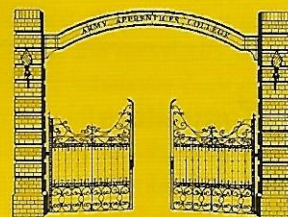


Spring 2005

Issue 32



O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

President. Brigadier S J Tetlow, MBE, ADC, DEME(A)
Vice Presidents Past Commandants

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Cover Picture

A contingent of the Arborfield Old Boys Association and the College permanent staff march onto the square to partake in the final Army Apprentices Passing Out Parade at Arborfield on Thursday 12th August 2004 under the command of Lt Col Andy Philips RE.

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When Col Peter Gibson and John Northam introduced the 'new' OBAN, Issue 1 of Spring 1992, they could hardly have expected the success that the magazine has had over the last twelve years. That issue, of course, wasn't the 'original' first, that honour must go to the OBAN of December 1956. Sadly, the newsletter did not lead a prolonged life in those days, for whatever reasons. But nowadays the Old Boys' magazine is avidly awaited by its many readers all around the world. As a very recently installed editor, I sat down to wonder 'what makes it tick?' The answer is very simple really. One only has to look over the last thirty-one editions, full of tales from far and wide, both serious and humorous, to realise that the magazine's success can be put down firmly to its many contributors.

With this in mind, I can only urge and encourage our readers to keep the contributions flowing in, for it is only by this method that the OBAN will continue to thrive. There must be many of you ex-boys out there with a tale to tell, however simple it may be. Don't be afraid to have a go, no-one is that worried about spelling or punctuation (and anyway, that's my privilege to sort out!); it is the spirit of the story that counts. If you have never written in before, think about it now – there is always an eager reader out there, waiting for you to spark his own imagination and make his own telling contribution. Get in there first!

Looking back through previous copies of OBAN, I notice that it has been some time now since the last 'Personality Slot' was published. I'm pretty sure that there are many of you out there who warrant inclusion in such an article – self-written of course! The main thing, apart from your honesty, which is never in doubt, is to accompany the article with two photographs – one of 'how you looked then' i.e. as an apprentice, and another of how you appear now. Don't worry; computer enhancement can make us all look pretty damn good! How about it lads – get your typing skills honed up and send in an article about yourself.

As editor, I have been extremely fortunate in having to work 'alongside' (is Spain really that far away?) Ken Anderson, who makes life very simple for me. As long as I receive letters and articles and hopefully 'edit' them to a publishable condition, then it is Ken who sets the typeface and layout, before sending the 'proof' copy on compact disc to the printers. I must ask again that, where possible, articles and/or letters are sent in on a 'floppy disk', particularly if they are of significant length. Short letters I don't mind 'typing' in on my steam-driven old PC, but for 'the serious stuff', I'd appreciate it in some word-processing format! Ken has proved very handy at converting most versions of text into a publishable style. As they say, *"We have the technology"*!

Pete Gripton 56B

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Please note that the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise of the Editor or of the Arborfield Old Boys Association. Therefore no responsibility for these will be accepted.

OFFICERS REPORTS



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

After the excitement of the AGM followed by the sadness of the final Passing out Parade, the last 4 months have been rather quieter on the AOBA front. Bill Cleasby has been working hard to ensure that the 2005 Reunion can take place in Arborfield and, from what I have heard, it should be as good as ever. The other members of the committee continue to dedicate many hours of their own time in support of the Association and, on your behalf, I am most grateful for their support.

One highlight of the Autumn, however, was the opening of the replica Poperinghe Barracks Guardroom as the new REME Museum entrance. This event took place on 1st November and I was honoured to be invited to represent the Association. The opening of this new facility marks another important milestone in the Museum development. If you have not visited yet, and live within reasonable reach of Arborfield, I urge you to do so. If you live too far away, however, you will have ample opportunity to spend time in the Museum during the 2005 AGM. For a preview, you can visit the Museum web-site.

I have not had the opportunity to visit the REME students at Harrogate as yet, but all being well I shall do so before the next Reunion.

May I finish with the hope that you all had a good Christmas and an equally sober New Year.

Col (Retd) Peter H Gibson (PS)

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY Lt Col IWJ Cleasby (61C)

May I start off by wishing everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year. Could I also thank all those members who sent cards and letters over the Christmas period, they were very much appreciated.

2005 Reunion Preparation for the 2005 Reunion is now well underway and, 'touch wood', appears to be going well. In essence, the weekend selected for the 2005 reunion is the 22nd/23rd/24th July. These dates have been chosen to coincide with the SEAE Summer break and give some flexibility in the requirement for both accommodation and seating. The 2005

reunion will be based on the Bailleul Sergeants' Mess and the programme very much on the lines of previous reunions. I intend to put out the programme and application form in the next month or so.

Remembrance Parade You may be aware that we are also planning, this year, for members to take part in the Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph in London, including dinner the night before and a special Remembrance Day lunch. Details are being sorted out by Keith Evans (Assistant Honorary Secretary), who can be contacted at the REME Museum (most afternoons) on 01189 763 384). Keith moved into the Museum shortly before Christmas, to assist with the sale of reunion Videos and/or DVDs, but has since expanded his repertoire to include the Remembrance Day Parade and the Museum's education programme. What a player and so typical of the fine attitude and capability of the Arborfield Apprentice.

For Sale Talking about Videos and DVDs, we still have a few left of the 2004 reunion, which can be obtained directly or ordered over the phone from the Museum Shop (01189 763 223). The recording of the reunion is first class and strongly recommended. If you have any money left over, post Christmas, can I also recommend Peter Gripton's book, 'The Arborfield Apprentice' and 'The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist' by John Dutton. Both of these publications can also be obtained from the Museum Shop.

Well now, I had better get back to reunion matters.

All the best to everyone, God Bless, Bill Cleasby (61C)

MONEY MATTERS Treasurer Major (Retd) Mike Davis (60B)

Money matters! Your fund is in good shape financially, considering the amount of expenditure on the Reunion weekend and the final passing out parade of the ATFC in August 2004. An excellent DVD and Video was made during this period to record these events. Back to mundane topics. A reminder to all members who pay their subscriptions by cheque and/or cash - your subscriptions for 2005 are due as of 1 January 2005.

Finally please note that my email address has changed and is now:
mikeandbethanne@onetel.com

Happy New Year to all, Mike Davis (60B)

PUBLICITY MEMBERS REPORT Ken Anderson (58A)

I'm pleased to be able to report that the AOBA Website continues to create much interest. In the last six months of 2004 the site received over 1,300,000 hits which in real terms meant some 10,000 unique visits to over 20,000 web pages. A Search Engine is now provided within the site and this is proving most useful to visitors as is the new Site Map facility.

Army Technical Foundation College Old Boys Interviews

On the 30th June 2004, just a few months before the College was due to close its gates for the final time, a unique opportunity was presented to a number of the Apprentices, when a small number of ex-boys made themselves available to be interviewed and asked about their times at Arborfield and subsequently. Reports of those interviews were written up by the Apprentices and published in the College magazine, 'The Arborfield Informer', and some extracts are included below:

Report by A/T Smith 189 on Keith Evans

Mr Evans was in Intake 45A and is an ex-REME WO1. He joined the Army because some of his friends had and his best memories of Arborfield were of the comradeship he experienced here. Having spent the majority of his life either in, or working for, the Army, the advice he gave us was to get on as many courses and get as many qualifications as possible, to help promotion in the future.

Report by A/T Richardson 668 on Mike Mullet

Mr Mullett's best memory of the College was the Passing Out Parade, which was run by the A/T RSM, not the PS NCOs or Officers. During his time in the Army he went to Germany, Jordan, Kenya, and Cyprus amongst others. The advice he gave us was not to waste time and to grab every opportunity.

Report by A/T O'Brian, 3 Platoon, on Andy Brian

In 1946, Andy Brown joined the Army as a member of Intake 46B of the Army Technical School (Boys). Mr Brown recalled his best times as being when he played pranks on the opposing companies. An example of this was when 'D' Company won a competition and raised their flag as a sign that they had done so. As a response, he and his platoon sneaked out at night, cut down the flagpole and placed it near the bus stop on the main road!

Although I know that the D-Day era Army was harsher, Mr Brown said his worst time at the College (or School then) was in the winter of 1947, when they had no heating due to the radiators freezing. However, it also seemed that the intakes then felt that they could get away with quite major pranks, which would not even cross our minds nowadays. Mr Brown thought that training standards had changed since he was at the School. He mentioned that the punishments were very severe if he or anyone else broke the rules, such as periods spent locked in the guardroom. The other difference was that the School was not entirely for the training of tradesmen, but that people would pass out, only to proceed to an infantry regiment.

Mr Brown talked about the education system at Arborfield whilst he attended. He described three training levels 1-3, with the highest being level 1. Mr Brown gained his Level 1 here, which helped his Army career once he had left. Eighteen months after he left, he had reached the rank of Corporal. He moved to SEE to train to be an Artificer and was automatically promoted to Sergeant. By the time his 18-month Artificer course was over, he was promoted to Staff Sergeant. Six years later he was a

WO2 and, after another six years, he reached WO1. On asking Mr Brown for advice on our future careers, he said two things: Firstly - All the bad things that have happened to me are history; all I can do is look back and laugh. Secondly - Take all that is thrown at you and smile!

Report by A/T/LCpl Smith 504 on Maj(Ret'd) Dewar

Major (Ret'd) Dewar became the Apprentice RSM for Intake 45A, which was then the highest ranking apprentice at the School. He was responsible for leading Field Marshall Montgomery to inspect the platoons for the Passing Out Parade. This told me that, if you show effort and determination, you will get a lot back and progress well through your Army career.

Report by A/T Richardson 419 on Ken Williams

Mr Williams was an A/T in 1953 and left the Army in 1984. He was an A/T/LCpl at AAS Chepstow. He said that they attended the School for three years and weren't allowed out for the first two. He also was not allowed to wear civilian clothing until he passed out. However, the thing that struck me as funny was that he believed our training was harder, as they didn't have to go on exercise at all in those three years!

Report by A/T Lucas, 3 Platoon, on Maj(Ret'd) Dixon

Major Dixon joined the School in October 1943 and was in the Army until 1979. He joined when he was just 15 years of age. Although the course was three years long at that time, he seemed to think that it was easier then it is now because they had longer to do everything. Maj Dixon claimed that the accommodation was even worse when he was here. There were 16 men per room and there weren't as many privileges. One privilege they did have was to go into town, although because they were only being paid one and sixpence per day, they would have to save up just to get there! It is quite rare now to hear of someone being put in prison in the guardroom, but Maj Dixon says that when he was here it was a common thing. He was once locked up for a day just for going to fetch the 'break' a few minutes too early. However, he did say that one of the main differences is that we do a lot more physical exercise then in the 'Old Days'. One of the highlights of his time at the School was that Field Marshall Montgomery was the Inspecting Officer for his Passing Out Parade with over 1,000 A/Ts on parade.

After Arborfield, he was given many postings such as to the Malaya Regt, Cyprus, Singapore, Honolulu, Christmas Island, Panama Canal, Jordan, Ireland and Germany - to name just a few! When he was in Jordan, he was given the duty, alongside others, to look after the King of Jordan after he was attacked. He also mentioned that he saw some of his friends die there.

Finally, he gave us the advice of taking all opportunities as soon as they arrive, in order not to miss out on great experiences and to take advantage of everything that is offered to you.

