received some direction that closure will happen but the issue is when? Looking to the move of Arborfield as a REME site as a whole everything is up for debate, which only serves to add more fog to an otherwise confused situation. As I come to the end of my tour I wish I could be more certain but I can't be.

Possibly of wider interest to you, the member, and is also at the forefront of the committee's mind is the

plan for transition to a new site and how the identity and ethos of the Association is maintained. Quite frankly I don't know the answer but I assure you that it does feature on the 'must do' list. I still remain a firm believer that we need to progress towards the electronic communications link provided by the internet but understandably this will not suit all and thus provision needs to be made for those not able to log-on for whatever reason. I can only see a positive outcome to this but if you have different views then write in and challenge the perception. I am determined, however, to do the best for the association and continue to deliberate the association's title amongst a plethora of other issues. The provision of an all-embracing title is proving a tad sticker than I originally thought!

The committee has a continual sea of change; Bill Pusey has stepped down after years of absolutely hard and dedicated work and a number of others move on. Thank you Bill as you read this article, from all of us. In short, we need vibrant replacements to sustain the continued success of the Old Boys. The responsibilities are not to be taken lightly but the rewards for a job well done are personally satisfying. If you consider that you would like to play an active role in shaping the Old Boys' culture and identity then please write to Bill Cleasby and put your name up for consideration.

Finally, where next for me, if you're interested? I have been fortunate enough to secure a high profile job in Headquarters Land Command in Wilton as the SO1 Combat Service Support operational planner. If you're confused with the title that makes you and I both! I know it is a challenging appointment but after all, that is why most of use joined the Army in the first place.

Less we forget it is the comradeship that counts and for that as chairman and boy soldier before I step off, I thank you all past and present. Look after the team and it will surely look after you. Farewell until another fair day.

Lt Col Derek McAvoy
Chairman AOBA

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Lt Col(Retd) Bill Cleasby (61C)

By the time you read this, the 2003 reunion will be in full swing and thoughts will be turning to the reunion dinner. I had better explain that it is planned to initially distribute the next issue of OBAN to those attending the reunion before sending the rest off to members in the normal way. The 20th of June is still someway off however and I am writing this report on a cold wet day in early May, hoping that the lazy hazy days of summer will kick in very soon. The response to this year's reunion has been tremendous and it looks set to be the best ever in terms of numbers. However, we could still do with some more of the 43 intake. Don't forget it's your Diamond Jubilee.

Two changes to your Committee I need to tell you about. The Commanding Officer of the College, Lt Col Derek McAvoy is leaving on posting for pastures new and is being replaced by Lt Col Andrew Phillips RE. I am sure that all members of the Association will join me in wishing Derek well and thanking him for all that he has done for the AOBA. He will be sadly missed. Bill Pusey is also standing down as the Trustee of the College Trust Fund after a long dedicated service of some 25 years. He would like to thank all the dozens of Committee members he has worked with over the years for their kindness and consideration. Thank you Bill for your wise counsel and we all wish you the very best for the future. Another person I need to thank is Ken Anderson who is doing a tremendous job on the AOBA web-site as well as many other tasks for the Association. He will be talking to members at the AGM about the publication of the 'History of the College' and the plans for its distribution to members. I have had a sneak preview and I have to tell you that

FROM THE HONORARY TREASURER

Major(Retd) Mike Davis (60B)

Subscriptions

I put this in as a reminder to all members. A fee of £15 is payable for Life Membership of the Association. There is an annual Administrative Subscription which can vary, but is presently set at £10. The preferred method of payment is by Direct Debit. In the past some members may have paid by Standing Order or by cheque - all should now be paying Direct Debit.

It appears however that some members are currently paying the Direct Debit of £10 and an old Standing Order of £5. Standing Orders can only be cancelled by the payee - therefore you must contact your Bank and instruct them to cancel your Standing Order!

As the cost to return any £5 subs is prohibitive it is proposed that the proceeds from any over-payments be placed in the charity account. PLEASE CANCEL YOUR STANDING ORDER NOW!

*Yours in Direct Debit
Mike Davis (60B) - Treasurer*

Peter Gripton's work is first class and I am sure that the book will be a great success. Don't forget that it is the first issue that will be worth a fortune in the years to come. May I end by thanking everyone for their continuing support of the Association. It is a great privilege for all of us on the Committee to represent the interests of an organisation with so much character, heritage and shared experiences of loyal service. God Bless.

Bill Cleasby (61C)

RECRUITMENT AND PUBLICITY REPORT

From Ken Anderson (58A)

The AOBA Website

The website continues to gain attraction to Internet visitors around the world and a constant effort is made to update the Archives pages with new pictorial content as well as stories and anecdotes. The AOBA Forum now has over 200 active and subscribing members with an average of 20 discussions being posted each week. The AOBA allows the creation of discussion groups where various topics can be discussed rather than just having one long list. These groups can be thought of as folders in a filing cabinet. One of the great strengths of the Forum will be the ability to create 'threads' of discussions, for example if a member posted a question relating to 'who was last standing at the bar' the whole thread of banter could be posted. Members using the Forum are able to join in and post to discussion groups or initiate their own.

Electronic OBAN

The last two issues of OBAN have now been published on the Web and the feedback from users is encouraging. If members were willing to receive their copy of OBAN in this manner it would create great savings to the Association in postage costs. If you would like to receive your copy this way please complete the form on the Web.

The Arborfield Apprentice

As many readers will know Peter Gripton 56A has been compiling and writing the history of the Army Apprentices School and Colleges at Arborfield for some time now. I now have the honour of being able to assist Peter in moving forward his excellent work to prepare it for publication as a book. In doing so I have enjoyed the pleasure of proof reading his work and can commend it to any old boy. I only wish that it

had been available when I was doing my apprenticeship as if I had it might have helped me find that Field Marshals baton in my knapsack! It is envisaged that the book will comprise some 600 pages of text and photographs with publication towards September 2003. It will be available as both a hardback and paperback. Although costs and prices have yet to be finalised it is envisaged that the hardback will be available for around £15 and the software back for just under £10.

*Ken Anderson (58A)
AOBA Webmaster.*

FROM BOY TO MAN - PART 1 OF 3

By Bill Wenborn March 1941



Bill, RAOC 1942

I think its safe to say that Peter Langley covered our recruit days and quite a few experiences most eloquently in OBAN Issue 24, and in so doing spurred me on to add my penny worth. Congratulations Peter, I enjoyed it and I'm sure so did many others, you were right, you did have too many lads in your barrack room, some of them were in J5.

Your reference to my height amused me, I met Bob Griffen shortly before he died, and his first remark was to the effect that he thought I was bigger than I was. I had to point out that he had grown some what over the years, where as I had not, In fact I was only five foot eight inches when I joined, and am only five foot ten now. Six foot tall fourteen year olds are not abnormal now, but were very rare then.

Staying with the question of size, two of our friends amused me during my service. Both were posted with me to 21 Command Workshops at Burscough Lanes, one was "Pewee" Edwards (I believe ex A Coy). On our way to Burscough, we stopped over night in

Chester. Needless to say, having just escaped from Arborfield, we all trooped out for a "taste" of freedom in the local tavern. Unfortunately the landlady took one look at "Pewee" and said something like "I'm not serving that kid" so we then had the problem of getting drinks to him for the rest of the evening, but it was a good feeling to think we were grown up.

That was February 1945, later, on my return from India about October 1947, while in the Sgts Mess REME transit camp at Otley. I heard a rather gruff voice call my name, on turning round I was confronted by a rather large Sergeant, with a look on his face suggesting I refrain from calling him "Pewee," I took one look at him and the thought never crossed my mind again. Unfortunately, I can not remember his first name, or maybe we never knew it.

The other chap was Bob Nash (C. Coy). About half way through boy service, Bob had a rather serious illness and was taken onto hospital, when he returned, he looked like a broom handle, and was given six months in which to gain a certain amount of weight or be discharged. Bob would go to the cookhouse mid morning and afternoon for extra rations to build him up, and he only just made the required weight in time. We went on to served together, or in close proximity for the next five years, and he never seemed to put any weight on.

About 1965 while on ADME inspections Aldershot, I was inspecting the arms at Sandhurst, the armourer

there told me that Bob was with the Coldstream Guards at Windsor and had a demonstration company at Sandhurst, so it was arranged for us to meet. The next time I was inspecting at Sandhurst, Bob walked up behind me, said "hello Bill," but when I turned round, I really had a shock. There was this great big fellow of about eighteen stone or more, with large heavy jowls, I could hardly recognize him. I know there were a good few years since we last met, but that really was a shock.

That's enough of sizing people up, except to say, I was the same size when I was thirty five as when I left Arborfield. Bob and I were like a couple of bean poles together.

Going back to the period of our recruit training, when the rest of the school had gone home, We found an old bicycle (I don't think it was lost), it was minus brakes, mudguards and a few other parts. We were having great fun racing down the road where the shelters were, towards the back of the armourer's workshop. Taking

an acute left bend, and trying to stay on the road. However, following a few near misses from crashing into a hut, we posted a lad between the road and the hut. Once when it was my turn to be the "stop man," Paddy Silcock being the rider suddenly appeared round the bend with no chance of staying on the road. I grabbed the center of the handlebars, and the front stopped dead, but not the rear, and I then found myself looking Paddy in the eyes from a height of about eight feet in the air and still firmly seated, (all in slow motion). Paddy then decided to part company with the bike and jumped

sorry, just couldn't resist it mate).

Anyway he soon came round, but joking aside we knew we had to get him to a doctor, so the next stage was a barrack room conference to ascertain how it had happened? So the tale was "he came running into the room and tripped over the bumper handle which had dropped down across his path." Now we can get him to a Doctor.

He saw the doctor and all seemed well. Then that evening in the camp hall waiting for the film to start, we used to have a very colourful display on the screen which looked like a mobile kaleidoscope, we were quietly watching this, when Taffy asked, "why is it in black and white tonight Bill?" I think my answer went something like "Oh dear Taffy, you really should not have fallen on your head." Fortunately by Monday morning he was back to normal, whatever that was.

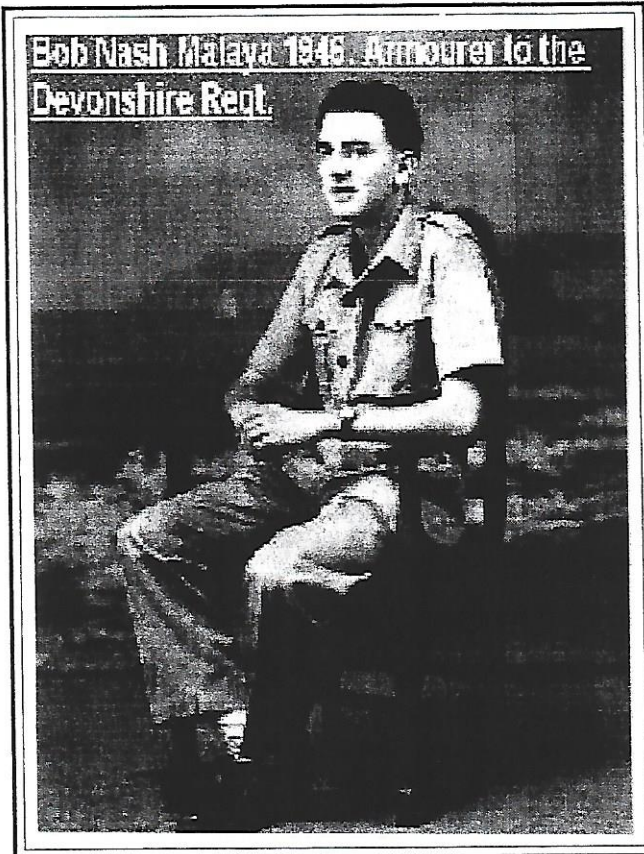
Sorry to say I have never seen him since leaving Arborfield, I do hope you never had any repercussions from that fall Taffy.

When the school closed at the end of February 1944 as I said earlier, I was sent up to Burscough along with Bob Nash, Bill Cranston, Peter Ryan, "Pewee" Edwards, Stan Dunning, Mac. McAlease, and a few others, but sorry to say I can't remember.

One little incident that happened there that I thought was very true, and still makes me smile, was the Armourer's Shop WO1 (who had started there as a National Service L/Cpl and somehow got to WO1) decided to give us a good rollicking. So he got us all in his office and started by telling us he had had enough of our pranks and bad behavior and that he was going to sort us out. Whereby Stan Dunning, always with a dry sense of humour, retorted with, "don't worry sir, where we've just spent the past three years, we were chased around by real soldiers." I don't think the poor chap really appreciated our sense of humour.

While at Burscough in 1944, we started to see the return of some ex-infantry men who had been re-trained in India to be armourers, three of them had just completed 12, 11, and 10 years service in India and Burma. That's what you call overseas service.

One sunny afternoon we were sat round a regimental L/Cpl. Instructing us on the Bren gun, this included the above mentioned three old sweats, who (surprise surprise) were not showing a great deal of interest, so the instructor called on one of them to demonstrate



Bob Nash, Malaya 1946

clear, I managed to stop the bike from falling on him. We certainly didn't wish to damage the bike and spoil the fun, Paddy was a tough "Soldier to be" and soon bounced back, with no damage done.

Another little mishap that occurred later in our boy service, concerned Taffy Howell in J5. Some bright spark decided on a little barrack room gymnastics, the idea was to stand on the towel rail attached to the partition (opposite the NCOs bunk) leap forward, grab the beam, swing forward and land as far up the room as possible. When it came to Taffy, he failed to get a good grip, his feet went up but his head came down, and knocked himself out cold. Now what do we do at a time like this?? ---PANIC!-- Since it was his head, we thought "no great damage done" (if you read this Taffy,

changing a firing pin. Well the demonstration was rather unconventional, but very fast, in fact it was difficult to follow. Then the lad was silly enough to ask where he had learnt that! He just smiled and said something like, "that's how you do it when you have to." We then let the poor lad into our secret, that he had just spent the past half hour teaching about twenty armourers how to strip a Bren gun, I don't remember seeing him again.

The first immediate action when instructing is, make sure you know who you are instructing.

For those who do not know Burscough, it's a nice little village, with two railway stations, one line running from Liverpool through Ormskirk and Burscough to Preston and Blackpool. The other line ran from Southport through Burscough then on to Wigan and Manchester. We spent most of our off duty time in Southport which I would class as a lively seaside town, I thought we had a good posting, and I believe most of our lads would agree.

However, V J day saw Bob Nash and myself on a train heading for the REME mob and holding center at Hucknall near Nottingham on draft ROBBJ. When we arrived, we expected to be able to get out and celebrate, but no such luck, we had to go through the whole procedure of booking in and kiting out, before they would let us out on the town. When we did get out we did our best to catch up, and ended the night dancing round a bonfire somewhere on a bombsight in Hucknall with some of the local talent.

Our olive green kit indicated Far East. In those days everything was secret, but not too difficult to work out. After a couple of days we were transferred to Bestwood lodge on the edge of Arnold, just north of Nottingham (5 miles from where I now live) we stayed there for six weeks.

It was a dreadful tin hut camp, with very poor sanitation arrangements. We paraded every morning in the lodge quadrangle, and would fall in by drafts, to be notified if we were to be shipped out within the next 24 hours. After which the order would be given for the senior ranks to fall out, and junior NCOs to fall in at the rear. They would be detailed to be in charge of various fatigue parties. The first time this happened, we found ourselves on the delightful task of emptying all the camp toilet buckets. We felt this was not very healthy, so from that day on, on the command senior ranks fall out and junior NCOs to the rear, Bob and myself did a smart right turn and very smartly marched off and

through a small door in the corner of the quadrangle. Next stop the NAAFI club in Nottingham. Thank the lord we were never questioned, because we had no answers to any questions. We had learnt as boys that we were unlikely to be challenged as long as what we did, we did it smartly and with "authority."

I must say that apart from the disgusting camp, we had a great time in Nottingham, it was like celebrating the end of the war for six weeks. We had a lot to celebrate since we were destined for Burma. By the time we got

Poona Traffic Policeman 1945



Poona Traffic Police

on the ship, not only were we stone broke, but had sold anything that would raise a few bob.

Our fate was an old Dutch 28,000 ton liner called the Johan van Oldebarneveld (or something like). The Germans took it from the Dutch and we captured it from them. A rather uneventful journey to Bombay, except for breaking down in the infamous Bay of Biscay in very rough seas for eight hours, (not a pretty sight to be amongst 5000 sea sick soldiers.)

Our deck was about six feet above the port side propeller, this had the effect of juddering the whole area every time the ship's nose went down and the stern came out of the water. This does not make for comfortable travel.

This was our first introduction to sleeping in hammocks. The closest comparison one can make is to a tin of sardines, and the smell down in the bowels of the ship (five or six decks down) cannot be described; but it is amazing what one can, or has to get used to.

The sleeping space in these hell holes, consisted of the seating requirement for 400 men at dining tables of twenty to a table, with the bench seats quite closely positioned under them. There was a narrow strip of floor space in front of the hammock storage racks and a gangway between the rows of tables. When all the hammocks were slung and occupied, we were all touching each other. This is where we ate, drank and slept for three weeks. You could say it was a breath of fresh air to get up on deck. It certainly was a treat to see Bombay.

We eventually ended up in a desert camp at a place called Dhond, on a 2000 foot plateau, about fifty miles from Poona, we were attached to a Sierra Leon unit of the 81st West African division for a couple of months. It was the first time we found out where we were heading, which was to be the 82nd Division, Royal West African Frontier Force in Burma.

Soon after we arrived, another draft joined us, I believe it was first attempt to fly troops to India. They had been crammed into "York" aeroplanes (these I understood to be converted bombers). They had to sit along the sides of the fuselage for 24 hours, with no windows, nor any form of comfort, it really was terrible. I believe it was quite some time, and with more suitable planes before it was tried again.

Our next move was by train across India to Calcutta in mid December, a three days journey, and a real Eye opener, the utter poverty really is shocking, and at times quite upsetting. Perhaps the worst thing is the fact that we just accept it for what it is, but of course we are just passing through and as individuals would not be able to make any difference. Anyone who has been to India will know what I am talking about, it is hard to explain.

Many of the beggars we saw, had been deformed by their parents when babies, to enable them to be good beggars. We only had two days in Calcutta but managed a good night out after being cooped up in a desert camp fifty miles from the nearest town for two months.

We were then put on another ship bound for Rangoon. I've forgotten it's, but it was designed to be used as a hospital ship during the war, and destined to carried troops in, and then lay off and waited to take off any

casualties. It did not have a Red Cross as the Japs would have used the cross as an aiming mark. That's the way they are.

When we first heard we were to travel on a hospital ship we thought we would be traveling in style, but we should have known better. The beds had metal slats with about six to eight inch squares for arms and legs to fall through, a couple of blankets but no mattress of course. (we can't have the men being too comfortable can we)? Bring back the hammocks, please

We arrived in a transit camp just out from Rangoon after five days at sea on Christmas Eve 1945, and had a great Christmas and New Year in this camp. We also had a chance to see what was left of Rangoon. It was obvious it had been a beautiful city, but it was sad to see how badly it had been damaged.

There was a cluster of camps in this area, including ours, for in coming troops, and another for homeward bound troops. About two o'clock in the morning following boxing day, (with a high proportion of us sleeping off good Christmas celebrations), we were woken by a burst of small arms fire, including a machine gun, followed by a couple of grenades. One of the camps near-by was under attacked by bandits (I believe we called them Dakoits), we were later informed that some of these bands were led by Japanese officers and NCOs.

What we had not realized before, was that the area command center was close by, and we were able to gathered from the conversation over the air, that it should have been the homeward bound camp's turn to turn out. The fact that many had been celebrating they were to be on their way home the next day. I don't think I need explain the nature of the conversation we over heard. These guys had just finished fighting up and down Burma for up to four years, and had no intention of stopping one on their last day in Burma. They eventually turned out a unit of Royal Engineers.

For our part, we had no idea what was happening or where the firing was coming from, and since we were already lying on the ground, it seemed a good idea to stay put. It was of course a tented camp. We never did find out what it was all about, but only that there were no casualties. It was a good introduction to Burma, a very violent country.

JOHN SALLIS – ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE.

By George Vince, (57A)

I first met John Sallis in 1947 when he was stationed with the Royal Horse Guards in Menden, situated in the Ruhr in what was then the British sector of occupied Germany. Both my mother and I had been in the first wave of families to join their husbands in Germany and had just spent four days travelling from Tilbury docks to Cuxhaven on the mouth of the Elbe, on a ship called the 'Empire Hallidale'. This was a renamed German ship that was being conveniently used on the trooping run and offered zero comforts. The four-day duration was occasioned by the fact that the North Sea had frozen over (1947 was a vicious winter) and we had to wait for icebreakers to get us out of the ice before we could enter port.

John was serving with the Royal Horse Guards and my father was in what was then the newly formed REME, attached to the Horse Guards. (My father was originally in the RAOC from which REME was formed). John and his family lived in a large house opposite the one where my parents and I were living in Hasensprunge Strasse. I was only six years of age and full of wonderment at my new surroundings and lifestyle. Having left the UK, where we had been living in a rented semi-detached bungalow with my mother, I now found myself with my parents (there were only three of us) in a huge five bedroom house with a large attic and basement. It wasn't until some years afterwards that I found out that all of the Horse Guard families, in common with many other military families throughout the occupied zone, lived in commandeered properties i.e. the German occupants had been evicted and the British moved in. It wasn't until much later that the situation was rectified and the German owners were allowed back into their own properties.

John Sallis had two daughters, Ann aged seven and Valerie aged six, so we three all played and went to school together. 'School' during those early days consisted of going to Iserlohn for the day in the 'regimental bus' (which was a converted Bedford QL truck) and being 'taught' by whoever was available. I seem to remember that the CO's daughter was co-opted into looking after us most of the time and that her great contribution towards our furtherment was teaching us the finer points of the new found art of origami!

It was during this time that I carried out an act of vandalism that was to have significant repercussions in later life. If John Sallis had one passion in life it was his garden. He would spend hours tending his many splendid vegetables and soft fruit plants. It was whilst playing with his daughters in his garden one day that I took it upon myself to rip up his prize rhubarb that he had been nurturing and use the stems as 'umbrellas'. Needless to say, John was not amused and took

it upon himself to register his complaint with my father in no uncertain terms. I was 'confined to barracks' and not allowed out to play for some time, such was the gravity of my 'crime'.

In 1949, the regiment was moved to a disused ex-Luftwaffe airfield just outside of a village called Wesendorf, adjacent to the East German border. At the time the border was in imminent danger of being sealed, resulting in a tide of refugees fleeing to the Western sector. The majority of the refugees fled with next to nothing and sought refuge wherever they could. As already mentioned, Wesendorf was close to the border, which resulted in many of the refugees taking up residence in the destroyed buildings of the airfield and the surrounding areas.

The Horse Guards spent approximately 18 months in this location during which time I, and many other of the Horse Guards children, including Ann and Valerie, learned to share with the refugee families that had become our involuntary neighbours. My mother, in common with the other mothers, would pass on unused clothing and food to the German families, who were still living in appalling conditions. This was a very sobering period, the visions of which have remained with me throughout.

After Wesendorf, the regiment was posted to Wolfenbittel, where it then remained until 1952. Throughout this period I was still in close contact with John Sallis and his family, so much so that he became known as 'Uncle John' to me.

Although my father was in REME and should have been posted early on; he had formed an affinity with the regiment such that, whenever a posting came through, the Colonel would be notified and he personally saw to it that 'Staff Vince' remained 'attached'. (An overriding factor may have been that, being a VM by trade, he maintained all of the officer's cars 'at very reasonable rates'!).

The Horse Guards were next posted to Cyprus, around 1954, to sort out the EOKA uprising. John Sallis went with them but, as history shows, he was then ERE'd to the Army Apprentices School (AAS) Arborfield as 'RSM' (or RCM, which is the Household Cavalry equivalent). I too went to Cyprus in 1955 with my parents and it was there that I later joined the Army and was posted to the AAS to become 23503101 A/T Vince as part of the 57A intake.

Now for the dilemma! Quite obviously, John Sallis knew that I was joining the AAS and that I would be spending the next three years under his watchful eye. So it was that, within a few days of my arrival, I was told to 'get my arse down to the RCM's office, sharp'! Once there, John Sallis explained to me 'how it was gonna be'. In essence, I was to keep absolutely silent about our previous relationship as he feared that, should it leak out, I would become a 'marked man' with all that could be entailed.

I left his office wondering what I had let myself in for, trying to decide what my parents would say when I told them that, after only a few days in the Army, I wanted 'out'! And so I began my basic training in Cpl Elliot's squad. In common with my counterparts I did not know whether I was punched, bored, reamed or countersunk! On a Saturday morning, some three weeks into my training, I was approached by the Orderly Sergeant who enquired, 'is your name Vince'? Having owned up to being the possessor of that name, I was told to report to the RCM's house for 'special' fatigues.

For those who can remember, the RCM's house was the cottage at the top of the hill having turned right outside of the main gate. (How many of us can also remember that the Reading bus stop was directly opposite his lounge window, which gave him the opportunity to make sure that none of his charges made their way into town with anything other than the correct attire!). So off I went, full of trepidation, trying to work out in my mind how I was going to fit 'special fatigues' in with the other 'very essential' tasks I had been allocated such as dusting the roof beams for the 50th time and 'bumping' the floor with 'Zebo'. (Oh the memories!).

When I arrived at the RCM's house, I was invited in and was given a slap up meal and welcomed by the family. I spent the rest of the day there enjoying the luxury of a 'normal' household, amidst the chaos of what was 'Basic Training'. At around about 7pm, I returned to camp having been briefed by John Sallis as to what to say to my counterparts in the barrack room i.e. 'he had me digging the garden and then I had to do the washing up. After that I had to 'bull' his shoes and leather belt'. What I did not know was that John Sallis had instructed the Orderly Sergeant to tell the room NCO that, due to my very heavy workload whilst on 'special fatigues' I was to be excused the impending room inspection. My room mates, having heard my account of the many and varied tasks carried out whilst on 'special fatigues', were in total agreement and the 'status quo' was thus maintained. Other similar 'special fatigue' sessions were embarked upon during my six-month basic training period and, on each occasion, my counterparts in the barrack room were 'very understanding'.

At the end of the basic training phase I was transferred to 'D' Company. As with much of my time at the AAS this was not by chance! The Company CSM at that time was someone called SCM (Squadron Corporal Major) Jack Cosgrove. Jack Cosgrove, as the rank suggests, was also ERE'd from (you guessed it) the Royal Horse Guards. Jack was also someone I had known throughout my childhood and so it was that I had not one, but two, 'Guardian Angels', making sure that my passage through the AAS followed a smooth and predetermined path.

Lucky ba****d I hear you say. Not so, I can assure you!

The 'down' side of it all.

In an effort to make sure that I was not seen to be receiving 'preferential treatment', thereby arousing suspicion, John Sallis would determine during his many inspections that my boots had not been cleaned, that my S.D.'s had not been pressed and that my buff belt had cracks in it. This resulted in far more 'Rodeo's' than I care to think about. On more than one occasion my colleagues stated 'I think he's got it in for you'. Little did they know!

Whilst doing 'conventional' as opposed to 'special' RCM's fatigues on one occasion, I mentioned that I did seem to get more than my fair share of his untoward 'attention', to which he replied, 'It'll make a man of you. Besides, I haven't forgotten that you tore up my rhubarb'. It just goes to show that what goes around comes around!

During my time at the AAS, my parents had occasion to visit me and, quite naturally, John Sallis made them very welcome. He took great pride in showing them around the School and informing them of the many different aspects of the training carried out there. It was during this visit that I became aware of the huge amount of affection John had for the job he had been given and his very genuine respect for the A/Ts in his charge.

It must be remembered that in many ways John Sallis was given a 'poisoned chalice' in that he took over from the most significant and popular RSM the AAS had ever had i.e. RSM McNally. He could quite easily have been overwhelmed by the inevitable loyalties and doctrines left behind by him, instead of which he set about gaining his own loyal following and respect, a task in which he succeeded admirably. He was respected by both the A/Ts and the permanent staff alike as being a 'firm but fair' man. He also had a very human side which, as already recounted in my preamble, came to the fore in a number of ways.

It was an indication of the loyalty he engendered that nobody ever found out about the occasion when Fred Silver's RPs had to extricate both him and his bicycle from 'A' Company's flowerbed. The apparent reason for his demise was that he failed to negotiate the corner by the Gymnasium after a rather heavy drinking 'session' in the Mess!

I look back on my AAS days, as I am sure many of my counterparts do, as being a very formative part of my life. The disciplines acquired there have enabled me to lead a much more 'rounded' life than many of the people I have encountered in civilian life, who have never undergone a similar experience. John Sallis personally made sure that I learned those disciplines for which, although I found it hard at the time, I now thank him.

Editor's Note. During the third Committee Meeting in 1999 of the AOBA, Lt Col Jim Mitchell stated that the new Lecture Theatre at the College had been named, 'The Beachley Hall'. The following article was originally produced for the 75th Anniversary of the School at Beachley and I thought it might interest Arborfield members (at the risk of being hung from the flagpole) to know something more about our old rival School - Ed.

BEACHLEY - 75 YEARS

History

In 1919 the War Office proposed to open a training school for 1000 apprentice tradesmen. The course was to last 3 years, to be followed by 8 years Regular Army service and 4 years on the Reserve.

Beachley was not the original choice of the Army Council, but in 1923 they found at Beachley a ready-made camp consisting of scores of huts, a cookhouse, a dining room and a large area covered by what had been a national shipbuilding yard for the construction of ships to replace those sunk by the U-boat fleets. The area had lain idle for several years and was strewn with redundant wartime material and equipment awaiting disposal, while railway lines ran hither and dither. During World War I the camp had also been used to house enemy prisoners.

In 1924, the War Office opened the Boys' Technical School at Beachley under the command of the first Commandant, Lt Colonel VTR Ford - 1923 to 1927.

The first occupants had to contend with less than ideal conditions, but by the end of 1924 at least the huts had been repainted in a cherry fashion - green and white inside with red roofs. Two bath houses with showers, enough for 100 boys at a time were soon provided together with a Regimental Institute with a supper bar and billiards.

In 1929 the school was re-named *The Army Technical School (Boys)* and in 1931 the school flag was adopted - a red, green and blue horizontal tri-colour.

The Beachley Old Boys' Association was formed in 1939 and by 1983 over 3,500 ex-boys had become members, so it would seem that their time at 'Beastly Beachley' as some called it, instilled a lasting feeling of camaraderie. In 1999 The Association had around 700 members.

In 1947 the school was re-named as *The Army Apprentices School* and a new badge adopted, followed in 1966 by *The Army Apprentices College*. A modernisation programme began in 1958, completed 10 years later when the then Commandant suggested that the history of Beachley should be written. The chronicle was taken up in 1983 to mark the camp's 50th anniversary, the result being the book written by Major D Thomas.