(It really is most interesting to read these reports as written by the Apprentices themselves. I wonder if the same opportunity might be available to those who will now do their initial training at the Army Foundation College up in Harrogate? Ken Anderson)

MEMORIES OF ARBORFIELD 1944 - 1947

By R W (Bob) Ward Sept '44

My first memory of Arborfield is of my five-foot-nothing frame, struggling under the weight of a 10-blanket roll, which I was attempting to carry from MT1, where the blankets had been stored during 'the Dispersal', to 'B' Company stores. The School was pretty empty when we first arrived, with the dispersed elements returning only in dribs and drabs. We were the first intake to be issued with battle-dress (BD), as our second best dress, and 2" belts instead of the 3" ones. This caused quite a bit of envy from the rest of the A/Ts, until their kit was brought into line with ours. One item of clothing that caused much amusement was 'Drawers Long', these were known as 'Wilsons', because of their similarity with the running gear worn by the eternal athlete in 'The Wizard' comic. After we had got our best boots beezed up to standard, someone outside the School decreed that we should fall into line with the rest of the Army and 'dubbin' them. So we applied a layer of 'Cherry Blossom' and left it unpolished until the order was rescinded.

Bullying We 'jeeps' were in awe of the senior intakes and learned to steer clear of their accommodation. I don't recall any physical bullying, but occasionally a jeep would be grabbed, stood on a table, and made to recite a poem or sing a song. There was definitely some fagging. I had to blanco and polish the Boy Drum Major's kit for a while, until he became dissatisfied with my standard of work.

Messing The system operating in 1944 was known as 'family messing', where a group of 12 A/Ts was allocated to a particular table in the Dining Hall. Two members of the group would be from the Senior intake and it would be their job collect the food from the Cookhouse counter, then serve it to the rest of their group. If you were unfortunate enough to have a couple of 'hard cases' at the head of the table, you would find that they took the lion's share of whatever was available, whilst the other ten members got what was left. When we changed to a cafeteria system, we still had to put up with the Senior intake exercising their privileges. This took the form of one of them breaking into the front of the queue and holding it up until all his cronies had been served. Oh how we longed to become members of 6 Intake!

Shortly after I arrived, blackout restrictions were lifted and we no longer had to put up the plywood blackout shutters each night. Most of the shutters were used in the construction of the castle walls, built for the 'Changing of the Guard' display during the 1945 Parents Day. However, quite a few sheets of plywood came in useful for pressing trousers between the biscuits and the bedstead.

Recreation The highlights of the programmes at the Camp cinema were the 'serials'. Woe betide the members of the film committee if they failed to obtain a good serial for each term. Our favourites included 'Flash Gordon', with Larry 'Buster' Crabbe in the title roll. It was some years before I identified the music used for the title credits but now, whenever I hear Liszt's 'Les Preludes', I can see that onion-shaped spacecraft, crossing the screen with smoke and sparks spluttering from its tail.

Another privilege of the senior intakes was to sit at the back of the Camp Hall, where smoking was permitted. As a non-smoker myself, I found the issue of a duty-free cigarette ration - when I became 17 - an extra source of income. This came from those A/Ts under 17, who were prepared to pay exorbitant prices for single cigarettes.

We were only allowed out to Wokingham, passes had to be obtained if you wanted to go to Aldershot or Reading. Wokingham had few attractions, apart from the one cinema and a *Woolworths* store. The main attraction in Aldershot was the Tattoo Studio, quite a few A/Ts returned to Camp with sore arms after a visit. Reading had a good choice of cinemas and plenty of shops, while there was a Forces Canteen in a room at the bottom the steps of the pedestrian underpass leading to the railway station. The best canteen by far was the 'Toc H' in Friar Street, which did a great 'bangers and mash', at a price we impoverished A/Ts could afford. My lasting memory of Reading is of seeing Friar Street, packed from end to end with American Servicemen celebrating VE Day. In later years, our favourite watering hole was 'The Britannia' in Caversham Road.

Accommodation When the School reformed, in September 1944, there were only four Companies, leaving E and F blocks only partly occupied by Permanent Staff. One room in F block was used for Religious Education and, during an epidemic of colds, another room in that block was used to isolate those A/Ts reporting sick. The isolation didn't seem to be total as M&D still meant that they reported for duty as usual. Another room in F block was also occupied by the 'Woolwich Class'. This was probably to ensure that the rest of the A/Ts did not realise what we 'bombheads' were getting away with! When 'E' Company was formed in 1947 - to accept each new intake for their first six months at the School - there was a re-allocation of barrack rooms and each Company was left with a spare room to be used for recreation purposes. These rooms were equipped with table tennis and tables and chairs where board games could be played. 'B' Company had a weekly 'Housey Housey' session.

Cold Weather On very cold morning parades, we knew that the RSM's order to "Put your kit down" would be closely followed by the dreaded command, "Hand and foot quick mark time". As an exercise in co-ordination, it was not quite as bad as rubbing your tummy with one hand whilst patting your head with the other, but it required concentration and certainly got the blood circulating. The first months of 1947 were extremely cold and there was a shortage of coal, the boiler house was reduced to burning old tent duckboards. Whilst the remainder of Arborfield Garrison were sent home, we were kept back as it was felt that we would only be a nuisance to our parents if we went home. To conserve what little fuel there was, the workshops were closed and those A/Ts not attending education classes either assembled in the Camp Hall to listen to lectures or were sent out on route marches. The 'Woolwich Class' was, of course, excused from such things but I do recall one of our AEC instructors advising us that the best way to keep our feet warm was to change into freshly laundered socks each morning - some hopes! Incidentally, my time with the Woolwich Class came to an abrupt end when I was weeded out at the halfway stage and returned to trade training, where I had to try to make up for the five months I had lost in order to pass out with my intake.

Fatigues Most fatigue duties were allocated to the duty class by the RSM during morning parade. The one I tried hardest to avoid was 'Agriculture'. Having joined the Army to get away from farm work, it was the last thing I wanted to do. Fortunately, my short stature came to my aid as the tallest A/Ts were chosen to be Ben Cook's helpers. One of the 'plum' fatigue duties was Sergeants' Mess. You reported for duty before breakfast and ate in the Mess kitchen. You had to make sure that the ante-room was cleaned up before lunch, as Bandmaster Nel took his afternoon siesta on one of the sofas. One Saturday morning voluntary duty was very rewarding. This involved 'beating' for pheasant shoots on the Bramshill Estate, for which we earned five shillings. I think Ben Cook must have had some connection with the head keeper, as he always delivered our morning break in person. We would be drinking cocoa and eating 'wads', whilst 'the guns' were knocking back whiskeys and tucking in to their smoked salmon sandwiches.

Commandants Col White was the Chief Instructor as well as being Commandant but, when he was replaced by Col Grenville-Grey, Lt Col Holman took on the role of Chief Instructor. I assume this was because the new Commandant did not have a technical background, in fact he wore the uniform of a Rifle Regiment (KRRC?). Which makes me wonder why the list on the AOBA Web Site shows him as originating from the RAOC? *(Comments invited upon this one! Ed.)*

Personalities Of the AEC instructors, I recall a Scots teacher of English who had an Italian name – I think it was 'Fattori'. He was the only teacher who gave rewards for the best efforts, but his rewards were in line with his nationality, being one whole penny! Padre Beer was a real 'Woodbine Willy', having been wounded during the fighting in Northwest Europe. His RE sessions were very popular, being attended by A/Ts from 'other denominations'. Perhaps the fact that he included sex education was the real attraction! I recall that one of the hymns he chose for the Sunday before annual leave was 'For all the Saints who from their labours rest'!

Pay The rate of pay when I joined was 1/3d per day, which could be increased by 3d increments based mainly upon progress in the Workshops. In theory, you could remain on the basic rate until you passed out or reached the age of eighteen. I had just managed to qualify for an increment, when a new set of pay rates was introduced. This was based on service, 1/6d a day for the first year, 2/- for the second and 2/6d for the third. We only received about half of our pay in cash, the remainder being kept back to pay for both the films that were non-AKC and for Barrack Damages. Whatever 'credits' you had accumulated were paid out prior to annual leave.

The School Song ('The Reds') Apparently the song originated with the supporters of a Dublin football team, using music from a Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, and was first picked up by a member of 'B' Company. When Bandmaster Newman joined the School, he composed a School March to replace 'The Boys' – a combination of 'Billy Boy' and 'Farmer's Boy' – which had been in use up to that time. The new march included the School bugle call and the School song and was very popular. Unfortunately, it could not be recognised 'officially' as the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which held the rights

to G and S Operas, would not permit any arrangements of Sir Arthur Sullivan's music. I guess REME did not have the same problems with the Walt Disney Corporation!

!! NEWS FLASH !!

Bill Cleasby finds 'missing' Royal Scot locomotive

What's all this about the Royal Scot then – eh? Well, apprentices from the late Forties through to the early Fifties may well recall that a scale model of a steam locomotive was under construction. This was amalgamated between the Machine Workshop and the Metal Bashers' Shop. Indeed, many A/Ts helped the civilian instructors, under supervision, by sharing some of the work. With the guidance of one instructor, I myself did some turning, on one of the wheels of the engine. I well remember an instructor alternatively beating (no, not me!) and annealing a large sheet of copper into shape. It took weeks of toil to form the sheet to the contours of the engine boiler and 'flare it out' to form the engine cab – a skill that we A/Ts greatly admired. At many an Old Boys' Reunion, the subject of the whereabouts of that locomotive came up. Rumours were perpetuated by statements such as "It was displayed in a showroom in London" or "It was sold at an auction" – the latter was guaranteed to cause annoyance to the concerned assembly. But the simple truth is – the locomotive had never left the College! It was at the Sunday morning 'coffee' in the Sergeants' Mess, following the 2004 Reunion, that Bill Cleasby casually revealed his amazing discovery. He had been busying himself by searching the College and listing all the artefacts, prior to the College's pending closure (a natural event for a Museum Director eh, Bill? Ed.) Whilst in the upper environs of the Lecture Theatre, Bill came across this splendid piece of College (or should that be School?) history, still ensconced in its display case – namely 'The Royal Scot'. Bill had now encumbered himself with a bit of a headache – in fact a 'half ton' headache! "How do we remove it from its lofty perch and what do we then do with it?" he pondered one break time. One coffee drinker present said that perhaps the Vehicle Museum would provide a good home. Bill hummed in thought at this suggestion but I thought I detected the germ of possibility to an idea as Bill's thoughtful gaze rose slowly to the sky. I have every faith that Bill will 'do the right thing'! Thanks for the good news Bill. From Ray Derrick (48B)

(At the recently held Committee meeting (Oct 25th), the said case and its magnificent locomotive were already on proud display in the REME Museum, just inside of what is still the main entrance. With the official opening of the re-built Depot Guardroom, which is to become the new Museum entrance, due just a week later, the locomotive may well have to steam to pastures new. But definitely, for the time being at least, Bill has 'done the right thing'. Ed.)

ONE LINERS

If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted, musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed, tree surgeons debarked, and dry cleaners depressed?

HISTORIC OBAN ARTICLES

Apart from the regular contributions from such as the Chairman, Hon Sec and Editor, as well as 'readers' letters', the main articles submitted to OBAN over the years, between Issue 1 and 10 are as follows:

OBAN 1 Spring 1992

1991 AOBA Reunion
College Archives and Memorabilia

OBAN 2 Autumn 1992

Comments on OBAN 1
Corp Pictorial Archives
Reunion 1992
The Association Standard
The year I grew up – Harry Shaw J39B

OBAN 3 Spring 1993

The Reunion revisited – Lawrence Nixon Apr 1942
Past Apprentice to present Portreeve – John Northam 47A
The budding Apprentice – Don Walker 45A
Our School (RSM McNally) – Bryan Adams 42C

OBAN 4 Autumn 1993

Bird Doctor of Sek Kong – Jim Ades 45A
Memories of early Arborfield – Fred Ford 39A
Reunion 1993 – David Schofield 65A

OBAN 5 Spring 1994

The rocking years – Pete Gripton 56B
Visit to New Zealand – John Northam 47A
Further memories of early Arborfield – Fred Ford 39A
Fifty years on – Bryan Adams Oct 42
RASC Jersey boys – Joe Gutteridge (Jersey boy)
Anecdotes from Arborfield – George Fleetwood 56B

The history project – Viscount Alanbrooke

OBAN 6 Autumn 1994

Fifty years on – Tom Pearce Feb 44
Ex-boys will be boys – Ken Hayes 42
The vicar's husband – Denis Marshall 46B
Personality slot – Frank Bennett Oct 39
Prince Rupert School, Wilhemshafen – Joe Kinson PS
Reunion 1994 – Tom Pearce Feb 44

OBAN 7 Spring-Summer 1995

Personality slot – Don Walker 45A
The Great Escape – Tony Guy 43A
Zomba or bust – Don Walker 45A
Disappointment at the Reunion – Mike Wells 49A

OBAN 8 Autumn-Winter 1995

My first day – John Maddox 44B
Memorial Garden – Brian Hornsey 54A
Reunion 1995 – Mac McNally 45A

OBAN 9 Spring-Summer 1996

Armament Artificer Training early 50s – Tom Pearce Feb 44
Personality Slot – Steve Johnson 46A
Reminiscences – Walter Jobber Oct 43
Trials of a Radar Mech – Brian Hornsey 54A
Jumbled jottings – Fred Ford 39A

OBAN 10 Autumn-Winter 1996

Personality slot – Brian Conway 42A
Pantomime 1947 – Ted Brigham 49A
Reminiscences Part 2 – Walter Jobber Oct 43
40th Anniversary Reunion – Pete Gripton 56B
Reunion 1996 – Tony Head 46A

This list will be continued in the next issue.



Some members of the Arborfield Old Boys Association attending the last Passing Out Parade held at Arborfield

GENERAL (SOMETIMES VAGUE) REMINISCENCES

By Gerry Berragan, 48B

Having passed 'the examination', I then enlisted and received the 'King's Shilling' at the Army Recruiting Office in Fishergate, York, in July or August of 1948. My brother Clifford, and cousin, Derek Kirkpatrick, joined the Army Technical School in September 1944 (44B), so had already left in July 1947. In early September 1948, I travelled from York, through London (for the first time) *en route* to Wokingham, clutching a small suitcase containing all my worldly possessions. That was then, but I now need a pantehnicon to move house! (*Come on Gerry, we all know that you really mean a furniture removal van! Ed.*)

An uncertain start Arriving at Wokingham railway station with a few other boys, we were met in the traditional manner by a Sergeant with a 15-cwt *Bedford* truck, who proceeded to transport us all to Arborfield. One memory I have is of being handed a sheet of paper with the official Arborfield address on it, to be used when writing letters home etc. The heading read '12345678 A/T A N Other'. I remember thinking 'that's an easy number to remember', but pointed out to the NCO in charge that my name was G B Berragan and not A N Other! I cannot recall his exact reply, but it was something along the line of "*We've got a right one here!*" After being issued with our bedding, uniform and eating utensils, at some stage in the next day or two we were arranged, according to size, into 'squads', being informed that this was for drill purposes. The tallest group, which included Mike Addison, was placed under the command of Sgt Buckley, while I was in the next tallest squad, under Sgt O'Brien, who I believe was later commissioned into the RAOC.

At a very early stage, we were told to put on our uniforms and to parade in the 'quiet room' for inspection. After a brief look, Sgt O'Brien invited me to stand on a small table. With false pride, I thought I was being displayed as an example of an immaculate turnout. He then invited the rest of the squad to spot if there were any errors in my dress. Which they did to a man, gleefully pointing out that I had my gaiters on upside down!

I cannot in all honesty say that I was very happy during my first week or so at Arborfield – in fact I was most unhappy, having been described by the Room NCO as the 'doom boy' of the squad. Had I been in possession of the necessary money – was it twenty pounds then? – needed to purchase my discharge, I may well have taken that drastic course. Fortunately I didn't and soon settled down to the life of an HQ Company 48B 'Jeep'. In my efforts to please and in response to the duty NCO's question upon entering our barrack room – "*Can anyone here ride a bike?*" I immediately put up my hand. I was initially very pleased when selected to cycle over to the Cookhouse and to report to the Cook Sergeant. But as I left the room, the NCO said, "*Oh, by the way, there isn't a bike, so you'll have to walk*". I spent the rest of the evening feeding potatoes into a peeling machine, before forlornly sitting there removing their 'black eyes'.

I well remember 'passing off the Square' after the obligatory six weeks of 'square bashing'. I was the one who managed to do a 'left incline' when all the others correctly followed the order

to 'right incline'. But whilst fully expecting to be lynched, it appeared that I was given some credit by the Guards' CSMs (who I believe were from Sandhurst) for remaining still until being instructed to do a 'right turn' and face the same way as the rest of the squad! I have the recollection that our squad won the drill competition, but cannot be too sure.

Sgt O'Brien, who was very fierce but nevertheless scrupulously fair and well respected, left after we had completed our square bashing and was replaced by a Sergeant from the Gloucesters (badges front and back), but I cannot remember his name. Major Charrington was our then Company Commander and we were paid ten shillings and sixpence (10/6d) a week. Out of that, we were actually given four bob (4/-) in cash each week, with all the formality of crashing boots, two salutes, and a cry of "*Pay and pay-book correct, Sir!*" On the religious side, I was confirmed in the School Chapel by the Dean of Windsor, on December 9th 1948.

Things can only get better! My chosen trade was that of Vehicle Mechanic (VM) and I spent many happy hours filing and chiseling blocks of metal into ever-decreasing sizes. I could never understand how the various Polish (not polish!) boys managed. Indeed, I was most envious of the way that they not only seemed to complete the fitting task sooner than anyone else, but also gained the highest marks for the finish (not Finnish!) and excellence of their work. The Poles were not only skilled fitters, but also outstanding sportsmen.

After HQ Company, although I had expected that with all the other VMs I would go into B Coy, there were apparently too many VMs in our intake, so a number of us were put into A Coy. I have very little recollection of my time there, but I did play cricket for both the Company and the School teams throughout the summer of 1949. During that year I was promoted to A/L/Cpl and returned to HQ Coy as a junior NCO. I remained there for the next three intakes – 49B, 50A and 50B, gaining the next highest rank of A/Cpl and then, the first of my own intake, the coveted rank of A/Sgt, by the summer of 1950. Things were certainly getting better!

Although it meant giving up either a Saturday or a Sunday, playing sport for the School provided a wonderful opportunity to meet players from other teams and backgrounds, as well as travelling to other schools and colleges. We played at Eton, Charterhouse, Winchester, Pangbourne, RAF Halton and the two other Apprentices' Schools at Chepstow and Harrogate. My mother came over from York to watch me play at Harrogate, where Lyons and myself, as opening batsmen, put on over a hundred runs – what a proud moment. A photograph taken at Charterhouse is a proud possession, although I can only recall a few of the names.

I captained the School Cricket XI for the 1950 and 1951 seasons and was awarded my School Colours. I was very proud to wear the gold on the forage cap and still have the small shield presented to me in respect of my period as School Captain. Whilst at the Apprentices' School, I had passed my Army Certificate of Education at 2nd and then 1st Class; four subjects of the Forces Prelim; VM Class III; City and Guilds – and my motor-cycling and driving tests. External visits that spring to mind include the



1951 Army Apprentice School Cricket XI

Festival of Britain exhibition (1951), the *Morris* car factory at Cowley, Oxford, and a trip to the *Vauxhall* factory in Luton.

One incident that comes to mind is the stabbing of the Provost Sergeant (Fred Silvers) by one of his own junior staff. It is of interest in that, although the stabbing took place on military property, the culprit was not, as to be expected, tried by a court martial. Instead, he was only put in front of the local magistrate's court, where he received what can only be called a rather lenient sentence.

A spell in 'the doldrums' During my last six months at Arborfield I acquired, jointly with a colleague called Routledge, a motorcycle. It was a 1936 *Zenith* with a 500cc Jap engine, for which we both contributed £20, a small fortune to us. It was, of course, totally illegal, but we kept it in a farmer's barn on the left-hand side of the road between RSM McNally's house and the Bramshill Hunt. Despite our 'skill' as VMs, the machine was continually breaking down and I have a very clear memory of pushing it back the full seven miles or so from Reading.

Many of our Saturday nights were spent dancing at the Drill Hall in nearby Wokingham. But on numerous occasions I would end up soaking wet as I rode the bike back to Camp in pouring rain and cold conditions. This could well be the reason why I contracted rheumatic fever whilst on leave, having just passed out of the AAS in July 1951. Thanks to that bout of fever, I was admitted to the military hospital up in York, where I spent the next four months. That may sound pretty good, but for most

of that time I was confined to bed, lying flat on my back and virtually unable to move. Having certain reservations about using a bedpan, I would drop off the bed in the early hours every night, stuff a pillow under the bedclothes and literally crawl on my hands and knees to the luxury of the toilet! Why no member of the nursing staff realised that I hadn't used the bedpan for the three months or so that I was bed-bound, I'll never know. It will remain a mystery - but also a great relief!

At the end of my time in hospital, it was touch and go as to whether I would be medically discharged, as I had been downgraded to P7 HO (Home Only). Fortunately for me, it was decided that I would remain in the Army and I returned to Arborfield to convalesce in late 1951. Thus, for a few short months, I became a Craftsman on the Permanent Staff (PS), back at boys' school. Whilst there I obtained another more modern motorcycle, which I was allowed - legally! - to keep in the Fire Station opposite the Guardroom.

Upwardly mobile! Around May/June 1952, I moved on to 14 Command Workshop at Ashford in Kent, where I subsequently gained my VM Class II qualification. Although at Ashford for a mere six months, I could probably write a whole book about my time there! But to keep it short, I played rugby and other sports and managed to get medically upgraded to P6 LE, with the result that I joined a batch of VMs posted to Austria. I was keen to become further medically upgraded, in order to apply for a commission and take the War Office Selection Board (WOSB). My time in Austria was memorable in that I gained my First

Class trade, promoted to Corporal and finally re-assessed as P2 on the fitness side.

I applied for a commission in July 1953 and returned to England to attend the WOSB at Barton Stacey. Having passed the board, I was then employed at the Depot REME, again at Arborfield, whilst waiting to be sent to Eaton Hall, the Officer Cadet Training School based in Cheshire. It was during this time that the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, used the Army to break the petrol tanker drivers' strike. I was a member of a group sent to the Regent Fuel Depot in Barking, Essex, and allocated a 2,000 gallon articulated petrol tanker to drive. It was a great experience at the time, particularly in the great welcome we received from the public at large.