By 1983 the College was providing a wider range of training exercises making life more interesting for the trainees. There were all sorts of expeditions and work projects at home and abroad. Included was the providing of assistance to local organisations in heavy duty work, such as clearing Lydney's Norchard Colliery and Power Station site for the Dean Forest railway and installing the Foudroyant Cannon in the Caldicot Castle courtyard.

The College finally closed in 1994, when Ivor Anthony - himself an ex-boy (48A Group) became Honorary Lt Colonel in charge of getting the camp ready for its new role as the barracks for an infantry battalion.

Recollections

The following glimpses of life at Beachley in the early times and later are recollected by:

Major CT Davies in his book entitled, *Life in the Thirties*, himself an ex-boy,

Major D Thomas RAEC in his book entitled, *The Story of the Army Apprentices College, Chepstow, 1923-1983*,

Captain RA Braithwaite RAEC in his book entitled, *An Apprentice in the Eighties*, and by other ex-boys.

In describing his experiences, Major Davies writes,

'For me it was an experience I didn't enjoy but for which I am grateful. Most of the apprentice tradesmen of the period would tell you that the hardest soldiering they ever did was at Chepstow - and they meant it!'

New Entrants

Most successful applicants on arrival were well under 15, the normal school leaving age being 14. Starting pay was 11^d a day (just under 5p) rising later to 1/5^d (one

shilling and five pence - just over 7p) with the addition of 'Lady Astor's sixpence' which did not allow much in the way of gracious living, especially as the boys were allowed only 1/- (5p) a week as pocket money. Things improved only slightly during the war years (1939 - 1945) when the weekly pocket money was increased to a princely 3/- (15p). The balance was paid when the boys went on leave - less, of course, *barrack damages*.

The huts were bare, fitted only with uncomfortable sliding section beds with 3 square mattresses, blankets, a pillow but no sheets (during the day these beds were 'made up' to look like chairs and you were courting trouble if you dared to sit on them), individual foot lockers, a wooden table top supported on two massive iron trestles, two stalwart forms and cleaning utensils.

In the centre of each hut stood a brick chimney containing 2 fireplaces, back-to-back, each with its own mantle piece (known as the *Cenotaph*) and a huge iron coal bunker. These fireplaces were the only source of heating during the winter, but were only lit at the weekends due to a meagre weekly coal ration.

Reveille was a traumatic experience. The boys all slept like logs and at the crack of dawn a bugler came, blaring away outside. As dreadful a sound to a sleeping lad as can be imagined. (*I quite liked it - Ed*).

Breakfast

After reveille there followed washing, and for older boys, shaving, in cold water before being marched to breakfast.

The food was universally condemned as terrible. There was a plethora of such delicacies as beans (of many varieties) rissoles and cabbage with bread and axle-grease marg used as a filler. One of the ever pressing difficulties was that as extremely fit rapidly growing lads, they were always hungry and there never seemed to be enough to eat. Some lucky lads got food parcels from home, but most had to survive on what was dished out.

After hut cleaning and inspection, the classes began. One good thing about workshop training was that the boys received a free mug of tea and a biscuit at the mid-morning break. The tea was the usual stuff, but the biscuits were unique. They were square, thick and really hard. Most boys saved them for later consumption - they responded to gnawing and many a

happy hour was spent in *rat-like* activities.

Leisure Time

At the end of the day, which included rigorous sports, the boys refuge was the NAAFI. This was a pretty austere place. The small amount allowed for pocket money didn't allow much in the way of indulgence, but the NAAFI was warm in winter and boasted several billiard tables.

Discipline

A lot of time was spent in keeping uniforms and kit in *apple pie* order to the extent that many used their meagre funds to buy duplicate kit for inspection purposes. Discipline was harsh, with fatigues and confinement to barracks being liberally imposed.

In describing a regular gang of boys who just could not keep out of trouble, Major Davies writes, 'strangely enough, these *bolos*, as they were called, turned out to be first class soldiers in later life, while a lot of the A/T NCOs did not.'

Leave

Everyone looked forward to leave, though in the early days free travel warrants were not provided and many of the boys could not afford the fare home 3 times a year.

Major Davies writes again, 'When we at last got home, it was marvellous to be in the company of adults who actually liked us, even if they were our own parents.'

Hobbies

Evening times were allocated to hobbies and the occasional *sweat night* when platoon members were given the task of making an already tidy room spotless.

Captain Braithwaite writes in his *Amalgam of Trainees' Impressions*, 'it was guaranteed that every apprentice was left each night with only one aim and that was to get some hard earned sleep.'

LIFE IN THE BAND

By Tony Domoney (56B)

I was sat thinking about 'the 50s' at Arborefield the other day and, after reading the most recent AOBA magazine, it occurred to me that I had not read anything much about the School Band in a long time. Whilst most of the magazine's story-tellers reminisce about their first days in 'HQ' and later movements to the Companies, I thought I might write a few notes on my own experiences in the Band.

I recall that I took a long time settling in at 'boys' school' and really didn't much enjoy all the square bashing, fatigues and 'bull' dished out by our Corporal of the Horse and other drill instructors at the time. I was not one of the natural leaders of our Division and I was not a wimp either, just one of those boys who, at the tender age of 15, had no idea what they really wanted or where they were going. Instead, I found myself having to just survive at Arborefield, along with the 'cut and thrust' of jostling for position and dodging as many 'bullies' as I could.

I really didn't enjoy my first six months at all and was on the verge of packing up and going home to Mum! Parades on a Saturday morning, marching on the huge (in those days) Square, presenting the 0.303 and saluting the man on his horse, under the steely eyes of RCM Sallis, was to me a complete bore. I had to find a way out and 'The Band' seemed to be my only salvation.

And so I reported to Band Sergeant Major Bagley, who I think was from the 'Inniskillings', with the intention of playing a musical instrument that I already 'knew everything about'. (I should mention that I had previously completed about 6 months instruction, playing the piano, until my mother, an accomplished pianist, and the teacher both gave up on me!)

"Of course I can read music", I replied, when questioned by the Bandmaster as to my musical ability.

"OK then, what instrument do you want to play?" he asked.

"The saxophone", I answered.

"You haven't got the lips for a sax, so it's the trumpet for you or nothing", He replied.

"What's that?" I said, by now feeling thoroughly despondent.

"Haven't you heard of Eddie Calvert?" he asked.

I said, "Of course, Sir". (I had a 78 rpm record of him playing "Oh my Papa".)

Then he said, "Go and pick that trumpet up, blow it and let's hear you make a noise then".

So I picked the trumpet up and blew into the mouthpiece, making a noise like a dying elephant and nearly blowing my own head off! This must have caused him a certain amount of amusement, because he said "You'll do, come down Tuesday evenings for practice, go to the Stores and get your 'Blues' and be ready for parade on Saturday".

By the end of that evening I could play one single note with a great deal of effort. I guess that night I must have celebrated with a couple of NAAFI vanilla slices (my favourite, as beer was not then allowed).

It was certainly the Band that kept me at Arborefield, definitely not the Fitters course, nor all the high jinks around the Camp or the WVS, the NAAFI, Sport or Church facilities - but the Band, all under the good-humoured leadership of Band Sergeant Major Bagley.

We practiced at least twice a week and, under his skilled tutoring, I learned the range of notes available on the trumpet. I learned also that I was just one of many 'musicians' and that every note I played properly was only as important as that by each other player in his Band. Every individual player relied on each other to play the whole musical score. Music is not just the output of one trumpet but each separate note played is a word in a musical story. That's what we were told and I

have never forgotten that. This was a team that I could relate to, unlike my clumsy efforts with the 'square bashers'.

I actually started to enjoy parades now, even the Adjutant on his horse seemed to be right somehow. Also, the soldiers marching seemed to have a lighter spring in their steps as we played the more popular marches, or even 'pop music' played at marching speed. Church services took on a new meaning, especially when soldiers' favourite hymns were played. I was doing my bit and felt good doing it.

External presentations were great. One of the 'perks' was for the Band to play at Agricultural and Festival days at towns and villages, mainly around the counties of Hampshire and Berkshire. This usually meant a whole day out from Arborfield, travelling in the comfort of a bus, playing to the public as we sat resplendent in uniform (very much in vogue in those days), without the fear of terrorist bombs and such like. Just the niceties of life and pretty girls to ogle (I fell in love many times!), followed by a beer or three - out of sight of Mr Bagley of course. The Band played on and I thrived.

I recall one inspiring visit to Kneller Hall, the Military Academy of Music. Having been entertained to a splendid evening, a number of us were approached by an Officer of the Academy and asked if we would be interested in transferring to the Academy for a career in music. I was sorely tempted but a little bird suggested 'no'. As destiny would have it, that was a good choice, but that is another story.

BSM Bagley was right for us 'young uns'. He was very much a father figure and totally different to the Company Sergeant Majors, who seemed to delight in scaring the wits out of me! He found time to teach me, having much patience as I explored the full trumpet range and kept falling over every note en route. He instilled in me the meaning of teamwork, the ethics of working together as a Band to entertain and, in many ways, the whole meaning of music. I am eternally grateful to that great man. A chap called Parker eventually took over around 1958 (I think) but he never inspired

me and seemed, in my humble opinion, a rather poor replacement.

However, my penalty for being in the Band was to be trained separately at rifle and parade drill out of hours by some 'mad' Sergeant. But somehow that was easier, now that I was a 'trumpeter', even my 'hand and eye' skills at the workbench improved as I progressed through the Divs. My main goal was to eventually play the trumpet properly like Eddie Calvert, the Fitters' course was only a means to an end. Meanwhile, the rest of the camp activities, especially sport, provided me with the lungpower necessary to blow the horn.

Passing out of the School in 1959 was an emotional experience, as I was by then the Apprentice Band Sergeant, leading the Band as my own colleagues passed through those hallowed gates to disperse to their different Army bases. Perhaps that was my only regret, as I never truthfully carried my gun through the gates. I eventually passed the Fitters' course, and actually came second to Dick Hampton; played hockey for the School, even got my 'half colours'; I did my bit in the Cross-country and High Jump for 'D' Company but, above all, I ended up being able to play the trumpet. I felt I had achieved everything.

Today I still play first trumpet in a small band, having gained some experience in a small orchestra, town brass bands in many countries and even a Jazz band. I was 'Hash horn' in the Hash-House Harriers for a number of years, that was a laugh a minute. I never made the 'big time' and no doubt old Eddie Calvert would be cringing in his grave at every false note that I play, but it has been a lot of fun and I am sure he would understand. Sadly my ability to play has now become hampered by arthritic fingers and thumbs. This is probably the result of wielding spanners on helicopter rotor-heads, or working on small aircraft undercarriages in rain, snow or desert conditions as an Aircraft engineer. Or it could even be damaged hands caused by fighting at Arborfield! Whatever, I shall play as long as I can and enjoy every precious moment.

TEMPUS FUGIT

Part 2 - From Second Career to Retirement

By Clive Soord (54B)

(This is the second part of Clive's article; From Army Apprentice to Pensioner. - Ed)

In Part 1, I covered the years from boys' service in 1954 to leaving the army in 1984. (You may have noticed an incorrect caption under the first photograph, it should have been '54B Instrument Mechanics'). Part 2 covers the transition to civvy street up to retirement.

Starting a new career in middle-age can be quite a daunting prospect which most of us have had to face up to sooner or later. The remarkable thing is just how diverse our choices of second career have been. Is this testament to the versatility and flexibility, amongst other things, which the three years at Arborfield gave us?

Although I had enjoyed most of my time in the army, after nearly 30 years (including the 3 at Arborfield) I was more than ready to leave for civvy street. I was particularly glad to leave behind duties, the formalities of the ranking structure and being liable for posting at a moment's notice. Jeanette and I were looking forward to a bit more stability in civvy street. However, the grass does appear greener on the other side!

Because we were happy in our home in Salisbury, I looked for a job in the area and was offered one as Projects Co-ordinator at Wallop Industries, the pyrotechnics company based just opposite the AAC Centre at Middle Wallop. One of my main project responsibilities was looking after a large contract to supply chaff and flare dispensing equipment to the Iranian Navy. Soon after I joined, tension in the Gulf area increased and the government cancelled the export licence for the equipment after a large percentage had already been manufactured. This caused panic at Wallop Industries and 40 workers out of 200 were made redundant. The stability Jeanette and I had been looking forward to had lasted less than six months! Of course we all now accept that 'jobs for life' are a thing of the past but it can be a hard lesson to learn.

Job prospects in the Salisbury area were not good at that time so I decided to apply to Westland Helicopters where I had a large number of contacts from my days with the MAGs. I was offered the position of Head of Survivability, in charge of a department of five engineers, with responsibility for improving the survivability of military helicopters.

I was really given the job in anticipation of the company getting the order for the Light Attack Helicopter (LAH) based on the Agusta 129. This was in August 1984. As so often happens, the MoD changed the requirement and the LAH order never materialised. (Instead, the LAH became

the AH and the order for Apache helicopters was eventually placed, through Westland, over ten years later).

After the discipline and organisation of the army, the relative chaos and lack of discipline of industry in general and Westland in particular, was a bit of a culture shock. I was initially taken aback after my first few meetings in the company. Nobody seemed to take any notice of actions agreed at the last meeting and 'punctuality' seemed to have a different meaning, nobody arrived on time and 15 minutes late was about the norm. The culture seemed to be one of 'knowledge is power' so each individual was not keen to explain his little bit of expertise.

As on several occasions in the army, once again I felt a bit out of my depth. Much of the work in my department involved mathematical modelling which was way over my head. However, after a year, I managed to gain the trust of those in my department and seemed to be getting on top of the job when the first Westland crisis struck in late 1985.

The cause of the crisis was the failure of the LAH order to materialise, the large cost over-run on the systems for the Indian Navy Sea Kings and the failure of the Westland 30 to break into the civil market. Large scale redundancies were announced and the Head of Survivability, together with his department, failed to survive! This was just after my family had moved from Salisbury to Yeovil. It seemed to be a case of 'out of the frying-pan into the fire'!

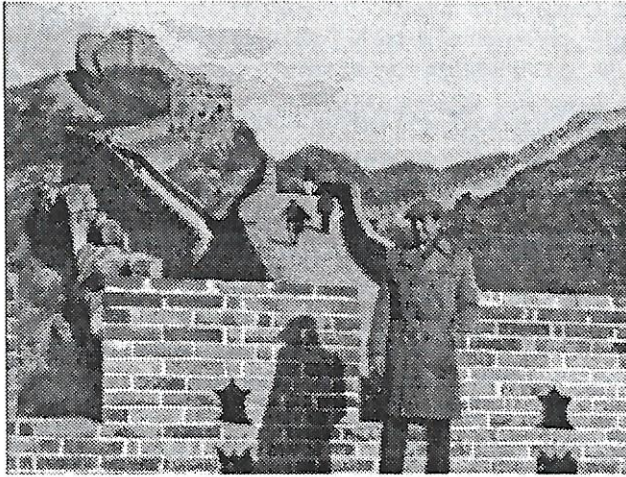
After a couple of months unsuccessfully looking for another job, I was offered one in Westland's Marketing Department, on a lower salary, which I accepted even though I could hardly spell 'marketing' let alone understand what it was all about! It turned out to be another one of life's crossroads and a blessing in disguise.

There are many text book definitions of 'marketing'. The salesmen maintained that it is that part of the sales process which lacks any accountability. There may be a grain of truth in that and it may be why I took to it like a duck to water! The success or failure of a marketing campaign may not be known for up to ten years or longer, by which time the people responsible have long gone!