Although very intense, I found the sixteen-week course at Eaton Hall relatively easy, following the three years spent at Arborfield. The vast majority of other cadets were young National Servicemen, who had completed no more than a few weeks basic training. I was promoted to Junior Under Officer – the first REME Cadet, I believe, to hold this rank. The greater part of that Eaton Hall intake was from either the Guards or Infantry Regiments. Upon leaving Cheshire in February 1954, I returned as a 2nd-Lieutenant to attend a REME Young Officers' (RYO) course at Arborfield and Bordon.

Career opportunities and changes During the RYO course, I was informed that I was to be posted as 2I/C of the LAD, 7th Queen's Own Hussars, who were returning from Germany to Tidworth, prior to a spell in Hong Kong the following August. As I had a few spare months between the RYO course and taking up my appointment, I applied to attend a parachute course. After two weeks with P Company in Aldershot and four weeks jumping at Abingdon, I qualified as a parachutist, but did not in fact join the airborne forces until 1963. During my subsequent tour in Hong Kong, the OC of the LAD was none other than Capt Pat Lee, who later went on to become DGEME. Whilst still in the Far East, I applied to take a Regular Commission Board (RCB) and after successfully overcoming that hurdle, I was transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) in 1956. It was a significant year all round as, apart from the debacle that was later referred to as the 'Suez Crisis' – I also got married!

My service with the RAOC during the next thirty-two years encompassed many command and staff appointments in UK, Belgium and Germany. I attended the Army Staff College, the National Defence College, the Higher Defence College course at Monterey, California, and the Henley Civilian Management course. In addition to service postings, either on military exercises or 'official business', I managed to visit such far-flung places as the USA, Canada, Australia, China, Cyprus, Italy, Kenya, Singapore, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. When I hear the term 'It's a small world', I know just what they mean!

I was eventually promoted to Major General and appointed Director General of Ordnance Services (DGOS) in September 1985. I was awarded the CB (Companion of the Bath) in the 1988 New Year's Honours List and had the honour of accompanying HM the Queen (Colonel-in-Chief of the RAOC) throughout her visit to the Central Ammunition Depot, Kineton, in March 1988 (see accompanying photograph). I retired in June of that same



General Berragan with HM Queen Elizabeth

year, but remained as a Colonel Commandant of the RAOC until the amalgamation of Corps that resulted in the formation of the Royal Logistics Corps (RLC). I was duly appointed as a Colonel Commandant of the RLC until 1998. I finally retired as Chairman of the RAOC Charitable Trust in 2002 and can thus claim service and/or a connection with the Army from 1948 right through until then – fifty-four years, boy and man!

Time to relax? Following my retirement in 1988, I was appointed Chief Executive of the Institute of Packaging in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, serving in that capacity until the end of 1998 before finally retiring. I have three adult sons – one a barrister, one a Major in the RLC and the youngest a policeman. Between them they have provided me with five grandchildren. My brother Clifford's second son, another 'Gerry' and ex-Royal Artillery, was promoted to Brigadier in 2001.

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

At the beginning of the New Year 2004 the British Services X Boys' Association (BSXBA) issued its Newsletter No.33, proving that it is still a thriving entity out in New Zealand. BSXBA consists of a three-service membership, including a number of ex-boys from Arborfield. Their 2003 reunion had recently been held in Auckland and a number of them had attended the Armistice Paraded, where the REME Standard was again proudly flown. The Association's 2004 reunion is being planned to take place in the Hawkes Bay area, probably based on Napier. AOBA wishes them well in their endeavors.

ARBORFIELD – THE APPRENTICES' SCHOOL AND AFTERWARDS (1956 – 61)

By Pete Gripton, 56B

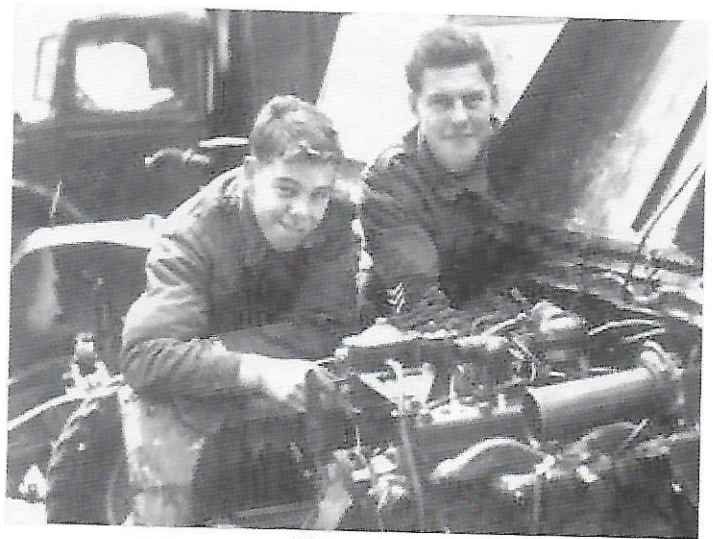
Having left my grammar school, the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys, known to all ex-pupils as 'the Inny', in the summer of 1956, for reasons not immediately known to me, I joined the Army! This wasn't to be for any gung-ho all-action future, but probably because I had been encouraged by my pseudo step-father, Jack Whitley, to 'learn a trade' – and my being in the Army would see me off his hands too! The strange thing is that, towards the end of my time at school, I had been asked if I'd like to attend a 'WOSB' (War Office Selection Board) and declined the offer. Anyway, whatever the circumstances at the time, I certainly have no regrets about joining the Army and actually went on to serve for the next eleven years. It seems a strange length of time, but my official nine years of 'man's service' started at the age of eighteen, at which time I still had the final year of my apprenticeship to complete.

That apprenticeship was, in those days, for a three-year period, after which I was to become a member of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – or 'REME' as it is usually referred to. I eventually passed out from the School as a Radar Technician – one of the highly respected electronics trades – so the trade training was pretty intense, especially when coupled with all the other stuff that was going on – like education, bull-shine and military training. But I'm leaping ahead a bit, so back to the beginning!

'Joining up' itself certainly proved a bit nerve-racking, having to attend the Recruiting Office in Liverpool city centre at Ranelagh Square, followed by the indignity of 'the medical', which took me to a building somewhere near Exchange Station. In those days of course, compulsory two-year National Service was still in vogue, so there were literally dozens of rather disgruntled young men attending for their medicals, a good few years older than me in most cases. Burly dockers and building workers surrounded this scrawny callow youth, making me feel both immature and insecure!

Off to a false start! My previous education had obviously stood me in good stead for training of a technical background, so after passing the statutory psychological and general knowledge tests, I was accepted as a raw recruit to the Army Apprentices' School at Arborfield. This was based near Reading, in Berkshire – it could have been on the moon for all I knew! I remember that we were then living up at Old Roan, at the north end of Liverpool, beyond Aintree Racecourse. Having been told to report to the Recruiting Office, I left home and caught the bus into town, carrying a suitcase and a mac over my arm. That was despite the warm weather – Mum always knew best! When I got to the Office, I was duly handed a travel warrant – but to be used the next day! So I caught the bus back home, walked up Altway and into Tonbridge Drive. I knocked on the back kitchen door and, when Mum opened it, she burst into tears – she thought I'd been rejected!

The next day I was on my way for real, taking the bus into town once more, but this time into Lime Street Station to catch the



Dinger Bell

train to London's Euston Station. It was quite an adventure, being on the express train to London all by myself, watching the countryside flashing past the windows in a blur and listening to the rattle of the train over the tracks. And of course the trains were still steam-powered in those days, so occasionally the view would disappear behind a cloud of smoke and steam. The stations at Crewe and Stafford had familiar names, but then came places like Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard, Tring and Hemel Hempstead, which sounded pretty foreign at the time!

Then it was the Northern Line tube from Euston to Waterloo and a Southern Rail train to the quiet little town of Wokingham – much bigger nowadays! I was picked up on an Army lorry and dropped off at the Camp gates at Arborfield – my home for the next three years, and a bit more as it turned out. The first person I happened to bump into was a scruffy looking lad who seemed to be digging a patch of brown soil just inside the gates, opposite the imposing Guardroom. He looked up at me and said, in a menacing tone, "Where are youse from lad?" Luckily for me, John 'Dinger' Bell was a fellow 'Scouser', so when I mentioned my Liverpool upbringing, his face changed into a smile. Otherwise, he'd have probably landed me one!

How can I begin to describe the next period of my life? I would literally have to write a book on the subject, so much happened. I started off as a 'Jeep' (that's a nickname for all juniors) in Headquarters Company, along with dozens of other young lads in much the same boat as myself. In other words, totally baffled and wondering why we'd joined! (Perhaps Doris Day's song, 'Bewitched, bothered and bewildered' was written just for us?) There were accents from all around the country, Jocks, Taffies, Geordies, Scousers, Cockneys and Brummies – the lot. One young lad – I think his name was Bob Hanson – tried to explain where he was from, but none of us could find 'Berkup' on the map. Turned out he was from 'Bacup' in Lancashire, hardly a million miles from Liverpool, but he could have been from another planet with that accent!

The next three years passed by in a blur. We scrubbed floors, polished floors, blanched webbing, bulled our boots and shone our brasses. We even found the time to learn our trade, at which I was to eventually become a Radar Mechanic (the Technician part was a later change). We did education with Warrant Officers

from the Education Corps and Physical Training Instructors, dressed like hornets, chased us around the sports fields until we dropped. (I almost wrote 'drooped' there, and perhaps I should have!) There were parades, inspections and 'fatigues' almost on a daily basis, the week lasted from Monday morning until Saturday dinner-time, and even Sunday mornings were often taken up by church parades!

Eventually of course, even the junior boys gradually climbed the ladder and became senior boys, with all the privileges and advantage that this provided. No longer did everyone 'gyp' you in the queue at mealtimes, as the three years progressed, you actually found yourself gypping the boys junior to you! If, dear reader, you wish to get a flavour of what happened during those three Arborfield years, well don't forget I have written the definitive history of the place – so all the lurid details are somewhere in there!



Studying hard at Reading Tech!

One of the highlights – well THE highlight – of each term was the leave period! During the weeks leading up to the 'great escape', one would eagerly reckon up just how much one would be taking home in 'credits'. The train journey home was often a blur, as all us 'Scousers' used the buffet-car bar to great advantage on the journey north from Euston to Lime Street. It didn't matter which intake you belonged to at that stage, we'd been through another term together and were now free to enjoy another session in our home city. The feeling of exhilaration as the train crossed the Mersey bridge at Runcorn is still something to savour.

Most of the guys I served with, plus the hundreds of other 'ex-boys' that I have met up with over the years, look back on their Arborfield days (or daze?) with affection. There are others, of course, who hated every minute of it. But there is no doubt that you had to grow up fast and learn how to survive, otherwise life there could be very tough indeed. Me? Well, I don't think it did me any harm. I certainly 'learned a trade', as had been the original intention, and I learned other things too – mainly how to keep my head down when the muck and bullets (figuratively speaking of course) were flying.

And so, having joined as a member of intake '56B', I still remember those days quite vividly. The old place has an Old Boys' Association, which was sort of resurrected in 1977,



Posing!

having been in the doldrums for a few years. Since then, I have attended numerous reunions over the years, meeting up with ex-contemporaries, some of them on a regular basis, such as Dave Howlett, Doc Houghton and Jock Dodds. Back in 1996, Doc and I got in touch with as many of the 56B guys that we could and held a reunion of our own in the Sergeants' Mess at Arborfield, it was a great success, the 40th anniversary of our joining up. Indeed, it was so good that we did it again in 1999, which was forty years after leaving. Since then, quite a few of us have got together again, most notably at Rod Smith's 'bash' at Sonning, for which he paid the whole bill. Plus hotel weekends at Reading, York and Redditch so far, with another planned at Diss, Norfolk, in 2004. So it can't have been all bad, eh?