So a marketeer I became and grew to enjoy it. I slowly progressed to become the Product Marketing Manager for the new EH101 helicopter and travelled the world to let everyone know what a marvellous machine it is. In fact I did far more travelling with Westland than I ever did with the army.

In my fifteen years with Westland, there seemed to be some sort of company crisis every two years when there would be a fresh bout of redundancies. If I had been looking for stability, it seems that I had come to the wrong place. A year after losing my job in the Survivability Department, The really big Westland crisis struck. It became a big political issue and Michael Heseltine resigned from the cabinet over

it. I managed to survive that one by the skin of my teeth and the experience helped me to survive the many other minor crises after that.



Marketing on the Great Wall of China

As with my army career, so also in industry, there came a time when I realised that I was not going to progress any further up the promotion ladder. When ambition drains away so does motivation. The pressure to make myself indispensable was no longer there and I began hoping that I would be made redundant at the next crisis. But sod's law intervened. Westland was taken over by GKN which had the financial muscle to take a long term view. Most of the redundancy and early retirement packages were withdrawn and I was left to contemplate the mating habits of ducks from my office overlooking the duck pond. Suddenly, from being under more or less constant pressure, I found myself under no pressure at all. I should have enjoyed it but instead found it rather depressing.

Just when I was thinking of calling it a day and taking early retirement before 60 on standard (not very generous) terms, I was offered the job of managing the company's office in Ottawa (office boy and dogs'-body) and with helping the campaign to sell the EH101 to the Canadians for their replacement Search and Rescue helicopter. Jeanette and I moved to Ottawa to an apartment over the office. We spent just over a year there and managed to see a great deal of that marvellous country. To top it all, after much political and industrial pressure from our competitors, we eventually won the contract in 1998. Although I had played a very minor part in the overall campaign, I was able to bask in some of the reflected glory of the success! The year in Canada was probably the most enjoyable of my careers in both the army and industry.

For anyone contemplating a second career, I can recommend marketing, particularly if it is with a large international company. There will be lots of travel, you will fly business class and stay in five star hotels and generally live a life of luxury while you are on the road. The difficulty comes when you have to pay your own way in retirement and revert to economy class and two star bed and breakfast!

Retirement



The EH101 Cormorant SAR Helicopter

Returning to my old job at Westland in Yeovil was a bit of an anticlimax. As I was now approaching 60, I could take retirement without penalty, in fact, the company provides a generous bonus payment up to the age of 65 to compensate for the state retirement pension. I retired soon after my 60th birthday in August 1999.

While Jeanette and I were in Canada, my son had 'looked after' our house in Yeovil. When we got back we found that things were as bad as we had expected! The garden was overgrown and just about every room needed redecorating, enough work to keep me going for at least five years!

I'm still compiling my list of things to do. The list gets longer by the day and I rarely seem to cross anything off. I always seem to be busy but don't seem to be achieving much. "So what's new?!" remarked an ex-colleague and cynic from Westland.

Jeanette and I are now getting to grips with retirement and doing what pensioner are supposed to do. We enjoy looking after our grandchildren but the real pleasure comes with handing them back to their parents! We have joined the Westland Retirement Association and go to coffee mornings, tea dances and rambles, we are no longer tied to weekends so we go away during the week, Jeanette has taken up bowls and I'm still struggling to play golf, I dabble with my PC without ever quite mastering it and as I look around the house and garden, I keep adding to my list of things to do. I now understand all the other pensioners who remarked that they never know where the time goes!

Reflections

I look back on my three years at the Apprentice School as having had the greatest impact on my life. The basic trade training taught me to be resourceful and, to this day, I still manage to surprise myself and my wife with the number of repair jobs I can fix with makeshift tools and bits from the gash box.

The three years was certainly character building. It made me a much tougher person, able to look after myself in most situations, it helped me to get on with others and taught me the basics of man management and how to work as a team. In fact, it probably provided the foundation for most of what I achieved in later life. If there was a negative, it was that the environment encouraged the stiff upper lip and the suppression of emotions. I still find it difficult to show my true feelings sometimes.

Was there also an element of brain washing? From Apprentice School days and throughout mans service, the importance of not being late for parade or for duty was drummed into us. Until recently, I used to have a recurring dream (or nightmare) of being late for parade or missing a duty because I had not read Part 1 Orders. Another ex-army friend has confided that he also suffers similar dreams. I am curious to know how common this is.

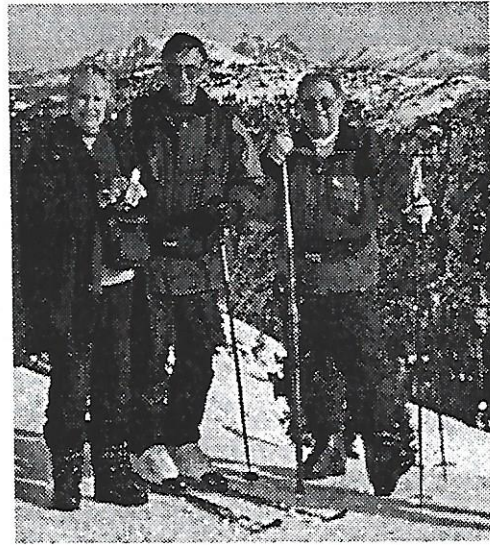
I still polish my shoes, but not quite so often, using the same brushes I was issued with as a boy in 1954. I also still have my original issue greatcoat up in the attic somewhere but it's now a very tight fit.

I often wonder how life treated the rest of my intake, especially those, like me, who were Instrument Mechanics. Terry Bunyard was on the same artificer course as me and I know that he went on to be commissioned and was very much involved with the army pentathlon team. I bumped into Robin Tomsett a couple of times, the last was in about 1967 when he was buying up old property to renovate and then sell off. If he kept that up he is probably a millionaire by now. Dickie Richards became a helicopter pilot in the AAC and turned into John Richards! (Quite a few ex-boys dropped their nicknames!) I believe he then went on to get a commission in the RAF as a helicopter pilot. When last seen, Jim Ashworth was happily working for a brewery. About the only ex-boy I have kept in touch with through the years is Len Symonds (54A). Our families went, together, on a skiing holiday to Austria recently and Len and I are thinking of forming the Geriatric Ski Club of Great Britain!

I've been to a couple of reunions at Arborfield in the last ten years and was struck by how much things have changed. The apprentices of today, boys and girls, have a very different regime to the one we knew. Nothing lasts forever and one wonders for how much longer the system of army apprentices will continue. Eventually, with today's obsession with political correctness, even 'Old Boys' reunions may be a thing of the past.

Have you ever stopped to wonder why most of the letters and articles, which have appeared in OBAN, have been written by those from the intakes of the forties? Is it because, as we get older, we tend to look back more often and as we reach retirement we have the time to write? With the intakes of the

fifties now reaching retirement, perhaps the baton is being passed to us.



Geriatric Ski Club

Do you remember the time when policemen, sergeants and captains started looking young? Soon it was the ASMs and majors, then colonels and eventually generals who looked positively youthful. Now even the Chelsea Pensioners don't look as old as they used to!

It is frightening how rapidly the last fifty years have flown by and time seems to be accelerating as we get older but, looking back, we can identify crucial crossroads in our lives, where the direction we took had a radical effect on where we went and where we end up. It's not so easy looking forward. Some time ago, I met up with an ex-army friend to plan a reunion of colleagues we had known at 669 Squadron AAC when it had been a lodger unit at RAF Wildenrath in the late 1960s. We arranged to meet again in a weeks time. Instead, that was the precise date and time of his funeral service after he has suffered a massive stroke. While we can look back at the crossroads in our life, we never know what is around the corner ahead of us.

Jeanette and I have now lived in the same house in Yeovil for 17 years so I suppose we did achieve the stability we were looking for but the constant threat of redundancies at Westland made it feel precarious at times. The roots we have put down here now run deep so It is likely that, one day, we will become part of the soil of Somerset!

On that cheerful note, I resolve to make greater efforts to attend Old Boys' Reunions in the future and plan to be at my intake's 50th anniversary reunion in 2004. I hope that as many as possible, especially from the intakes of 1954, will make the effort to be there and meet up again before we start fading away! Tempus fugit!!

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON LIFE IN KOREA

By Dick Wade (39A)

John Dutton (OBAN21) refers to *MV Georgic*, this was a chartered ship to convey troops to and from Korea and Japan, normally used for American tourists to and from the UK, a much better class than our own troopships, we had cabins as opposed to troop decks with bunks.

Regarding the calibre of ammo not matching the machine guns, sounds like history being repeated. Arborfield 'Thirty Niners' until 1942 were RAOC, the badges showed the cannon balls were too big for the barrel, which of course related to the Boer War. We reservists left for home on the *Georgic*, a complete contrast to the troopship *Lancashire* on our outward journey.

With ref to Joe Adey (42A), burial of Korean dead in sitting position, this may be so, it was all a question of wealth and status. If one could afford the coolies to carry the coffin to the peak of a hill, the coffin would be buried in the perpendicular position, putting the deceased nearest to Heaven or that other world, wherever that may be. On the other hand, if the person was a poor fisherman, he or his family were buried on the beach or near the sea, therefore, I would suggest those in the sitting position were the in-between class.

The so-called righteous became wealthy due to black-market trading in beer and other items. The currencies used were Korean Wons, the US Army Military currency and the US dollar were both used and changeable in to Yen in the American PX in Japan.

The British Military currency was of little value, more or less confined to NAAFI purchases, beer etc. Our spivs in World War II were novices compared with what went on in Korea. The Koreans wanted silks only obtainable in Japan, and they knew the UN Forces went on leave to Japan. The Koreans would pay generously through their horse trading in US dollars or US Military currency to UN persons going on leave to Japan to bring back silks which were then sold off to ordinary Koreans at a price, and that was how the rich Koreans could afford to be buried at the top of any hill if they or any of their family pegged out, the higher the peak the more it would cost.

For R and R leave in Japan we flew from Pusan to the US Army Air force Airbase at Tchikawa in Japan, then on by road to the Ebisu Hotel, (about a 15 mile journey).

The hotel with dormitory sleeping quarters was very comfortable. At breakfast a Japanese string quartet would entertain us, we did not even have to make our beds nor do any make do and mend, Japanese women attended to these tasks.

Ebisu was just a short commuter ride to the stop before Tokyo, the start of the Ginza, the main shopping street. In the afternoons stalls were set up along the pavement opposite the big stores. I bought a camera for £1, so small it took photos the size of a postage stamp. I think this was the start of 'Japanese know-how' in cameras and photography, which is common knowledge today.

The train ride from Ebisu; all station platforms were marked off with lines, stating 'UN Forces coach stops here'. It seems to me the Yanks were insisting on this post-war segregation. I ignored the markings and boarded a coach, where seating was arranged alongside the windows facing each other. The seating in that coach was full of commuters reading their morning newspapers. Sitting by the door was a woman with two small children with baby on her lap, she picked the other child up and offered me the seat, so to return the compliment I picked the child up and sat him on my lap.

When we arrived at the Ginza stop, the passengers indicated I should be first off and all stood up and bowed. A GI standing on the platform looked horrified that I ignored the UN coach stop, so in my best British tradition I gave him the two fingers sign and went on my way.

In the evening I ventured down the side streets off the Ginza, all lit up with coloured neon signs and music from outside the bars blaring out Bing Crosby songs, the Andrew Sisters and Mills Brothers etc.

One bar I went into for a beer, I chatted to a Japanese student, he did not know much about World War II, but was interested to hear about my Father's and my experiences. He invited me to this home to meet his family the next day. I was made most welcome by the family and I enjoyed the sake and beer. We sat on cushions on the floor and the family were interested to hear of my experiences in Burma during the War, and yet at the same time expressed sadness and sorrow as to the treatment our POWs had to endure at the hands of the Japanese Army.

The student that I befriended did all the translating as some of the family could only speak a little English. They then invited me to an evening meal and to stay

overnight, but I politely declined. I did not think I could manage to eat raw fish etc., but preferred to get back to the Ebisu Hotel for the good food that was on offer there.

I thanked them for their hospitality, and after much bowing made my way back to Ebisu. I think it was their way of expressing their sorrow of the suffering we encountered in World War II. I know that many other lads had experienced similar situations, but just to recall one. One of our lads was blown out of his mind stone drunk. A taxi driver picked him up in the Ginza late at night and drove him back to the Ebisu. The guard on the gate realising the situation asked the driver what the fare was. He replied, "No pay", and with a big grin on his face drove off.

The adopted orphan that Brian Conway mentions was similar to the one we adopted in Pusan, who also did small jobs on our behalf. His name was Buksan. In the afternoon the lads taught Buk to play cards, including how to cheat. Buck in turn showed his orphan mates how to play, but not how to cheat. Buk made a killing once his mates started to play for money.

Reference to Peter Simmonds (44A); that nasty incident where (due to a cock-up in communications), the Argylls were napalmed by the US Army Air force on a hill that had changed hands more than one, and became known as Argyll Hill. Even though I was at Taegu at that time, I was aware of what happened, being attached to the Argylls when I was in Honk Kong. I know some of my mates suffered, had I not finished my regular engagement when I was in Honk Kong, I would have been with the Argylls in Korea.

A few of my own observations on Korea. There was a Swedish hospital ship in Pusan harbour. Their contribution to the UN Force that had on board all the latest medical facilities, and did a wonderful job on our casualties. Sometimes, their staff when off duty would come ashore and play our lads at football.

Referring to the 'thunderbox loo'; this was a wooden rectangular box laid over a six-foot deep trench, the lid had around five seats carved out. Surrounding the box was a gunnysack, i.e. hessian screen, with an opening for access and egress. Each toilet seat was partitioned off with a screen for privacy. Petrol was poured down the hole for hygiene purposes, with a warning sign *Danger - No Smoking*.

On one occasion, a wit pinned up a notice with the following verse:

If you want a rise in life,
to please your ever-loving wife,
a lighted match below this seat,
and you will rise up 60 feet!

Due to the petrol fumes, it really was a hot seat.

When I was in Pusan, ENSA sent out well-known stars to entertain. I had to go to the Airfield to pick them up. There was Jack Warner, Ethel Revnell, PC49, and pianist Davey Kay. As we turned into camp, there was an old Korean gent in a long white robe standing on the corner smoking his long stemmed pipe; Ethel remarked, "I didn't know Bud Flanagan was out here".

Reference Brian Conway not paying saluting compliments to an American Officer, reminds me when I was a boy in Secunderabad India, which was in the Nizam's state of Hyderabad. The Nizam, who had his own Army, asked Britain if our troops would salute his officers, in return he would fit their uniforms with gold buttons. That man was so rich that he had a cage full of gold bars, so full, that a truckload of gold bars was backed up to the cage, for want of space. The British Government pointed out that we saluted the King's commission and not the Officer, the Nizam's offer was turned down flat - pity, look at the money our lads could have made, via a pair of scissors!

Back to Korean again, our Humber staff car suffered two broken spring leaves due to the rough roads, and this affected the front suspension. I was told it would take at least three months to get a replacement from the UK. The US Army Engineers ran the railway yard where rail wagon springs were repaired, sprung and set.

I asked the US Top Sergeant if they could help out, he took me to an office and I gave his CO a smart salute that would have made Ben Cook envious. This US Officer was so taken aback and said, "I wish my own men would recognize my rank". Without further ado, he instructed the Top Sergeant to cater for my request. Within two days they cut and re-sprung two new spring leaves. Our CO was pleased as punch that this staff car was back on the road. There you are Brian, how is that for diplomacy to gain a favour?

Regarding the cruelty our POWs in Thailand by the Korean Guards, when I meet our Ex POWs in Rangoon, many including my Father told me about the Korean Guards' brutality. When my Father knew I was off to Korea, he said, "You tell me the difference between North and South, they are all Koreans". It was no thanks to the Japs for using them,

One cannot leave out the Yanks' Universal Services Newspaper. I used to go down town daily to pick up a bundle of the Stars and Stripes. One morning I was amazed to see in a wired compound GIs queuing up for their jabs for a sexually transmitted disease in the open air. One GI trucker jumped to the front of the queue and said,

"Excuse me Buddy, but I got an important consignment to deliver".

He then pulled his tugs down, bent over and got his jab. No one, not even the Medics, turned a hair!

One issue of the Stars and Stripes headline read 'US 2 Div, has the biggest Ice Cream Plant in the Front Line' - talk about 'Mad dogs and Englishmen' - ice cream with temperatures at minus double figures - they must be mad!

Another example of a "Stars and Stripes" headline came about, regarding a football match our lads were playing alongside a main road somewhere up towards the front when suddenly a US Army convoy pulled up sharply amidst a cloud of dust.

An Officer with a Stars and Stripes reporter nearby shouted "Hey! Youse guys - Get to hell outta here, the Chinks and Gooks (Koreans) are not far away!".

The referee blew his whistle and in no uncertain terms told him to get off the pitch "your holding this game

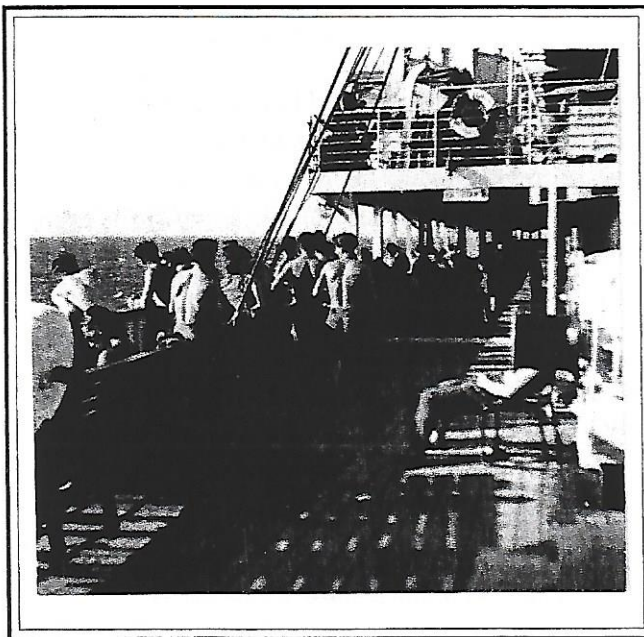
up!". (The Yanks when in panic state would often exaggerate how near the enemy were).

Next day the Stars and Stripes' headlines reported that the event compared it to Drake playing bowls at Plymouth Ho, ignoring the approaching Spanish Fleet until the game was completed.

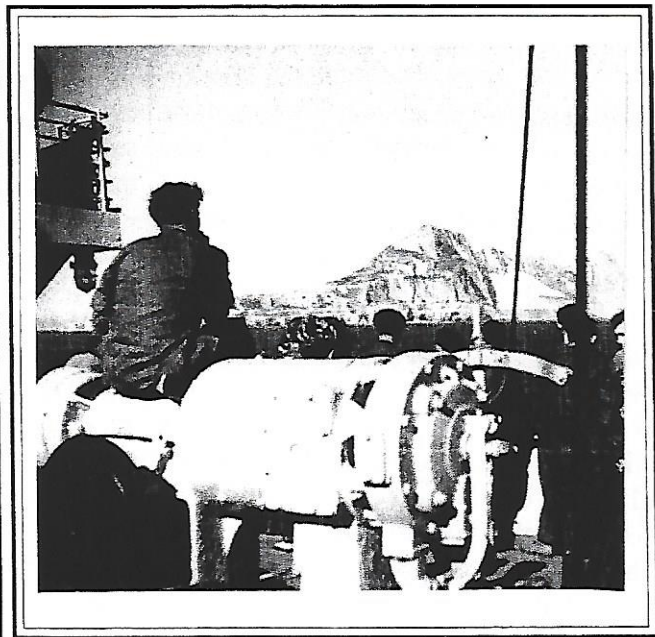


Voyage home from Korea - Raffles Club, Singapore

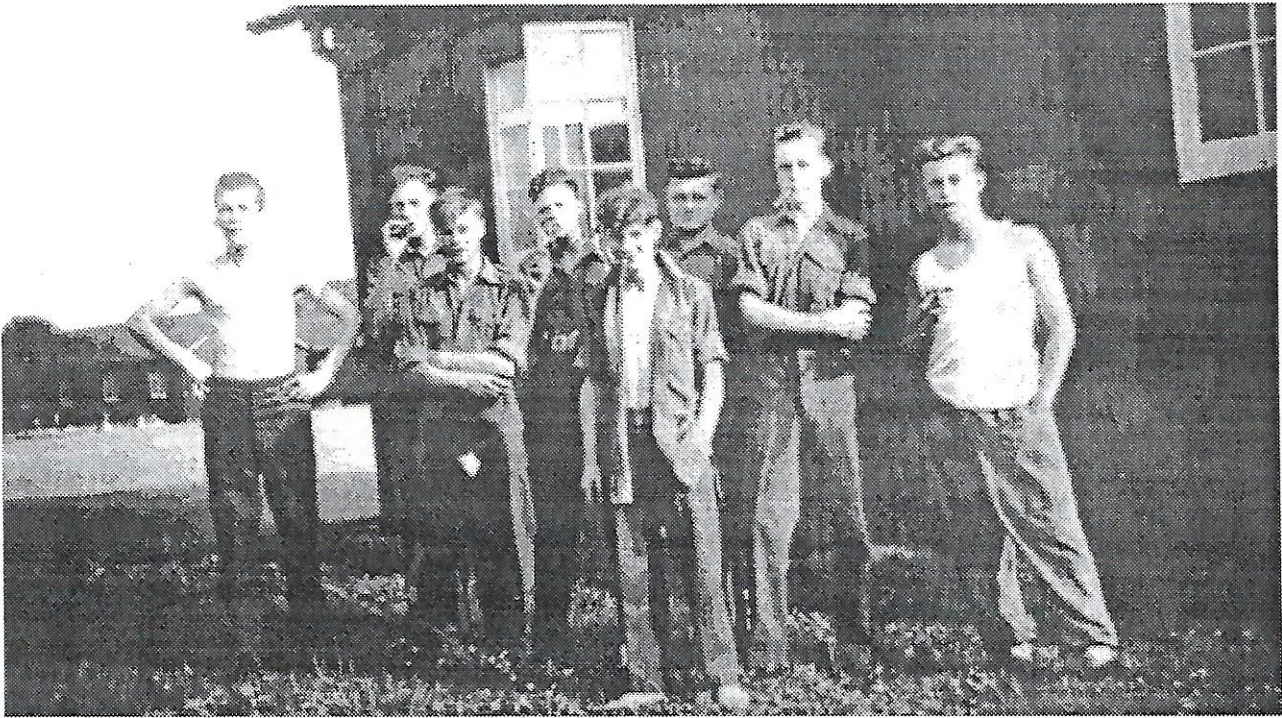
The experiences on Korea in OBAN21 were very interesting and as I said in that Issue, I hope my observations will be found to be of equal interest.



Voyage home from Korea - Straits of Gibraltar - MV Georgic



Voyage home from Korea - Gibraltar seen from MV Georgic



*Members of Room D4, B Company (54A) in 1955 - smoking Burmese cigars
'Biz' Bizwell, Dug ---?, Frank Ferriby, Fritz ---?, 'Jock' Carruthers, Bill Weston, 'Dilly' Dillon and Mick Sheward*

MEMORIES OF ROOM D4, B Company By Lemmy Holmes (54A)

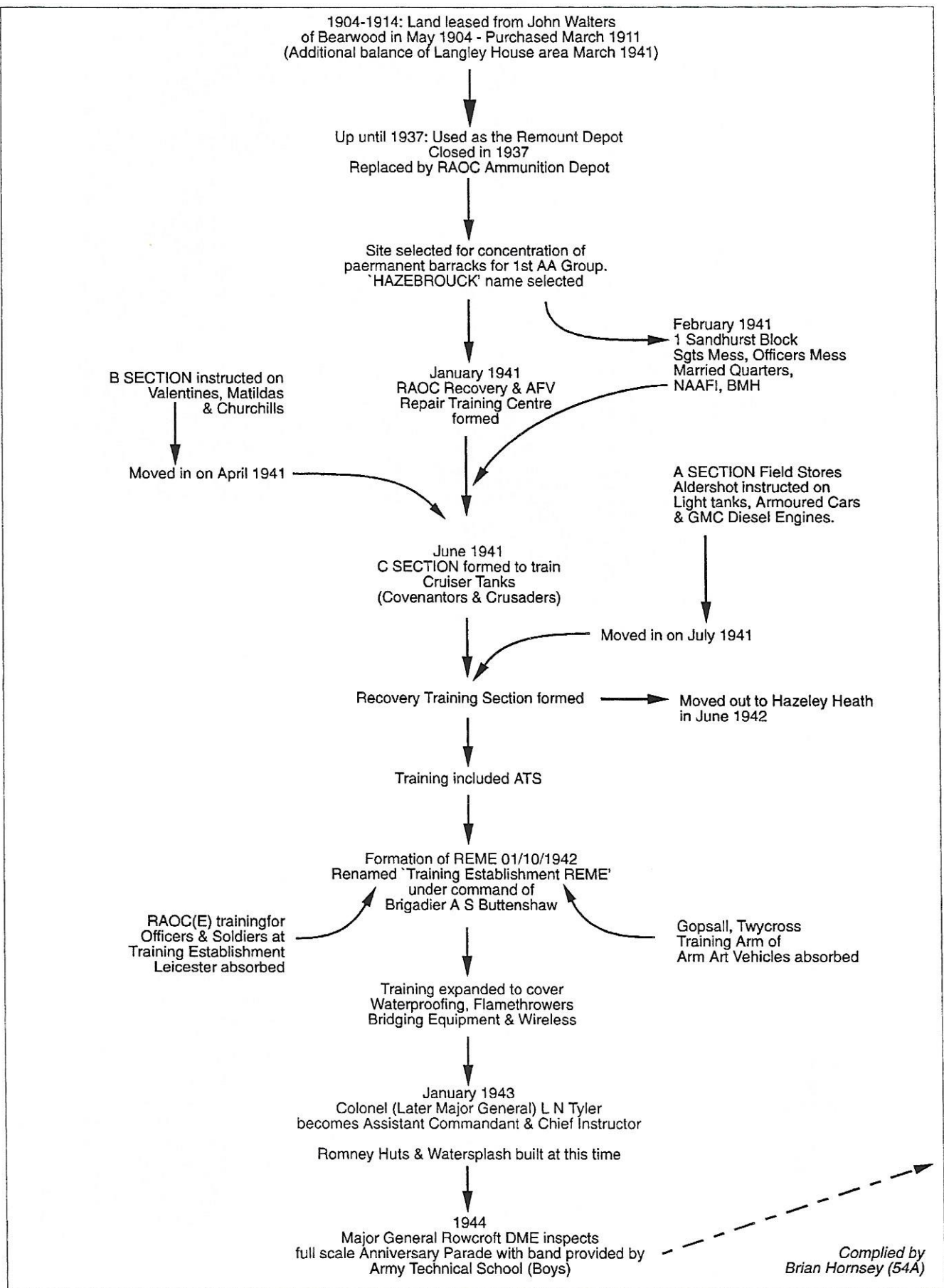
The above photo recalls one of our weekends in camp when we were sampling the delights of Burmese cigars kindly provided (for a few pence) by one of the Burmese apprentices, Than Soe, Kin Nyunt, Sein Pe, or Tin Nyunt. Almost everyone smoked then. I guess I must be the only one left who still does. On the left is Terrance Arthur George Biswell (Funny how one remembers details like that after 45 years! And I promised I would never tell anyone what his initials stood for!). 'Biz' as he was known, fancied himself as a bit of a body builder and liked posing half naked. Fifth from left is John Buchanan Carruthers (Jock) who being diminutive like me, was in E Squad with me when we were in HQ company. Jock was not only short but also came from the shortest named village in Britain, Ae in Dumfriesshire, and as can be imagined, always had trouble when someone asked him where he came from! Especially if it was the drill Sergeant or worse still an inspecting officer. When he answered 'Ae, Sir', he would be told to wash his ears out! Next to the right is 'Wizz' Weston, a top hockey player like his brother before him in an earlier intake. Second from right is 'Dilly' Dillon, the 'idiot' of D4 and held in much affection by everyone. With his broad Yorkshire accent and his Irish sense of humour, he always managed to get a laugh out of every situation and had us in stitches most of the time. RSM McNally was once seen to jump on his hat with rage when inspecting Dilly. Dilly once decided to clean his rifle with a 6 x 3 rather than a 4 x 2 and the pull-through broke. We all thought it was hilarious as he was due to go on parade in a few minutes. He was charged of course but got off lightly and the Armourers got the offending blockage out.

Dilly had a natural flair for acting and always played the judge complete with wig, when mock trials were held of junior division members. Needless to say their 'sentences' were quite lenient; such tasks as pushing an open tin of boot polish down the barrack room with their nose. Other members of D4 were Gordon Francis Quarendon, Verdigi, Anderson and Gavin Ball who came from

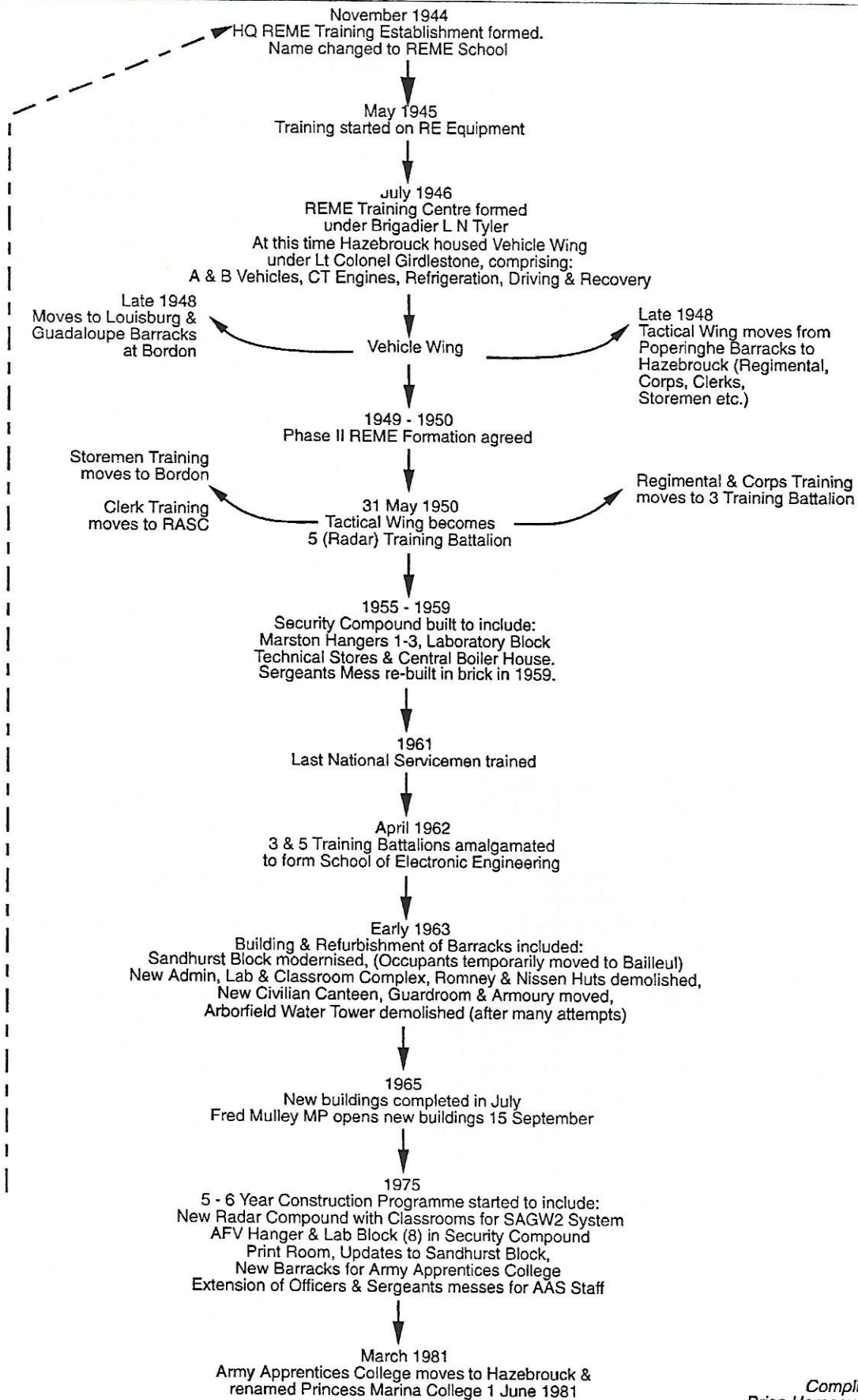
Aberdeen and whose trips home were necessarily infrequent. He would often be moved to tears when we all sang 'The Northern Lights of Auld Aberdeen' for him. It was while we were in this room that the Firework Factory nearby blew up one tea-time with a huge explosion, resulting in several fatalities. Even the AAS Fire Piquet attended the resulting fire. I wonder who remembers that? We weren't above making a few explosions of our own:

One of our many tricks was an improvised cannon. It used a bumper which had a steel pipe as a handle with a 3/4 inch bore and about 6 feet long. This was rested on a table-iron (remember them?) at about 45 degrees and with the lights out, was pointed out of the fire-doors facing the square. A large banger was lit and dropped down the tube, closely followed by a 5/8 inch ball-bearing. The result was quite effective! The ball was heard to land on HQ Company's corrugated iron roof and then bounced several times. We never did find out the effect on the occupants. Incidents with the electricity supply in the spiders were quite common. As usual it was the Telemecs who were expected to 'fix' the system if anything went wrong, because presumably they were supposed to know about 'lectric'. 4-inch nails as fuses were often used if there were too many apprentices ironing their SDs at the same time (all plugged into the lighting sockets, of course). The single power socket in each room had to be used for the room radio. With Radio Luxemburg being so popular, attempts were made to improve the awful reception on Medium Wave by running a very long wire as an aerial over the barrack-room roof. A wire once found dangling outside our room window was assumed to be from a rival room so was promptly plugged into the mains socket. We heard that a private radio had suddenly exploded for no apparent reason!

Strange isn't it how one remembers the humour that kept us going through a time which was generally harsh and oppressive. And equally strange for me is that I remember the individuals by their names, not their numbers or their ranks.



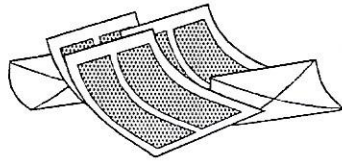
HISTORY OF HAZBROUCK BARRACKS 1904 - 1944



Compiled by
Brian Hornsey (54A)

HISTORY OF HAZEBROUCK BARRACKS 1944 - 1981

**LETTERS TO
THE EDITOR**



 *By Charles Ashdown (42A) writes*

Recruit Training For Jan'42 Ex-apprentices

Towards the end of August 1944 most of the January 1942 intake at the Army Technical School had returned to Arborfield from various locations, whence they had been dispersed, due to the temporary close-out, because of 'D' Day operations.

All of these fellows were approaching or had reached eighteen, when they would start man-service and graduate as qualified tradesmen. Somebody in a position of authority had recognised that these soldiers, while trade qualified, were not proficient in some of the basic military skills such as weapons use and field-craft. It was therefore decided to send members of the intake to take the basic infantry training course at the School at Warley Barracks, Brentwood, Essex. This was a six weeks course, which if I remember correctly ran from mid October to the end of November 1944.

This then, is what I remember of this episode, I must confess at the outset to being less than sure of some details due to the lapse of time. I would therefore crave your indulgence with respect to any errors you detect.

The Course. My memory is that about 100 of us reported to the training school, most of us still in service dress. We were kitted out with battle dress, full web kit, and various other items not previously issued at Arborfield. One of the things that occurred immediately was that all boy NCOs ceased to hold their appointments, so that we all started equal in the eyes of the school staff. We also took to wearing the (old) REME cap badge.

A word or two here about the permanent staff of the school. There was an upper echelon of the unit which was usually older men often wounded or disabled veterans. The junior echelon was almost entirely conscripts, who had done so well on their recruit (and follow-on) training, that they had been retained and promoted to Corporal rank. It was with this junior level of Corporals and platoon Sergeants that the following experiences occurred.

Almost from the first day friction occurred between ex-boys and school staff because in so many areas we knew as much or more than they did. Foot drill and customs of the service caused much amusement and discussion because of this. We very quickly learned all about assembly, wearing and care of our web kit so that went quite smoothly. Major problems were avoided however by the actions of our platoon sergeant. We felt at first that he was too ancient to be effective, but he quickly showed his

mettle and we responded to his leadership qualities, despite his advanced age (50). It is a great pity I can't remember his name or regiment, but perhaps someone else can.

Several weeks passed and we settled into the routine, and began to find that there were after all many things that we could learn that would fit us for a career in the Army. The drill and use of the No.4 rifle was not too strange since we had had arms drill with the No.1 Mk.3, but the spike form bayonet was new and different from the sword bayonet of the latter weapon.

We had an opportunity previously denied to most of us, to fire weapons in use at the end of the war. As part of the weapon training I came to a degree of fame (or was it infamy?). As you may recall bayonet fighting was taught by attacking straw filled sacks as posed in various positions, one of which was the prone position. Because of the war in the Far East and experience with Japanese troops in combat we were taught to respond to prone figures by bayoneting them.

It had been found that wounded Japanese would lay still and attack advancing troops with any weapon available. The drill was (with prone figures) to jump astride and plunge the bayonet down into the figure at about chest level, withdraw and charge on, trying to keep the encounter down to a few seconds.

One day, during this drill, after being exhorted by the sergeant to get my back into it and show some enthusiasm, I charged up to the prone figure, leapt onto it, stabbed my foot, withdrew (yelling all the time) and charged on. After a few feet I realised that my boot and sock were very soggy and on looking down discerned a small hole (spike bayonet shaped) near which my right big toe was. I then realised what had happened, and limped over to the sergeant and reported what I had done. He said "You bloody fool, you're supposed to kill the enemy, not yourself!"

I was transported to hospital where it was discovered that I had (luckily) just pierced the outside skin and flesh of the big toe. I was given a tetanus shot and kept in overnight. I was threatened with a charge for damaging government property, i.e. my right boot; however this didn't transpire, and I continued to wear the boots for some time after, notwithstanding the hole.

At this stage of the war the bombing with V1s had had become a usual background to our lives. The V1 (a kind of crude cruise missile) was of course quite audible in its approach and its behaviour well known. However the V2s, which started to arrive at about this time, gave no warning of their advent and they carried quite a punch, what with their downward motion and explosive power. We were young (and believed we were immortal) so we were quite severely disturbed and surprised when a V2 landed on the gym in the barracks and demolished it with some loss of life. This was altogether too close and deadly.

In this connection I now recount an incident which shows how jumpy people were at that time. A group of us ex-boys were out one evening having visited several pubs, and having to leave because of a shortage of beer (rationing in one of its many forms), we decided to go to a café for something to eat before returning to barracks. At the door of the café we found it locked but obviously open for business. After beating on the door vigorously, it was opened and we were told to 'beat it' since the place was full. One of our number (no names - no pack drill) lit a thunderflash and placed it in the porch at the now closed door. After the explosion the café emptied hastily, people shrieking and asking where the V2 had gone off. I can't say, in hindsight, that I feel proud of myself or the culprit, but at the time we felt it was hilarious. The response of the crowd in the café may give you an indication of the atmosphere of the time. You may well ask where did the thunderflash come from, but I am sure everybody knows how well ex-boys know how to scrounge.

As we approached the end of the course, we trained up for the five mile forced march, a much feared event of the training. On the day of the march we set out with battle web, rifle, bayonet and 50 rounds of ammunition (in a bandoleer). We all completed the distance (a record), even though our platoon sergeant (who also went the distance) ended up carrying the rifle of one individual and others his pack and bandoleer. When we came close to barracks we formed up as a proper group and marched into the camp in threes feeling very pleased with ourselves (even if a little sore).

At the end of the course we were addressed by a Captain, who told us we had done extremely well, and would be posted as a group to an infantry battalion. He was completely surprised and quite angry at the jeering response from the group. It was pointed out to him by one of our number that we were REME and that was where we would be posted.

We were right, of course, but it didn't improve the attitude of some staff members. We were subsequently brought together and informed about the heavy barrack damages that had been discovered in our quarters. As those of you who were there will recall, we were billeted in Victorian era permanent married quarters, which had not been painted or repaired since the onset of the war, so it was not surprising that damage had occurred. As a result of very pointed exchanges with the Corporal who told us of our liability, the Company Commander intervened and the damages bill was much reduced. I won't attempt to imply that there was a racket going on, but it was certainly possible under the circumstances, especially with so many new, naive and raw recruits going through the Unit in a continuing stream.

Finally, after the passing our parade we took ourselves off to have a dinner at a local pub, with our platform sergeant. The evening went off very well and when we showed signs of becoming rumbustious, he fell us in outside the pub and we marched back to barracks in threes. Shortly thereafter

we were dispersed to our first proper postings at various REME units, at long last properly trained soldiers.

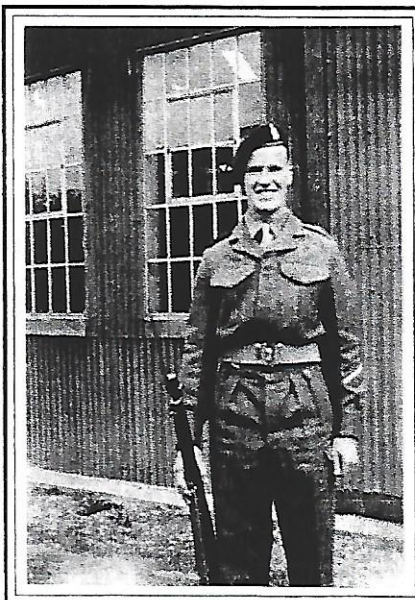
Conclusion. In looking back fifty-seven years I can see that I, and many of my peers, were not very attractive individuals, being shallow, irreligious, irresponsible and thoroughly arrogant. I seem to remember aspiring to be a Sergeant, since it was the general impression that they didn't have to work hard. How wrong I was on all counts! I believe and hope I have overcome these disabilities in my old age. I will repeat here my plea for any memory lapses, and would be delighted if you detect and correct any that you notice.

✍ *Ray Jenkinson (48B) writes*

Into the thick of it.

Way back in 1946/47, while working as a lowly laboratory assistant with ICI near Bracknell, I was advised to try and obtain an engineering apprenticeship. I made applications to a local engineering works and also approached the Army Apprentices Schools. A school friend of mine was already at the AAS Chepstow and I was very tempted by his long summer holiday. Next followed a couple of visits to the Army recruiting office at Reading, and these eventually terminated in a truck-ride to the AAS at Arborfield.

My precept was always that I was joining the Army to learn a trade, but I soon discovered that there were others,



**Ray Jenkinson, July 1951
Passing Out Parade**

and they were in authority, whose ideas seemed to run contrary to mine. I am still in possession of my end-of-term Reports and these are divided into five sections - Trade; Trade (Classrooms); Education; Physical Training; and Military Training. Looking at those Reports, it is very easy to determine in which direction this boy wanted to go - and he made sure of it!

From the Final Report, Trade and Education - 'excellent'; Physical and Military Training - 'fair, and must try to overcome the tendency to be insubordinate'. Well, I was fortunate, when the AAS Taunton closed down in 1949 and the Royal Engineers' Draughtsman training was moved here to Arborfield. I was selected as suitable ma-

terial to make up course numbers, a wonderful opportunity for someone so mechanically minded. As a relatively small course, a lot of attention was given to broadening our engineering background, with so many interesting visits.

I remember Stuart-Turners of Henley-on-Thames, where all the operations, from casting to machining and assembly, were all carried out on the one premises. Then there were the Great Western Railway Works at Swindon, with the unforgettable noise of the riveters in the boiler-making shop. In my mind's eye, I can still see the giant lathes, turning the wheel profiles of a pair of driving wheels mounted on their axle; and a locomotive being tested on a rolling bed, while members of staff measured and recorded all the inputs and outputs.

We also visited the Science Museum in South Kensington, where we had a conducted tour with demonstrations of steam-power and the use of mechanisms. Then, in 1951, just as we were about to finish at the School, we had a trip to the Festival of Britain, on its South Bank site – we must have caught the train from Wokingham to Waterloo. There was the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon – a tall pointed construction, held in place by guy-ropes. The transport section still leaves a vivid impression. I remember the latest underground train unit that was sectioned, exposing the motor unit/driving wheels, the braking, door and cab controls, all accompanied by very realistic running noises. There was also a brand new steam locomotive, painted in 'British Rail' green, but nothing else comes to mind.

Ah well, back to the Drawing Office! Anyone in possession of the film 'Army Apprentice 1951' will find an item filmed in that office. I appear in that clip, the chap on the far left. But we all have our backs to the camera, whilst on the table in the middle is a 'Morris 10' differential case. This brings to mind a prank I played on our civilian instructor, he really didn't deserve it! He was an ex-mining engineer from the North – his name escapes me, but he had a wealth of experience.

To set the scene, all is very peaceful and relaxed. The trade tests are over and we are filling in our time with some difficult components to measure, before producing working drawings. During these afternoon sessions, our instructor is prone to taking a little nap, so this was the set-up. Place the differential housing on one end of the sloping bench and just prevent it from rolling – but teetering – by the careful placing, of a mere matchstick. Go to the other end of the bench and innocently work away.

But be sure to give the bench a gentle jog – or two – until away goes the 'diff' – BANG! – onto the floor. One little nap suddenly terminates but, being what he was, our former mining engineer soon recovers his composure and it's probably not too long before he has assessed the situation and realised what has happened. But all those innocent faces tell him nothing and no further action is taken.

Another memory is of wishing to be confirmed. I had a lot of time for Padre Dacre – he died only a few short months ago – and so I joined his confirmation class. One of the other candidates was none other than RSM McNally's daughter.

At the end of my three years, I was glad to walk away with the Draughtsman (Mechanical) trade prize and to proudly receive my RE cap badge. It probably sounds crazy, but to this day I still have most of my Arborfield course notes and some locally produced precis referring to Workshop Practice. Looking back, I suppose I had a good grounding, but I was never converted to real soldiering, I always erred on the side of technology! As soon as I could, I headed for a Clerk of Works mechanical course at Chatham.