Another eighteen months: I earlier mentioned 'three years and a bit more'. That was because, on leaving boys' school, a handful of us continued serving at Arborfield, when we attended Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) training at the adult Training Battalions and Reading Technical College. So it was four and a half years at Arborfield in total, plus later 'Upgrader' training for a few months around 1964 – couldn't get away from the place! Not that I have any complaints about that extended sojourn at Arborfield, life tended to be pretty good during those days.

Those of us who had left the boys' school together first moved to 3 Training Battalion at nearby Bailleul Barracks. Accommodation there was exactly the same as what we'd left, so it was all pretty familiar. And of course, now that we were all 'trained soldiers' – and Lance Corporals to boot, we thought we were real cool guys! We shared a room with National Servicemen, all they thought about was when they would be demobbed, ticking off the days on their wall calendars. We must have driven them mad with our devil-may-care attitude. After all, three years of boys' school had left us quite knowledgeable in 'how to skive' and get away with things.

It must have been while we were at '3 Batt' that we had a coach-trip down to Southend, I think it was on a Sunday. The group of lads who had preceded us out of boys' school were then at '5 Batt', but asked us if we'd like to join them for a day out. Which of course we did! I remember that when we got there, we parked



Enjoying a day out in Southend

near a funfair, I think it went by the name of 'The Kursaal', or something like that. Anyway, we decided to work our way along the seafront, stopping off for the occasional pint along the way. There was a visit to one of those tracks where we drove some 'racing cars' around for a while, then a few of us decided to go to the pictures. I recall that it was an old-style gangster film, starring Edward G Robinson, but can't remember the plot. We'd all downed so much beer that we slept right through most of the film! It was then time for the return trip along the seafront, probably calling in at all those pubs we'd missed on the first pass!

Eventually, everyone made it back to the coach and we made our way back to Arborfield. I guess it was during 1960 and there was a popular Lionel Bart musical doing the rounds at the time, by the name of "*Fings ain't what they used to be*". Anyway, one of the lads kept jumping up and yelling, "*All together now*", at which the whole lot of us would break into a chorus of "*They've changed our local Palais into a bowling alley, etc etc*" – goodness knows how many times we sang that song on the way back to barracks!

One of the 'funnies' to come out of that trip was probably only made up, but it's worth telling. It was possibly Jimmy Walker, one of the 5 Batt guys, who had a go at the shooting gallery and won first prize of a tortoise. Like the rest of us, he'd had a few too many and the story goes that next morning, back at camp, he told the rest of his room-mates how much he'd enjoyed "*that crunchy pie*" the previous evening! As I say, the truth will never be known, but it has always raised a smile for me! I still have a photograph or two of the Southend trip, quite a day out!

Our education continued in two ways. Most of the term was spent under the guidance of a few NS Sergeants, who carried on from where we'd left off at the school – Maths, English and technical training. But we'd also go off to Reading Tech College for practical work in laboratories and on equipment unavailable to the Army. Mornings would see us taking the bus into Reading, where we would make a stop at the *Joe Lyons* teashop in Broad Street for some breakfast. At lunchtimes, we would walk towards the town centre and have a 'pie and a pint' in one of the local pubs. Then in the evening, we would arrive back at 3 Batt

and make our own suppers in the cookhouse. This was inevitably a big fry-up – chips, eggs, bacon, sausages and chips – the works – all washed down by a pint mug-full of ice-cold milk from the big walk-in fridge. Happy days!

When the 'lab work' coincided with a Friday, this gave us the opportunity to rush through the work in the morning, then set off home for an extended weekend break. I've lost count of the number of times that I used to hitch-hike all the way to Liverpool – often in uniform in those days, as this usually helped to gain a lift as well as some sympathy. If you told the driver you were NS, this could lead to a stop at a café somewhere, where a cuppa and pasty may come your way! Looking back, perhaps there was an element of deception there, but it all seemed so natural to go along with what the driver wanted to believe!

Hitchhiking was a bit hit-and-miss of course. One week you may get a lift almost all the way home, another time you would hardly get a lift all day. I recall being stranded once at Wednesbury in the Midlands, it started pouring with rain and there was poor visibility, so nobody wanted to pick up a bedraggled squaddy. I had to catch a local train into Birmingham – Snow Hill station, I think it was – then another train as far as Crewe. From there I 'phoned home' and was lucky enough to find Jack Whitley in good enough mood to come all the way down to pick me up.

Going back to camp was another matter. I always made sure that I had arranged a lift directly back, usually with a 'regular' soldier who had his own car – or van! If I remember correctly, the guy who provided most of the transport was Mick Swords from Birkenhead, who owned an old 'Austin 7' van. The pick-up point for this lift back was generally outside Lime Street station in the city centre, at around midnight on the Sunday. The journey would be through the Mersey Tunnel, then down the old A5 route via Chester, Whitchurch, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Castle Bromwich, the Coventry by-pass and so on, down past Oxford and so back to Arborfield. Smoking wasn't the evil habit it is nowadays, all the film starts smoked, so we would do likewise. Just how many fags one can get through in around seven hours is not really something I wish to recall! We'd arrive back at Camp just about in time for morning muster parade, then spend as much



National Service Sergeant Instructor

of the day as possible dozing in class!

Recreation – Berkshire style: All that travelling was okay, but a bit wearing, so local attractions in Reading started to beckon. There was no shortage of pubs in Reading and, in my time, I guess I must have gone into most of them! If you timed the bus journey from camp just right, you'd arrive at St Mary's Butts just in time for opening hour. *The Allied Arms* was right on the bus stop, so it would be the first stop. A nice pint and a pork pie, with lots of mustard, would see you through the TV programme *'Six-five Special'*, which featured all the top music of the day. It was mostly skiffle then, with a dash of trad jazz, with other acts such as the Dallas Boys and the Vernons' Girls. Then the pop scene started to feature such as Tommy Steele, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury – yes, those were the days all right!



G-flogs ablaze – Weren't we just the bees knees?

A walk along Broad Street usually included a stop at *The Peacock*, and then we'd end up in *The Star* for a game of darts, more drinks – and pickled eggs were a favourite. Eventually we'd end up further up London Street at *The Foresters*, which was a bit of a dive really! But the music was great, all the big American stars – Elvis, Gene Vincent, Eddy Cochran, Little Richard and the rest. The lights were so low in there that you could jive the night away quite well, however poor a dancer you were! And it's probably just as well that we couldn't see who we were dancing with most of the time!

They used to have a break in proceedings, when you could have the back of your hand stamped, go out to the *Barley Mow*, then get back in for the last session. Of course, you could do your dancing with a little more style at one of the larger Ballrooms, such as the *Olympia*, *Majestic* or *Oxford*, but the music there would be by a live band – pretty tame stuff when compared to *The Foresters*. Still, the big advantage was that they all had bars that stayed open about half-an-hour longer than the pubs, so it was worth the admission fee for that reason alone!

It didn't happen too often, astonishingly enough, but there was the odd occasion when the 'last bus' would be missed and it was a case of 'shanks pony' all the way back to Camp. Having had a few beers, it never seemed too bad, even though it was a walk of around seven miles. But most times we made that last bus on time and inevitably it would be packed with squaddies. We'd all enjoy a good singsong on the way back, with songs like *'Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner'*, *'Maggie May'*, *'I belong to Glasgow'* and such like. There would then follow a short period of trying to sober up before walking into the Guardroom to book in.

The 'Boys' School' at Arborfield long ago started up its own 'Old Boys' Association, but which withered on the vine somewhat towards the end of the Sixties and on into the Seventies. However, the arrival of a Commandant who was himself an 'old boy', in the shape of Colonel Barrie Keast, rejuvenated things in 1977 and the Association has gone from strength to strength since then. A Reunion is held every year and I have been to most of these since 1977. Apart from meeting lads who were there at the same time as oneself, friendships seem to build up with other faces, familiar by their annual presence.

A twist of fate: Early in 1961, those of us who had attended the ONC training were preparing to be posted to our first units, most of which in those days seemed to be in Germany – BAOR, British Army of the Rhine. However, fate had decided that, just two short months before we were due to embark across the Channel, I was to meet Joyce Jones – *'the girl from the Pru'* (*Prudential Assurance*, I think was the full name.)

I shouldn't even have been 'out and about' on the Saturday evening in question, January 28th, because I had been selected for Fire Picket duty at the Garrison Cinema, the *Globe* (or 'Gaff' as it was popularly known). However, someone asked me to swap duties with him, and a request by Jim Rampling to join him in Reading that evening fell on willing ears. No doubt we did the usual 'pub tour', before ending up at the *Oxford Ballroom* – and in particular its upstairs bar!

Whilst sitting there nursing a whisky and orange, the head of Jimmy 'Jock' Gardner appeared up the staircase and we asked him to join us. He declined at first, saying that he had not one, not two, but three girls with him! Doreen was 'his' girl, Pam was her sister, and Joyce was the third of this trio of girl singers known as the 'Grifftones' (an amalgamation of 'Griffin' and 'Jones').

Having met Joyce on that Saturday, of course I then had to do the cinema duty at Arborfield the following night. But we'd already agreed to meet on our first 'date' on the Monday, when we went to the *Odeon* cinema in Reading, to see *'Tunes of Glory'*, starring Alec Guinness – would you believe, a story about soldiers! I think we went on to visit the 'flicks' just about every night that week, it was certainly a popular pastime in those days. It wasn't long before I was invited around to Joyce's house 'for tea' and, of course, for the family to run the rule over me!

I tried to see Joyce as often as possible during the next few weeks, knowing that I'd soon be off to Germany on posting. Romance blossomed very quickly and I astonished myself by asking Joyce to marry me, after an evening at the *Majestic Ballroom*. Thankfully she said "Yes" and I think we've since managed to prove that there is such a thing as 'love at first sight'! The rest, as they say, is history! What's the old song? *"We've been together now for forty years – and it don't seem a day too much"*!

MY BELOVED 3Mk7 RADAR

By Ken Anderson, 58A

My tale starts some two years before I left home to catch the ferry, from Ryde on the Isle of Wight to Portsmouth Harbour, where I met two or three other young men to start our journey to Arborfield in Berkshire (wherever that was to be). Joining the Army Cadet Force at School, I had been fortunate enough to spend some time with 'P' Battery of 457 HAA Regt RA, the local Territorial Army unit. The school caretaker was a member of the Battery and an operator of the '3Mk7' Radar. To a young schoolboy, it was an Aladdin's cave of equipments. 3.7" HAA guns, 3Mk7 FC and 4Mk7 TC Radars, No.11 Predictors and a selection of 10-ton and 16-ton AEC 'Matador' tractors. I soon learnt the 'switching on' procedures for the 3Mk7 and was able to carry out the T's & A's without any need for the drill book. I also learnt how to drink a half-pint of *Brickwood's* ale in the canteen after each Drill parade!

In January 1958, having being encouraged by my headmaster not to continue at school after Easter that year, I sat my entrance exam to join the British Army as a boy soldier. Having achieved the appropriate grades, I was fortunate enough to be offered an Army Apprenticeship at the Army Apprentices' School, Arborfield, as an apprentice radar mechanic. I seem to recall that a Sgt Perrott (or was it Parrot?), of the Devon & Dorset Regiment, was our drill instructor. Anyway, after an initial period of 'square bashing', I moved with the rest of my intake, the 58A 'Easter Bunnies', to commence my trade training. At filing and fitting I was a disaster, at metal turning, blacksmithing, welding and tin-smithing - a good deal better. One of the exercises we had to complete was that of constructing 'something', by soldering tin-plated wire into some recognisable object. My choice, of

course, was to make a wire-frame model of the good old 3Mk7 Radar Set.

I enjoyed progressing through my basic electronic training, under the careful tuition of civilian instructors Bernie Cardrick and Fred Hall, to eventually move into Bob Coe's class to learn the intricacies of Radar. Now, at long last, came the practical lessons when I was finally able to get back inside the 3Mk7 Radar - such joy! Having completed my apprenticeship and winning the trade prize for my intake, I moved over to 5 Training Battalion REME to complete my second-class training and trade test. This proved really interesting, with some great instruction in microwave engineering and servo and synchro mechanisms. The laboratories for those subjects at that time were located in the old Remount Stables. It was also a time to graduate to the 4Mk7 Tactical Control radar, which was a joy to work on and fairly straightforward to maintain and repair. I recall that the training simulator was located in the building that was later to become the Gymnasium. There was also Building 59 and 'the compound', which at that time housed the 'secret' Corporal missile system.

Then it was off to my first posting, at the School of Artillery at Larkhill, in the wilds of Salisbury Plain. I was most fortunate that my individual posting was to the Trials Section of the School, although to start off with I was based in the Radar Park, alongside fellow ex-boys Pete Sinclair, 'Flash' Davies and Mike Thompson. At the time, a Nick Thoukadidies, who was a SSgt 'Tiffy', ran the section alone. The post was later upgraded to an ASM, AQMS and couple of SSgts. The equipments there consisted of a multitude of 3Mk7s and a couple of 4Mk7s. Most of the 3Mk7s had been modified to work in the mortar locating role and a huge bank of synchros were to be found in a large drop down cabinet.



We were told that Larkhill was a 'hardship posting' - so that's what accounted for there being a large contingent of WRAC being based there! After three-and-a-half years of enforced celibacy at Arborfield, the close proximity of females certainly stirred the hormones! Many of these girls were radar operators, so that gave the REME radar mechanics ample opportunities to get to know them closely. To assist in the training of operators in the use of the 3Mk7, one (Radar that is, not the operator!) had been stripped down and installed in a Nissan hut classroom next to the Radar Park. A WRAC operator was responsible for the general care of it and I was fortunate enough to be given the task of maintaining it. Being in a classroom, the door to the building could be securely locked from the inside, which probably accounted for how much time I spent in there!

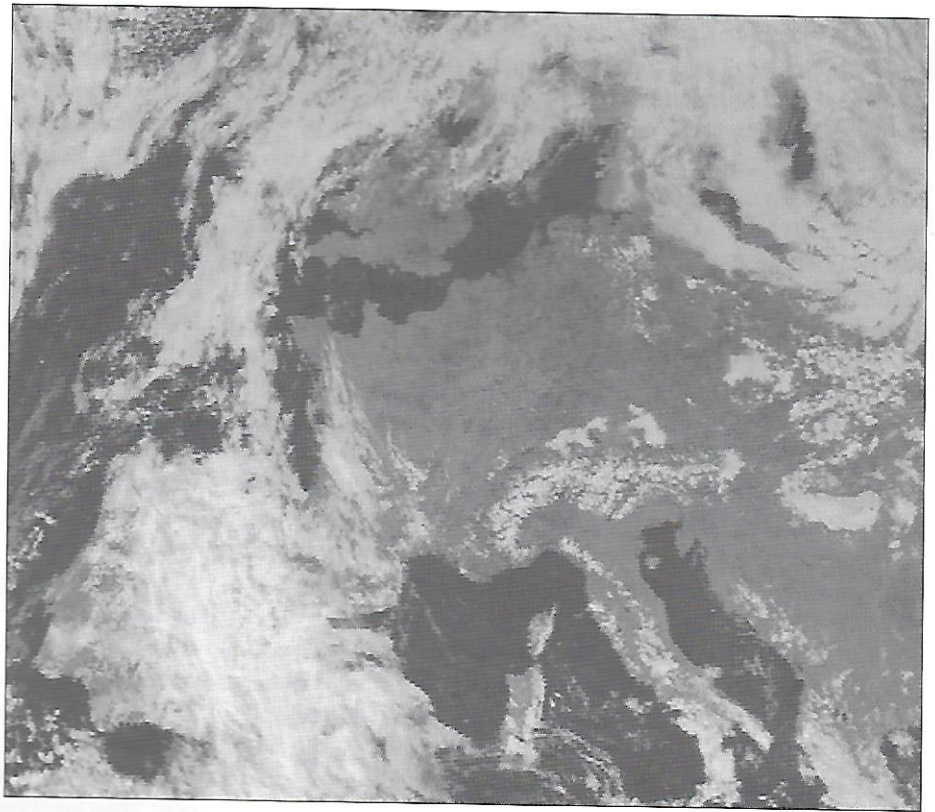
It really does quite strange now in 2005 - I wonder what today's techies would make of it?

When we were working on the equipments in the Radar Park, it was our usual practice to hang a small notice on the outside of the sets, saying 'REME Work in Progress', which preventing our being disturbed. Again, many used this to their advantage to ensure some degree of privacy as they demonstrated to the WRAC operators what they were doing! I remember one occasion when two of us were detailed off to change the bearing oil seal on a particular set. There I was, struggling under the mount to remove the securing nuts and drop the lower plate, whilst my mate was totally ignoring me and having the time of his life with one of the young buxom operators. Oh happy days!

This particular tale now has me jumping forward some seven or eight years (*the story of the in between period will told another time*). Having completed my Tiffy course and spending a short time teaching Young Officers at SEE, I was then posted onto the Permanent Staff in the Electronics Wing, back at what had now become the Army Apprentices' College at Arborfield. Here I was most fortunate to meet and work with WO1 (ASM) John Pewsey. John was one of only a small handful of people that I can identify as having a significant influence in my life and what I did with it. Maj Graham Cant and Capt Worgan were the officers in charge of the Wing, with WO2 (AQMS) Dick Butterfield, SSgt Joe Redfern, Sgt Dick Emery and some Corporals making up the other members of staff. John Pewsey and I worked on a number of constructive projects, which as well as to the advantage of the Apprentices and teaching staff, gave us both a great degree of freedom to carry out some innovative design and development work. These projects included a Polar Diagram Plotter, a Feedback Classroom and Acoustic Radar. (*Perhaps more will be told of these at some future time.*)

The most important project though was the construction of a Weather Satellite Tracking Station. Today, as we daily watch the weather forecasts on our television sets, we take for granted the images of the earth and weather patterns used by the presenters. But at that time, just before the first astronaut landing on the moon, this was indeed the stuff of 'Tomorrow's World'. Under John's guidance, I established a good working relationship with one of the development departments at the Meteorological Office in Bracknell. As well as this, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) in the USA supplied us with almost anything we asked for in the way of information.

At that time there were perhaps only three or four US and a couple of Russian satellites in polar orbit (90 minute orbits, crossing the poles north to south) and a couple of geo-stationary satellites, which sat directly above the equator. The polar orbit satellites continuously transmitted pictures, line by line, similar to the raster frame of a television. This could be received by a ground station whilst the satellite was in visual range, which could be for as short a period as a couple of minutes to a



A typical satellite image of Europe

maximum of twenty minutes, when the satellite passed overhead. As each satellite passed over the north pole, the pictures from the complete orbit were 'dumped' to a ground station, followed by onward transmission to a processing centre in Washington. Here, pictures from consecutive orbits and from all the satellites were combined, to form a complete global image that was then uploaded to the geo-stationary 'Meteosat' satellite.

And so to 'the project' at Arborfield. We needed to construct a steerable aerial array that was capable of traversing 360° and elevating from the horizontal to the vertical. What better platform to do this than the trusty old 3Mk7 radar set? These sets were well out of service by now, but John Pewsey somehow managed to find one at Old Dalby that must have been previously used in an airfield control system, as it was painted in a bright red and white check pattern! The requirements for tracking satellites were far different to that of tracking fast moving aircraft, so the first task was to remove the parabolic dish and replace it with an array of VHF helical aerials. This array was some 6 metres long and two metres across, thus it was essential to modify the servo system to be able to gently and quite slowly traverse and elevate this odd-looking array. Once that had been achieved, I designed and built a VHF receiver and some pre-amps for the aerials, all using transistors, which were quite a new technology at that time. A picture decoder was also constructed and an old Muirhead mechanical facsimile machine modified to be able to produce hard copy images similar to that shown. The Muirhead used a tuning fork oscillator that was originally at too low a frequency for this application but, after a number of visits to the 'Fitters' Shop', and some judicious use of a grindstone, it was soon 'spot on' the correct frequency!

With the project completed and working, the College made some good PR out of it and it was also displayed at the Aldershot

show one summer. That was pretty interesting to me because, as an Apprentice, I had appeared on a stand at the same venue, constructing a 'disco light switch', using valves, under Fred Hall's gentle guidance some ten years earlier.

Approaching almost fifty years since first making my acquaintance with it, I still have a fond affection for the old 3Mk7. I know that if I were to step into one tomorrow, with its amplidynes, magnetron, klystron, PPI and 'M' type range display, that I could still switch it on and feel at home within it! A final thought – I have spent all my working life working in the electronics field in one or way or another, and more years than I care to count working with computers and especially PCs. So now, when I sit in front of a computer that is 'just there' but which has no character of its own, it is all so different to hearing the 'snap, crackle and pop', complete with the smells of high voltage arcing, rotating machinery, lights flashing and instrument dials whirring! Oh for my beloved old Radar Sets!

(By golly Ken, you almost had me going there! My handkerchief almost got damp! Those 'modified' 3MK7s must have been the 3Mk7(F) radar sets that I was destined to work on with 94 and 21 Locating Regiments Royal Artillery in BAOR. Never had your close affinity for them though! Ed.)

THE GREATCOAT

By John Loy, 39B

Now that I have reached 'a certain age', should I get a feeling of *déjà vu*, I keep it to myself in case someone says, "*And so you ought, you were here yesterday!*" Therefore I thought I should record some of my recollections before they fade from memory. As I recall, the induction of our October 1939 intake did not follow the path usually depicted in films and books, where the new recruits are kitted out shortly after entering camp for the first time. We were, I believe, the largest ever intake, so it was no surprise that it was many days before we got our kit. To start with, we had shoe inspections and those who were literally marching on their socks were taken off and issued with boots until, by the day of kit issue, most of us at least had boots. The Army had not long stopped wearing puttees with Service Dress and we were each issued with two pairs. Apart from one memorable occasion, they were never used – except to 'fill a space' at kit inspections. Puttees were fitted over drainpipe trousers, of which the Army had large stocks, and it was with these, rather than the wider bottomed trousers, that a lot of us were issued. The lucky ones also got a double-breasted greatcoat, considered by us to be very smart when compared to the old single-breasted version.

I was never the smartest of soldiers and so I needed all the help I could get. Needless to say, I was issued with two pairs of drainpipes and a single-breasted greatcoat. We were allowed to take one pair of trousers to the tailors for conversion to 'wide bottom', achieved by having a 'vee' of material inserted into the inner seam. The creases were then re-pressed into the new position. The only problem was that the old creases seemed

to resent being made redundant and were wont to reappear whenever it rained! Some of the kit had obviously seen previous service and dated back to both during and before the First World War. There was even a rumour that someone was issued with a tunic with a bullet hole in it – but it was more likely to have been caused by the grub of a .303" moth!