 *Charles Pepper (43B) writes*

Experiences with the M44 Self-propelled Gun

One learns many tricks as a REME man posted to many various units. On one extended exercise in the wilds with 25 Battery, 35 Regiment RA, Hohne, BAOR, I was invited to share a gun crew's Dixie of chips – they tasted excellent and were most welcome. After the meal I asked where they had obtained so much cooking oil. "It's gun oil, we've got plenty of it," was the answer. One hears of Vickers machine guns and vehicle radiators being used to boil water for tea, but this was a new one. For some reason the gunners used to throw away their tinned rations which we would then collect for our reserve food supply – waste not want not as the adage goes!

It was during 1963 that I was posted to 25 Battery as an Art Vehicles and was to tend to a vehicle such as I had never imagined existed – the M44 self-propelled gun. I believe only two regiments had them, 35 and a RHA regiment. In order to understand the vehicle I spent every night for a month reading every manual available and was taught to drive it by the gunners. Basically, the M44 was an almost square box with a power pack in the front half, with the gun and driver in the rear half. A large rear door extended the gun platform when it was lowered. Like many American vehicles of that time it had many advanced fittings alongside those from the Ark.

The power pack could be out and in again in about 45 minutes. Being an air-cooled engine and of horizontal construction, it could be rested on planks and run up for testing. All controls were connected to the hull by umbilical so the engine could be controlled from the driver's seat. Fortunately, there was no Health and Safety Executive in those days as we used to work around the unsilenced engine, tuning it to get the exhaust flame to a light blue colour.

There were two magnetos, one 2 degrees behind the other. Our electrician, a young lad called Chris Payne, devised a system of relays to get the timing right.

The suspension was no trouble except that the rear idler

would snap off if the vehicle were neutral steered viciously in very soft ground. In the field, the most serious job was replacing broken supercharger drive shafts. The odd parts of the vehicle were the fuel tap, a huge assembly operated by a winch and cable (always stretching) and the parking brake which operated by applying the foot brake and then shutting the valve in the pipe line to trap the fluid thus holding the braked on.

On exercises the support vehicles took one route while the Saracen Command Post and our Champ with four of us aboard followed the guns. Guderian the German tank expert's admonition, 'never mix wheels and tracks' was often proved. The Command Post would pull us out of the mud and when the going got too heavy its fluid flywheel would boil and we would have to wait until it cooled down. Meanwhile, the Battery was out of sight and we had to find it!

The M44 was extremely nimble! Once, when we at the tail-end of the Battery, climbing a winding hilly road which obscured vision ahead, the BSM passed us yelling, "Get over, they are coming back!" The Battery thundered by nose to tail. They must have neutral steered like a troupe of performing elephants while the Command Post and ourselves had to continue onward until we could find a place to turn.

Now, in any group of vehicles there is a rouge! When on a march this one would lose a single track pin clip and the pin would move outwards. No amount of checks could find a reason for this but as it was known about and easily rectified, it was accepted. On one exercise the Battery parked in a field under the cover of darkness, the guns side by side and the tailgates lowered. When the formalities were completed we retired to our bivvies for a well-earned rest. Around daybreak we were awakened by an incredible noise of screeching metal and a rhythmic thumping, we ran out to see what was happening and found a gap in the gun line - we were a gun short!

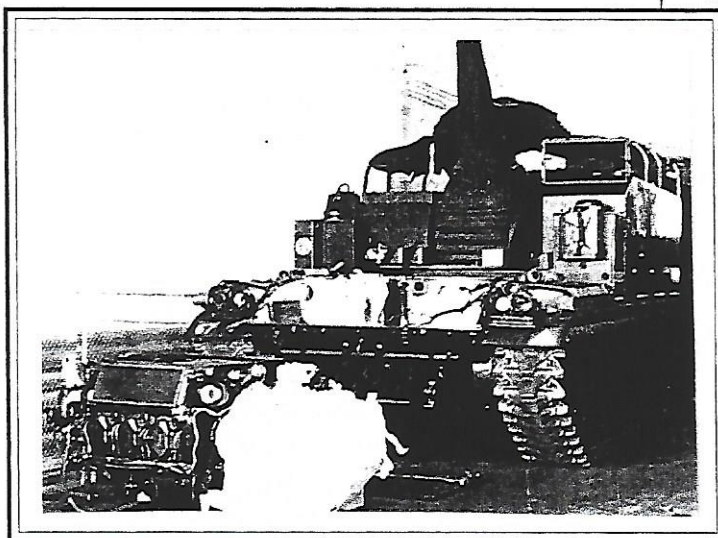
As dawn broke, it could be seen that the gentle slope we had parked on was the top of a steeper hill, which the gun had rolled down, and come to rest about 100 yards from a farmhouse. The crew went down, found no damage and brought it back on the road. Curiously, there was no reaction from the people in the farmhouse.

The parking brake system was examined but no leaks were found anywhere and the driver insisted that the proper procedures had been followed so, as there had been no damage, it was left at that but from then on an order was given that when parked in dubious sites the tracks were to be locked with a plank.

The 'runaway' was the one with the track pin problem and after this event it never threw another pin. I could only assume that there was a distortion in the hull, which was rectified on its career down the slope.

After this incident I could understand why UK regulations demand mechanical parking brakes separate from road brakes. I have seen no references to M44s in military magazines, although there is an example in the Woolwich RA Museum. Perhaps we were privileged to have worked on them.

(Charles, In view of the content of your contribution, I passed it on to Brian Baxter at the REME Museum, along with the photo, both of which have been passed on to the vehicle section in the Photographic Archives. Brian replies: CP is not quite right in his supposition that the M44 was a World War II design. It definitely stems from a post war series of US SP Guns, designed in the very late 1940s and early 1950s. They were our first post war acquisitions in the way of US artillery and were superseded by the M109, a similar style SP, but with a roof over the gun position which was, in fact, a rotating turret. The M44 was a fixed box with a traversing gun. The Americans had an intermediate series of turreted SPs, but I don't think we ever used them. - Ed)



An M44 with power-pack removed for servicing

✍ Ron Sykes (39A) writes

Boys Service: First Intake, Arborfield Army Technical School, May 1939. Weeks were spent at the bench filing a hexagon plug and socket - we checked the size with a calliper whereas the instructor checked using a micrometer - the slightest variation meant a restart! We were bussed to Wembley Stadium to hand out cup final programmes. We were once sent on unexpected leave during one winter cold spell when there was no heating. I remember a typical payday - Friday, we received 3/- (15p) then after dark it was over the fence to Arborfield Cross for chips. RSM Ben Cook, Grenadier Guards, later commissioned Second Lieutenant in charge of 'agricultural', had us dig up every spare space to plant food.

I was posted to the ranks at seventeen and a half instead of eighteen.

REME Service: Permanent attachment as Company Fitter to various units, including the Manchester Regiment – the Rifle Brigade – the KRRC – the Queens Hussars - and the HLI. During this time I was never visited by a REME NCO or officer to check on what I was doing – I was completely alone doing my own thing!

I was 19 when I was with the 10th Battalion HLI in Normandy as Company Fitter, looking after 6 Bren Gun Carriers and although a Vehicle Mechanic, not an Armourer, six 6-pounder Anti Tank guns. Where went they, so did I – mostly at the sharp end! In one action in Cheux, 4 enemy tanks had broken through and most of our gun crews had been killed or wounded so only 2 guns remained operative. Captain Scott, i/c anti tank platoon, took charge and with L/Sgt Dave Oldale, knocked out all 4 tanks at a range of 100 yards. For this Scott received the Military Cross and Oldale received the Military Medal. I was acting as loader on one of the guns and all I got was a nasty wound in the shoulder and hand. I often wonder now what I was doing there. Shouldn't I have been back at HQ instead of trouncing around with an anti tank unit?

After recovering from my wounds, I was posted to Wolfsburg Motor Works in Germany. From this bombed out factory, in difficult conditions we managed to put the factory back on its feet and start production of the Beetle, despite a decision by the British Motor Industry who had rejected the offer of the factory as war reparation on the grounds that the VW Beetle was a freak car with no future! How wrong they were when 57 years later it's still in production! (*I still own a 1985 Mexican example – Ed*).

Great effort was put in by the Germans who have named a road after Major Ivan Hirst, together with a memorial sculpture in the form of a column complete with a glass silhouette of Major Hirst. Volkswagen has also established the Ivan Hirst Foundation for the award of Scholarships in research engineering.

(Ron, you probably already know this, but the REME Museum has a considerable amount of material on the VW/Hirst story – Ed)

Alf Stubbs (55A) writes

I have been doing a bit of research and came across St Eligius, patron saint of artisans. As he is also the patron saint of REME, his feast day being celebrated in REME chapels throughout the Army, I compiled this short history which might be of interest.

St Eligius

Elio (Eligius Loy) c.588-660, bishop of Noyon was born at Chatelet (Haute-Vienne). He became a goldsmith and entered the service of Bobon, the royal treasurer. His

reputation was based not only on excellent design but also on economical use of materials. When he made two golden thrones out of the metal allocated for one, Clotar II (b.629) took him into his own service and commissioned him, as did his successor Doagabert I, to decorate tombs and shrines and make crosses and chalices and plaques. Eloi became a priest then bishop of Noyon in 641.

He became a very successful preacher and founded monasteries at Noyon, Paris and Solignac. He was especially active in the Tournai area and was a pioneer apostle in much of Flanders. Of his supposed surviving homilies one is especially notable for his warnings against pagan superstitions such as fortune telling, watching the omens and keeping Thursday holy in honour of Jupiter. Instead of these, Christians should arm themselves with prayer, the sign of the cross and the Eucharist. Later in life he became a counsellor of Bathild, the queen regent, an Anglo-Saxon who had been liberated from slavery and subsequently made good. To their influence may be traced the decree of the council of Chalon, which forbade the sale of slaves out of the kingdom and insisted on their freedom to rest on Sundays and holy days.

It seems that no surviving piece of goldsmiths work is certainly his, although shrines of Quentin, Julian, Germanus, Brice and Martin were attributed to him. His plaque mounted above the altar at St Dennis and his Chalice at Chelles, which disappeared during the French revolution, are known from surviving drawings. His reputation both as apostolic bishop and as a distinguished craftsman who became a patron of goldsmiths, farriers and blacksmiths ensured the diffusion of his cult from Picardy and Flanders over most of Europe.

In England, where only one ancient church was dedicated to him, he was so well known through his feast legends and representations, such as at Shorehampton (Oxfordshire) that Chaucer's Prioress's strongest oath was, 'By St Eloi!' His principle emblem is a horseshoe; like St Dunstan he is depicted holding the devil by the nose with a pair of pincers (13th century) at Angers. Perhaps his most picturesque representation (14th century) is that of him shoeing a horse whose leg he first removed and then restored. He is a good example of a genuine saint of antiquity, whose cult attained its widest popularity in later Middle Ages. Feast days are 1st December or 25th June.

Nick Webber (50B) writes

I was wondering if any reader might be able to fill in my missing memories. It was St Georges Day 1953 at Windsor Castle. At Arborfield some of 6 Division, mostly B Company I think, were told we were to provide a Guard of Honour at St George's Chapel in the Castle.

After being trucked by 3 tonner to the Castle, we went in through the main gate, then round to the left stopping at the gate leading to the Chapel forecourt. Here, we disembarked and formed up under the beady eye of RSM

McNally (I think). I was the senior A/T as A/CSM. McNally marched us through the gate into the little square with the Chapel at one end and the Tudor timbered houses at the other side, exactly as it is today or was in 1980 as I last saw it.

We formed up and after a while the Knights Garter appeared in procession, lead by the Queen, only one year on the throne followed by Prince Philip. As the RSM was muttering, "Don't move", we could not see everything, but I think Churchill and Eden were near each other and a King of either Sweden or Norway was there as well. The flowing dark blue gowns and colourful hats and chests full of medals etc., made a very impressive show.

After the Knights Garter had moved into the Chapel, McNally took us in to the back of the congregation where we waited for the service to start. It was a really impressive sight, the high ceiling of the Chapel with banners hanging down along each side with all the bright colours of the Knights Garter at the front made it a spectacle I cannot forget. The first hymns began to be sung and as in most churches was rather subdued but, as confidence was gained our voices increased in volume, singing with great gusto, as though we were in the AAS Camp Hall.

The service ended and we were ushered out first to form up again as the Guard of Honour after the Knights Garter had moved up into the castle. As I was standing next to McNally I heard the Chaplain Royal say to him, "It was nice to have had your men, they really brought life to the service, thank you."

I must say that over the years I have met various officers, both Australian and British who have stated to me that when ex-boys are grouped together they are always crafty, artful and full of ideas, but when given a serious job to do are very adaptable and reliable.

I do think we were worthy of that reputation as ex-boys and hope that the new generation of young soldiers, both ex-boys and non ex-boys, will persevere with their training and exhibit the same dedication as we did.

(Nick, I took one or two liberties with your letter, I hope it still portrays the original spirit you intended - Ed)

Pete Gripton (56B) writes about the College History

Dear comrades, first of all, may I remind you of who I am! I'm Pete Gripton of 56B, many of you may remember that I served on the Committee as the SEME Bordon representative for many years until my retirement in August 2000. It was after my retirement that I was persuaded to make a start on putting together a definitive history of the College.

So over the last three years I have been very busy on the

task. I started off by taking the brief history, last produced in 1992, and trying to build upon that. I have been greatly assisted by the input that has been put into the pages of the OBAN, since it was revived, again in 1992. This has been a great source of information, full of personal anecdotes and experiences, which I hope will have enriched what may have been a rather dull exercise.

As far as the facts are concerned, I have spent many hours poring over the pages of the REME Magazine – now The Craftsman – and of course the College's own magazine, in its various guises, mainly known to most of you as The Arborfield Apprentice. My thanks must go to Derek Gilliam of the REME Museum, who has kindly allowed me access to these magazines.

Through the benefit of access to a web-site over the past couple of years, many of you have contributed other personal stories, not previously published, and for these I am also most grateful. Ken Anderson, who now runs the web-site on behalf of the AOBA, is now involved in the printing and publishing side of the project and he will make a report to the AGM at the next Reunion.

My part has almost finished – except for any final polishing up, late entries if they are forthcoming and the selection and insertion of appropriate photographs. I must also say a big thank you to Rodney Smith, a 56B colleague of mine, who has backed me up with financial assistance to encourage me! Plus, of course, the AOBA Committee, which has kindly covered many incidental expenses.

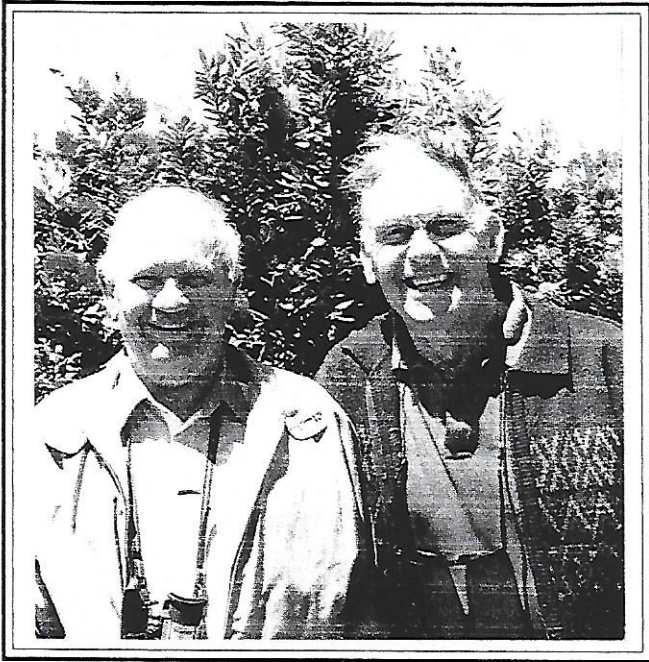
But mainly, it has been a labour of love, which I have thoroughly enjoyed – as well as having learned much about the old place that I had not known before. I hope that the final product will prove equally enjoyable to those of you who read it in the future.