To keep us out of mischief, one day when the workshop heating had broken down, we were taken on a route march. As conditions underfoot were treacherous, we were ordered to wear our puttees. Whoever gave the that order must have forgotten that they do not fit very well over wide-bottom trousers and this, together with our inexperience in fitting them, meant that at the end of the march we resembled a bad day at a field dressing station. We were in far more danger of tripping over our own puttees than anything else. The experiment was never repeated.

My greatcoat was a masterpiece it was most definitely a 'size too' (sic) and too big! The only place it came anywhere near fitting was around the neck, where it was too tight. It was made out of a material that could best be described as 'yuck-coloured matted felt', it seemed that an outbreak of sheep scab, an explosion at the dye works, trouble at t'mill and a short-sighted tailor forgetting his glasses, had all gone into the making of my coat. The label inside showed that it had been made in Greenock in 1917 I was unreliably (sic) informed that this was not the town in Scotland but a town of similar name in India. As this info was from the same expert in geography {an ex-Dukie} who listed 'Pee-king' and 'Wan-king' as the principal cities in China in his exam answers, I had my doubts! Before it could be worn, it had to make the first of its many visits to the tailors to have the bottom turned up by a good ten inches. This was an absolute necessity if I was to proceed forwards without tripping over the front edge. The sheer awfulness of the fit can best be judged by the fact that, when I first got it, I weighed about seven stone and when many years later I weighed eleven stone it was still too big! I shall never forget the look of horror on my mother's face when I went home on my first leave. What had they done to her little boy? He had left home a schoolboy and returned looking like a prototype Dalek. Mother, ever diplomatic, said nothing until I took my coat off and then said, "*Ah! That looks better*".

I would not claim that my coat was the worst in any particular category, but it certainly scored low marks in all. A right motley crew we must have been when on parade as, apart from the big difference between single- and double-breasted greatcoats, the materials ranged from 'fine worsted' to 'coarse felt' and in colour from 'dull yellow', through 'khaki' to 'dark green'. It was just as well that we were not often closely inspected when wearing greatcoats, as I always imagined that the inspecting officer would start eyeing me in disbelief before he ever got to my position. And when there, in the time-honoured manner of a hospital consultant, who never includes the patient in the conversation, would say to his entourage, "*Can't we do something about that?*" Discipline prevented me from butting in and saying, "*Yes, please change it for one that fits*", but no, it was back to the tailors for more adjustments. It was alleged, among other things, that the sleeves were unequal in length. But when the tailor had the sleeves out he never could decide which was which and so the problem remained. I found in the end that I could overcome this

discrepancy by checking in the mirror before going on parade, and then lean towards the shorter side. As long as I did not obey the order to 'stand up straight' with too much enthusiasm, I could get away with it. One of its other characteristics was its ability to absorb water! Sometimes when I see an advert for a miracle sponge that can absorb twenty seven times its own weight, I cannot help thinking, "*I once had a coat made out of that stuff*". When it rained, it just got heavier, as water seemed to gather in the 'gutter' formed by the turn-up and then released enough dampness to take the crease out of my trousers for weeks afterwards.

Over the years I made many attempts to get my coat changed. All to no avail until, when serving in Tel-el-Kebir, I returned to my bunk one day and found that my coat was under attack from an army of ants. Not the puny English sort, but the big 'not many to the pound' bite-your-leg-off Egyptian variety. I assumed they were foraging for the remaining crumbs of a long forgotten bar of Duncan's fruit and nut, secretly consumed when on Saturday afternoon guard at the rear gate at Arborfield. I took what I thought were suitable anti-ant measures but, when I returned the next day, I found that the ants had regrouped. On closer examination, I could see that they were actually making off with the coat itself. It was fascinating to watch them. They were marching along the clothes-line, down the coat hook into the coat itself, each emerging with a tiny tuft of materiel like a radio antenna. Then it was back up the coat hook and along the line again in the other direction. I imagined I could see an ant directing the traffic at the junction but, as I could not see a red hat or establish whether its parents were married, it would be unfounded conjecture to assume it was an MP ant! I thought of leaving the ants to it, but realised that I was not likely to get very far with just a set of buttons and an excuse, "*Please Sir, the ants ate it*".

Only a few days later, the occupant of the bunk next to mine set fire to his bed. The flames came through a crack in the wall and burnt a large hole in the back of my coat. I thought I now had an undeniable reason to get it exchanged, but I was directed once more to the tailors and a large patch was let into the back. The patch was of a different materiel and colour but, when I complained to the QM that I looked more like one of the prisoners-of-war, who also had coloured patches in the backs of their greatcoats, he responded, "*So what? We are all prisoners-of-war in Tel-el-Kebir and, anyway, they have all got double-breasted coats!*" I would have liked to record that my coat went out in a 'blaze of glory' (as it so nearly did) but all that happened was that I eventually changed with someone going home on demob and I at last had my double-breasted greatcoat. I usually check the sellers of 'Big Issue' to see if my old coat found a good home; it would be easy to spot, as its material also had another peculiarity in that, unlike others that fade when exposed to sunlight, only parts that were covered faded by different degrees. So that, whoever wore mine would appear to be a Lance Corporal, Staff Sergeant and WOII all at the same time!

ONE LINERS

If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disorientated?

A SOUTH SEAS CONNECTION

It was quite a surprise one day to find an e-mail from old pal Larry Jarvis, to which was attached the photograph of someone I could hardly remember, although the face was familiar. This turned out to be a guy called Tony Wilson, who had contacted the AOBA Website and attached the photograph that Larry had now passed on to me, along with Tony's contact details. At the time, I was still busily working on finishing *The Arborfield Apprentice* history book, and still had all the relevant text on my computer. Thus I was able to attach a copy of Chapter 5 (1956-59), the relevant period covering Tony's service as a member (like Larry and me) of intake 56B. At the time, Tony was living on the Pacific island of Tonga – hence the title above. He does intend to return to New Zealand sometime in the future, where he had previously lived, and has asked me to be ready to post off a copy of the book to him, once he has settled down into what will no doubt be his retirement.

Once Tony had read the details contained in Chapter 5, he responded with a few memories of his own, which I am sure he will not mind sharing in the pages of OBAN:

"Pete, many thanks for mailing the copy of the 1956-59 chapter to me. I found it very informative. I do recall some of the names and incidents detailed. Wally Walters, the chap who thinks he was in 'A' Coy? I reckon he was in 'B' Coy and remember that he was often going over, under or through the perimeter fence for an evening out, sometimes in a jacket of mine he fancied and which I rented out to him. That would cost him a few *Woodbines*, as I was quite a smoker in those days. I also recall another you mentioned – Dave Harris of 'A' Coy. Not too tall, but built like an All-Black forward, with a booming London voice, Dave had a crew-cut, when everyone else was trying to emulate Elvis in hair style! Other names recalled are Wareing – he always had porno books available, sent to him by his Dad, stationed in Germany! There was a Dewar – was he from Portsmouth? – Braithwaite, Piper and Curtin. Not all in 56B intake, but it's just the names that come to mind.

In my 'B' Company, I recall that Hadfield became boy CSM, Richardson, Stevens, Humphries, Roy Woolley, Les Trafford, 'Tiny' Noble, Sutcliffe, Fred Wilson, Ian Webster, I'm amazed how the names come back after all these years. There was a lad called Dopson, I think he transferred to a Guards Regiment; Muir – in the Pipe Band; Shand the drummer; Johnny Johnson, Ron Donnelly, Klaus Pennington and, of course, Larry Jarvis. I also seem to remember one 56B boy – was he a Smith? – who 'had to get married'. Something that sticks in my mind must have happened because of the Suez crisis. Waking up one morning, we found the camp had been transformed into one large 'car park' full of sand-covered vehicles. They must have arrived overnight and, due to the normal sheer exhaustion suffered by the A/Ts, no one had heard their arrival.

As mentioned in the book, I too thoroughly enjoyed those Company camps out in Surrey and well remember bashing along the Hog's Back (A31) on the way to recce some river or other on the Surrey/Hampshire borders. On finding one such river, my 'mucker' and I were attempting to measure the width, depth and flow rate – all part of that day's challenge. A local, out walking

his dog, watched us throw a stick into the flowing water, then begin counting, *"One hundred, two hundred"* and so on. He asked us what our estimated answers were and he agreed that they were pretty near correct. It turned out that he saw pairs of troops, on virtually a weekly basis, carrying out similar tasks at the same place. He added that tanks could cross the river at that point, but not 15-hundredweight or 3-tonners. But there was a ford further upstream where crossings could be made, came his reliable information. I also recall being dropped off, with a small sheet of OS map, from the back of a lorry in the middle of one dark night and being told to *"find your own way back"*. The secret was to keep an eye out for the church steeples along the way, guiding us back to the bivvy area.

I also remember the 'Paddy Claydon' affair and all the 'voluntary contributions'! One of the lads who worked alongside me in the Electrical Workshop 'did a runner' on several occasions, usually with a group of other trainee escapees. Being caught and returned to camp after one escapade, there was no room for them at the Guardroom, which always seemed to be pretty full. They were 'put up' for the night at one of the Training Battalions, before coming back to the AAS. Here, they were put into a communal cell and immediately broke into the ceiling cavity just inside the cell door. They climbed up and waited. The duty RP, a Lancejack known as 'Gearbox' (one up and three down!), noticed the 'empty' cell and ran out to raise the alarm. Needless to say, he left the cell door open – need I say more?

As far as I remember, the lads were later put onto a bread and water diet – or so I was told! A report in 'the media' also said that they had got down on their hands and knees and began barking, during a MO's inspection! The same group was asked by a new Geordie RP, *"What are you lot in for?"* Their combined answer was to the effect that they had been caught 'doing a bunk'. Now, in the Durham Light Infantry, this term must have meant something a whole lot different, because Geordie thought he'd been posted to a school for deviates!

I noticed the name Stan Cocking - what can I say? Pedantic, to say the least. Les Trafford went on leave once and found himself sharing a compartment with Stan and a lady friend. Stan introduced Les to the fair lady, then proceeded to share out some buns and a flask of tea, before engaging Les in conversation for the rest of the journey. I think Les was quite blown away by this experience! I have a feeling that Stan must have taught French, as well as Maths. I went into a classroom one day, to find a whole lot of French on the blackboard, and it was definitely Stan who'd been teaching in there beforehand. The National Service Sergeant who was teaching us took great delight in correcting all the mis-spellings on the board!

Stan must have been a pretty good Maths teacher though. I'd never been much cop at the subject but, under Stan's tutelage, managed to pass my 'Intermediate' and 'Senior' test while still at the AAS. Later, as an adult in New Zealand, I even passed the 'School Cert' and University entrance levels. It was with great pleasure that I spotted in the book that old saying *"some old hags carry a handbag till old age"*. It's now written in my diary and I shall be passing it on to younger family members when they are due to take their Maths exams!

'B' Coy became Champion Company, probably during 1958. I was in the drill squad, being taken through our paces in front of a group of Guards Senior NCOs. Despite CSM 'Daddy' Dunning having to continually yell at me to "get those bloody arms back, Wilson zero three two", I think we managed to win. I do remember one of the inspecting team asking me to raise my foot, in order that he could count the number of studs! Ivan 'Tiny' Noble must have been one of the tallest members of the school and used to carry the Champion Company banner, as can be seen on page 192 of the book. I was persuaded to join him on several occasions, as one of his escorts – Tiny used to say that the banner party never got inspected!