John N. Pewsey (45A) writes from New Zealand

Attached is a photo of (left) Mem. No 1968. John N. Pewsey, 45AD and (right) P. Harry Sebborn, 45AD, taken 31 December 2002 in Wellington NZ by Molly E. Pewsey, (Née Cook), daughter of 'Ben' Cook, 1st RSM of the Army Technical School (Boys), Arborfield. (Some people remember Harry Sebborn as 'Peter', but everybody calls him 'Harry' now)

Harry and I both 'signed on' on 21 February 1945; Harry in Catford and myself in Brighton. We started off together on opposite sides of Barrack Room E6 and stayed together later in Barrack Rooms J4 and J6 until passing out in February/March 1948. Since then we hadn't seen or heard of each other for nearly 53 years.

Harry was an armourer and I was a (potential) Tels Mech - quite soon back-squaded onto a Radar course. Harry only completed 7 years with the Colours, then came out and joined the Metropolitan Police. Soon afterwards he saw an



John Pewsey (45A) & Harry Sebborn (45A)

advert for armourers wanted for the NZEME. He signed up; shipped out and was doing tours in Malaysia where he met other REME ex-boys and finally retired as a Captain QM 29 years later!

I vaguely remember a letter in a much earlier OBAN from Harry, so I contacted Ken Anderson who put me onto a Bill Park, also ex-Arborfield and now living in NZ, via e-mail. Bill looked up a fabulous document called 'The NZ White Pages' (remember, the population of NZ is just on 4 million - with 70 million sheep and almost as many unwanted Possums!). Bill immediately found just 4 'Sebborns'; Harry, his wife and two sons. I immediately got in touch and - as they say - the rest is history.

For those who haven't been there, NZ is a magical country - where men are still men - and road hoardings declare (like Oz) 'So, you think you can drink and drive? - BLOODY FOOL' or 'He thought he could drink and drive - DEAD WRONG, he was'. Not overburdened with 'PC' in NZ, if you see what I mean.

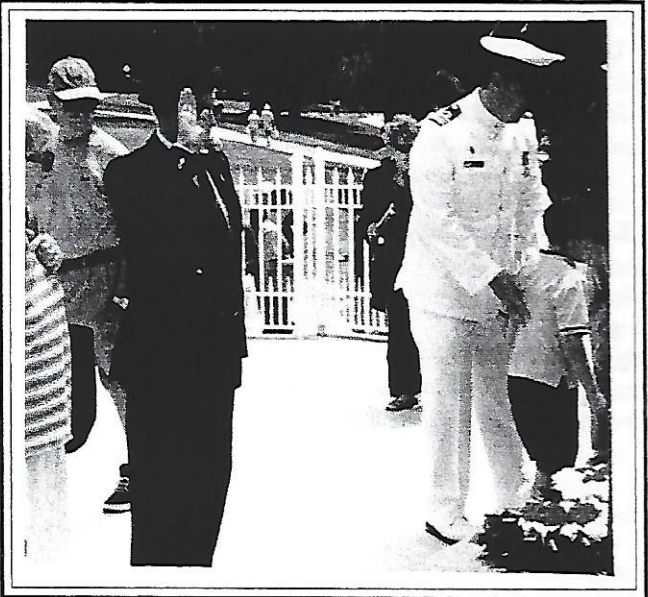
(John, my daughter and family have just emigrated to Papamoa on the Bay of Plenty, near Auckland, however, I am not convinced that NZ is a magical country! - Ed)

✉ **Peter Humpton (38J) writes from Perth, Australia**

It is with some considerable regret that I have not previously made the effort to contact you and arrange for the regular receipt of the OBAN. Finally, however, I have made it and enclose herewith my cheque for pounds ten, which I currently understand will cover the next four

issues delivered to me at my Australian address. I trust that this will prove sufficient to cover the additional air post charges. If that is not the case, please advise me the additional costs by e-mail and I will send a further cheque for the difference.

Taking advantage of this letter I am also enclosing a set of photos taken at the 'Kings Park War memorial' in Perth,



Peter Humpston (38J) lays the AOBA/REME Association wreath

Western Australia on Remembrance Day 2002, when myself, together with a fellow ex-Arborfield boy, Fred Ordynski and ex-REME Captain Pat McCann layed wreaths on behalf of the AOBA and REME Association (UK) and the RAEME Association of WA, respectively.

I would also add that the wreath for the AOBA and REME Association was kindly donated by the RAEME Association of Western Australia to which we ex-rats have the privilege of membership and on whose committee I have the honour of serving. As is the case each year, we also marched together with the parade of the day in representation of our respective organisations.

I regret this most belated submission of these photos, but if you should find them suitable for inclusion in your next issue of OBAN, the ex-arborfield contingent here in Perth would be much obliged.

(Peter, I can only publish one photo (in black & white for technical reasons) as I have no more room!. I intend to pass all your photos on to the Photographic Archivist at the REME Museum for a permanent record.

Would you also please note that all communications regarding payments should be made to the Hon. Treasurer, Mike Davis, contact details in the front of this OBAN - Ed)

RESIGNATIONS

Name	Intake	Member No	Date of Resignation
Peter Langridge	56B	702	09 January 2003
Peter Butler	46A	1232	07 December 2002
Gerry Cross	39B	1886	03 May 2003
Peter Ostrolink	50A	2145	31 December 2002

NEW MEMBERS

Member No	Name	Known Name	AT Details	Post Town	Date Joined
2311	Mccabe J R	Jack	A-59C-D	RIYADH 11543	06-Oct-02
2312	Kimpton B	Brian	A-63C-A	KETTERING	08-Oct-02
2313	Geddes BR	Bob	A-66C-A	STANWOOD	09-Oct-02
2314	Jackson M J	Mike	A-53A-D	ERICKSON	09-Oct-02
2315	Wright M L	Mike	A-62A-C	RINGWOOD	09-Oct-02
2316	Brown N M	Norman	A-52A-B	MELTON MOWBRAY	16-Nov-02
2317	Cottingham B	Bryan	A-PS	FLEET	16-Nov-02
2318	Thomas M F	Mike	A-84A-C	CARDIFF	16-Nov-02
2319	Morland J G	John	A-45A-A	NORWICH	16-Nov-02
2320	Escott M W	Mike	A-61A-C	PULBOROUGH	16-Nov-02
2321	Smith D L	Duncan	A-79C-D	PEMBROKE PINES	10-Nov-02
2322	Pearc T J	Tom	A-59B-C	PEMROKE	14-Nov-02
2323	Weller F W	Frank	A-49B-A	WENDOVER	15-Nov-02
2324	Beadle A	Arthur	A-42A-C	LUTTERWORTH	22-Nov-02
2325	Hillier D A	Derek	A-48A-C	LEIGH ON SEA	30-Nov-02
2326	Greenhorn B	Brian	A-66C-A	DUNFERMLINE	02-Dec-02
2327	Brown K D	Ken	A-60C-B	BURGESS HILL	01-Jan-03
2328	Holbeche D J	Derek	A-52B-B/D	PERTH	11-Jan-03
2329	Gerrish A	Tony	A-61B-C	TROWBRIDGE	22-Jan-03
2330	Lloyd D	David	A-53A-B	LOWESTOFT	21-Jan-03
2331	Blachford S F	Stan	A-60C-C	53340 MECKENHEIM	05-Jan-03
2332	Rendall C M	Calum	A-63C-A	SWINDON	23-Jan-03
2333	Grantham M H	Michael	A-43A-B/D	DRONFIELD	26-Mar-03
2334	McGarvie R B	Roy	A-43A-B	SWANSEA	26-Mar-03
2335	Southcott R G	Rob	A-66B-A	ABERGAVENNY	27-Mar-03
2336	Cooper J J	Jeff	A-62A-B	DOVER	27-Mar-03
2337	Lloyd R C	Raoul	A-43A-B	GRIMSBY	27-Mar-03
2338	Laidler I W	Ian	A-71B-D	WAKEFIELD	27-Mar-03
2339	Hutchinson P G	Phillip	A-53A-X	STAFFORD HEIGHTS	27-Mar-03
2340	Cliff J A R	Jim	A-57A-A	SWAN BAY	27-Mar-03
2341	Irvine J A G	John	A-64C-D	SINGAPORE	27-Mar-03
2342	Ware R A	Robby	A-69A-D	WOKING	29-Mar-03
2343	Clark R J	Roy	A-81C-D	CATTERICK GARRISON	29-Mar-03
2344	French J E G	John	A-52A-B/D	WHITSTABLE	29-Mar-03
2345	Scapens L N	Les	A-43A-B	BRISTOL	29-Mar-03
2346	Bending A B	Tony	A-43A-B	BOURNEMOUTH	29-Mar-03
2347	Carn M D	Mike	A-57B-C	7609 MJ ALMELO	29-Mar-03
2348	Jones W J M	Bob	A-43A-C/A	LANCASTER	29-Mar-03
2349	Wood A D	Tony	A-93A-A	WELWYN GARDEN CITY	12-Apr-03
2350	Higgins A	Tony	A-66B-D	WOKINGHAM	12-Apr-03
2351	Nicholls J T	John	A-66X-C	NEPEAN	12-Apr-03
2352	Humphreys B	Bernie	A-65C-A	TREHARRIS	07-May-03
2353	Coles J A	Herbie	A-66B-A	ROYSTON	08-May-03
2354	Meyer K J	Ken	A-50A-C	RICHMOND HILL	08-May-03
2355	Rayfield A	Alan	A-56A-B	QUEENBOROUGH	11-May-03
2356	Day M S	Marshall	A-58A-A	NORTHAMPTON	15-May-03
2357	Charlesworth C P	Clifford	A-47B-B	LOUTH	15-May-03
2358	Andrew A P	Fred	A-64B-B	NAPLES	15-May-03
2359	Dandy A N	Neville	A-53A-B	GARSTANG	18-May-03
2360	Oates G V	George	A-52B -C	BUNYA RIVERSIDE	18-May-03

DECEASED

It is with deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following since OBAN 26: When members contact the Membership Secretary to notify him of the death of other members, they are requested to make the contact in writing and provide as much detail as possible.

Peter Caine (44A): On 23 February 2003 a private ceremony was held at the Duke of York's Military School in memory of Peter Caine who died earlier this year. Mrs Caine was met by the Bursar of the school who had arranged the planting of a tree adjacent to CLIVE House. Peter's ashes were placed around the base of the tree along with a small plaque. There were approximately 26 people in attendance who afterwards watched the normal Sunday morning parade Church Service. - *David Cross (42C)*.

Name	Intake	Member No	Date of Death
Wally Hamer	42B	1764	1996
Peter Simmonds	45B	1834	October 2002
Gordon Thomson	47A	2042	21 June 2002
John Sands	42B	1475	16 August 2002
Phil Gibson	54A	199	26 October 2002
'Spike' Hughes	45B	1811	5 January 2003
Ron Hague	50B	2104	12 April 2003
David Matyear	49B	35	April 2003
NJH Butcher	46A	1011	2003

OBITUARY

LAST FAREWELL TO RON HAGUE (50B)

Who died 12th April 2003

By Weston T Robertson (50B)

As I remember, the air was damp and a chill wind carried away what little confidence remained within the spirits of the assembled group of boys, waiting to be formed into squads for initial basic training, when I first met Ronald John Hague. HQ Company, home for the next 6 months, not only offered training in the art of square bashing, but also the rudimentary skills common to all trades. Here, in that great melting pot of mixed ability and personality, opinions were blended and formed, friendships forged and tempered and characters created. It was September 1950 and among the many, Ron Hague was proud to have indelibly inscribed upon his heart, 50B.

While an apprentice armourer, Ron put his ability to use the weapons he studied to good use and enjoyed a reputation as a keen and efficient shot, an ability he retained throughout his career, particularly with the LMG. Never rising to NCO status within the School, although never to my knowledge actually charged with any misdemeanour, 50B would have been a lesser group without him.

On passing out as a third class armourer, Ron went initially to Warminster, then did two tours with 2/10th Ghurkha in Lahore, Malaya, where he was Mentioned in Dispatches. It was my good luck to be with him then and we spent many happy hours both in the sea and supping rum with his laughing soldiers, who seemed to have great affection for this tall armourer Sergeant. Leaving Malaya, Ron tried his hand at flying with the Army Air Corps but was found wanting, navigation I believe was his weak point, but nevertheless he took a civil pilots licence and flew for pleasure.

With a love of history and tradition, particularly Scottish, Ron's posting to The Black Watch in Berlin was particularly welcome and, in his way, he was extremely popular with the 'Jocks', so much so that he was invited to a special function, as a civilian, many years later. It was with regret that he had to leave to attend

an Artificer Weapons course, but he had found another love in Janet, who was to become his wife, the ceremony taking place among his friends in Berlin.

A tour in Sharjah with a gunner regiment, then back to the UK to join the strength of CVHQ at Bordon, then across the road to become an instructor at SEME. This was an opportunity to indulge in other interests, like sailing and diving while still taking the occasional flight, but perhaps more so, to concentrate in his love for shooting.

Retiring from the Army as an ASM in 1974, Ron became a civilian instructor in the small arms section at SEME, then took time out to instruct in Saudi Arabia, then returned to SEME, this time to the instrument section where he remained until he retired in 2000.

Those who knew Ron saw him as a comrade and a friend. A friend who would rather you had a good time than he. A friend who thought no sacrifice too great and whose friendship remained firm and true throughout the years. When he spoke it was with affection, for only the false conceit of authority held his contempt, having none of his own. A larger world knew him for his knowledgeable articles written for the Stalking magazine, but a smaller world loved him for just being him. For the last twenty years it has been my privilege to have him visit at least once each year to my home here in the Highlands of Scotland and to accompany him as we stalked these lonely hills. When first his illness struck, he fought the fight and won, able once again to walk the highland glens, but when again called to climb a higher mountain, the strain was too much. Ron is survived by his wife, Janet and two children Alison and Andrew, to whom we send deepest sympathy from his many, many friends.

The funeral took place at West Liss on the 22nd of April. A single piper lamented that the Flowers of the Forest had all faded away as the coffin entered St Mary's Church and with a heavy heart, I spoke a few words to the assembled mourners. At the grave side, the regimental march of the Black Watch, 'Highland Laddie', mingled with the songs of the birds in the hedgerow and we left to the strain 'Black Bear', by tradition, the call for going home.

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).

CD: of the REDS School song, recorded during Reunion 2001 is also available from the Museum shop.

A 37 page illustrated history (published in 2000) of the Army Apprentices College / Princess Marina College is available from the Membership Secretary, as are back numbers of the OBAN.

History: Free to members. Available to other UK and BFPO based members at £2.00 per copy (inclusive of postage). The cost to overseas members is £3.50 per copy.

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).

If you require a copy of the History, UK based members should send postage stamps. Although payment for a single copy of OBAN may be made with postage stamps (5 x 20p), requests for more than one copy should be accompanied by a cheque.

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

Army Apprentices School Blazer Badges: The Membership Secretary was told of the availability of these during the Reunion 98, not officially available from the AOBA, but from Badges of Pride, PO Box 94, Sarisbury Green, Southampton, SO31 1ZE. Tel No. 01489 885389.

Cartoon Sheets: Copies of the cartoon shown in OBAN 17 (or any others drawn for articles by David Barrett) can be ordered from 74 Cedar Road, Hythe, Southampton, SO4 53PZ. 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.

THE CRAFTSMAN

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