I recall that in January 1959 we finally made it from 5 Div to 'Senior Div', but with the change-over from a two-term to a three-term year, for the life of me I don't know if we went to 6 Div, 8 Div or 9 Div! Not that it matters now. I know that I was an NCO's cadre when I left Arborfield in March that year, never quite making the dizzy heights of promotion. I was very 'low profile' at boys' school, excelling at nothing. I did my share of jankers for the usual crimes – peak-slashing, pillow destroying during room fights and late/idle on parade. I must have had that 'skive to survive' mentality, doing the bare minimum to get by and not really the best of attitudes when I look back. Previously, at my secondary school in hometown Gosport, I had made the town schoolboys' cross-country team. But when I was 'forced' to do the same at AAS, I usually skived off somewhere.

My workshop exploits were not particularly happy ones either. On one occasion, a new desk in a trade classroom was damaged, the top was either cut or carved. The AQMS in the workshop pulled in everyone who had sat at that desk, either in class or 'prep', and charged each and every one of us with 'damage to WD property'. Fortunately, 'Daddy' Dunning asked the two of us from 'B' Coy why we were being charged, as we waited to be marched in front of the Company Commander. We told him, each denying responsibility. The outcome of it was that all nine of us who had been placed on charge were cleared. That should have been the end of it, but that AQMS had it in for us from that day on! That really soured my outlook on life, though I always had the greatest respect for the CSM, who had immediately identified that an injustice was in the making.

I had been an inveterate smoker ever since starting newspaper deliveries at fourteen. By the time I got to Arborfield I was hooked! The habit kept me short of readies throughout my junior years. It was only when I reached the ripe old age of seventeen and a half that things improved. Then I was able to afford 'the basics' – of which ciggies were one! It was not until my mid-thirties that I finally made the effort and packed in the evil weed.

In March 1959 when I became medically downgraded to 'P3L7' and, by that time, the remnants of intake 56B were at low numbers. Immediately upon leaving, I joined the Merchant Navy! They were obviously not too worried about my flat feet! I loved it, especially the duty-free smokes, and the food was far better too. Despite being a bit immature, I quickly caught up, after serving several months on a small coastal vessel, trading around the British coast and across to the Continent. The next youngest crewman to me was in his mid-fifties and many of the

crew were older than I am now!

I 'signed off' a ship on a trip to New Zealand, just before Christmas 1962. I liked it there and decided to stay. I worked on a hydroelectric dam in the Bay of Plenty, a lovely part of the country. I moved to Wellington, got married in 1965 and joined the Customs Service. At the time, many of the older members of staff were ex-servicemen who had served during the War. Customs were looking to expand the uniformed Preventative Service and anyone with a military background was about three-quarters there already. Later, when I was myself sitting on recruiting panels, I also found myself biased towards ex-service personnel. So, I can give some credit to the AAS for getting me fixed up with a lovely job, one I was in for over thirty-two years, enjoying every minute. I retired in late 1997 and came to live in Tonga. My wife is originally from there and we had a house built there some years previously.

I'm sure that other ex-boys will say that the rigid discipline at AAS was the most positive factor of their future lives. But while I believe it must have had some importance, I think that the main thing I learned was loyalty to one's mates and an ability to get on with each other. I am sure that the Arborfield experience is something from which all of us benefited and which has withstood the ravages of time to the present day. Kia Ora!"

Tony's memories were obviously in the form of a letter to me and I have taken the liberty of editing his words into an article suitable for publication - I hope both he and others will agree with me!
Pete Gripton, 56B.

SOME MEMORIES OF MY DAYS AT ARBORFIELD 1939 - 42

By Maurice Harvey

It is now so long a time since I left home and joined the British Army as an Apprentice Tradesman that I have little recollection of much that went on during those first few months at Arborfield. I was placed in "B" Company, Room C4, where I stayed for the next three years, my bed and locker being next to the room used by the boy Lance Corporal in charge of the room. So I was lucky enough to be in a corner, which I enjoyed for most of my days at the School. I was already quite used to being with a group of boys, as I had spent a number of years with the Boy Scout movement. There, we would meet once a week for different activities, and also go off Camping for a week or just a weekend during the summer months.

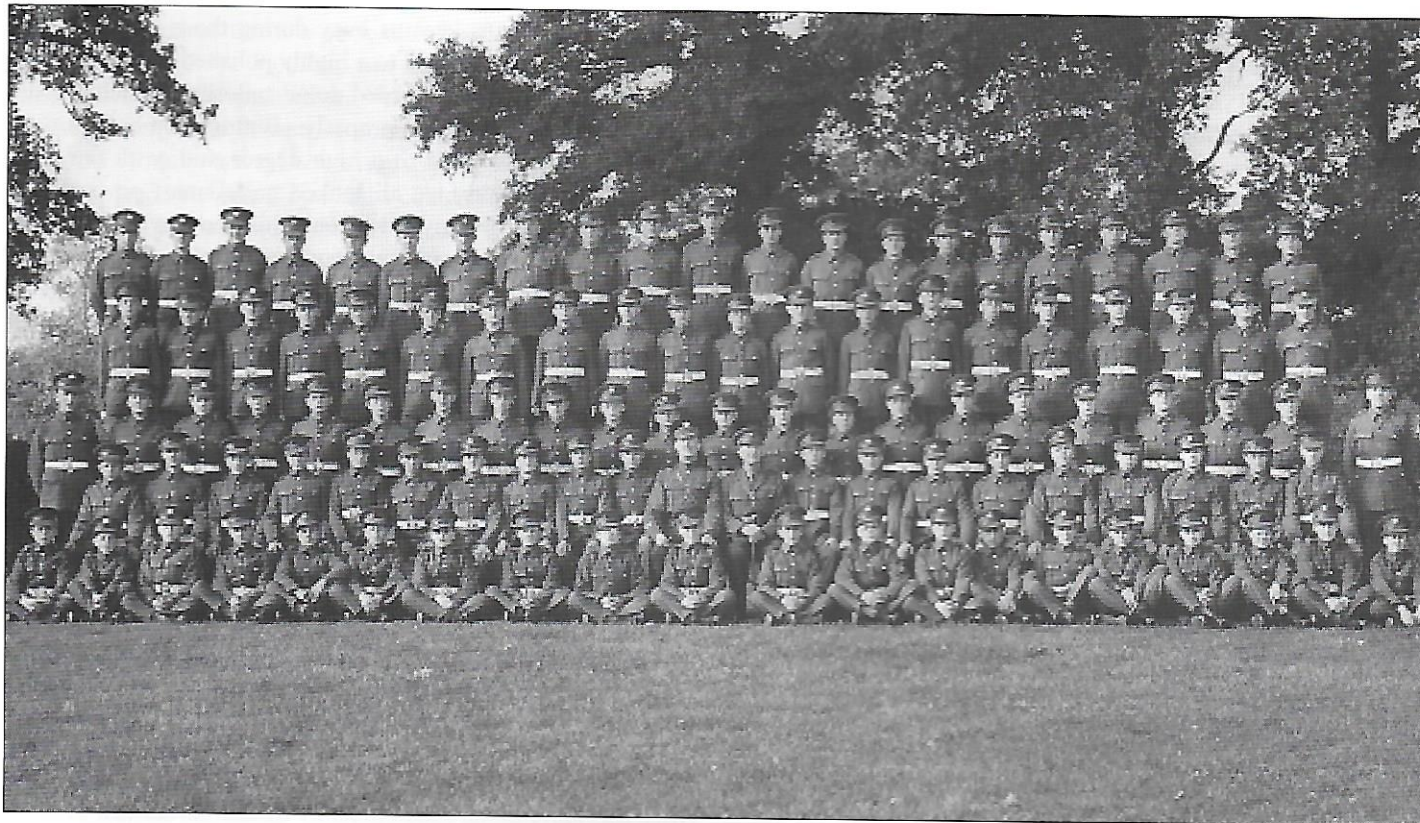
I seemed to settle into the routine of the School fairly well and we were kept quite busy most of the time, including Parade Ground drilling. At first this seemed quite amusing, as some of the boys couldn't march in the normal manner, but put their left leg and arm forward at the same time and then alternated with the right leg and arm. It took a little time for the Drill Corporal to straighten them out but they all finally made it. Looking after

our kit and uniforms kept us busy during those early days, as our boots had to be brought to a highly polished state for parade and our uniforms often needed some tailoring, which we did ourselves, to make them fit properly. Buttons and badges were also polished and buffed to a high degree and, with our belts being blanched white, we all looked quite smart on parade. I remember returning to my old school whilst on leave, impressing my former classmates with my smartness.

Another aspect of our training was in the maintenance and cleanliness of our room. Each Saturday, we would move all beds to one side of the room, clean and polish the floor to a very fine standard, then move all the beds to the finished side, enabling us to finish that side too. Shortly afterwards, we would be inspected by our Company Commander, accompanied by our Company Corporal, who inspected each person's bed, kit, uniform etc. as well as the room. We soon settled into a steady routine, and made friends who stayed with us over the course of our apprenticeship. In our room, we had a number of different trades represented, including a lad called 'Fangs' Lloyd, named so because his two top front teeth were missing. He went into the Blacksmith trade and the change in his physical development was quite dramatic over the years, due to the heavy physical side of his new trade. Another lad who I became very friendly with was Alfie Titterton. Alfie was more mature than most of us and, in our last year, he became the top A/T at the School, but I am not certain of his title at that time. Another boy I remember well was 'Guts' Goodway, who had quite a way with the local ATS girls in his last year, and was the only ex-Arborfield boy that I ever ran into after I left the School. We met in Rangoon, Burma, in 1947, where I was serving with the RIEME. The only other boy I remember was 'Nobby Hobbs' who became a Lance Corporal, and was the NCO in charge of our room. I believe he had come over from the Duke of York's Royal Military School. Nobby played the Trombone and was a member of the School Band.

Being boys, we resorted to many pranks, particularly after lights out, when someone would sneak out of bed and turn someone else out of their bed by flipping the whole bed and occupant over. The rooms were all in darkness due to the blackout for air-raid precautions, so it was a fairly easy thing to do. Another trick was to take a boy's bedding and stuff it up amongst the rafters when he was out of the room, just before 'lights out'. This was very effective if the boy didn't get back before 'lights out'. I myself came in late one night, tried to get into bed and found it had been sewn up about two feet down. I got a knife out and quickly cut the offending threads away and said, "Well, someone wasted a lot of thread". There were a few sniggers in the darkness and, when I checked my 'Housewife' the next day, I found someone had used most of my own 'housewife threads'. The laugh was on me!

One of the lads in our room was of Scottish background and really enjoyed smoking cigarettes, which of course was forbidden. To finance his habit, he would sell off his dessert - or pudding? - to those who were willing to pay and, if still hungry, top up on any decent looking 'left-overs'. Speaking of food, one of my favourite treats was to visit the NAAFI for a mug of tea and a nice piece of shortbread. This was a nice change from the Cookhouse food, which must have been quite adequate though, as we all kept growing steadily through the years.



The September 1944 Intake taken after their passing off the Square. Bob Ward is seated in the front row, third from the left.

We usually had Saturday and Sunday afternoons to ourselves. Quite often, we would take the bus to Wokingham, sometimes taking in a film (it's 'movie' now). We had to be careful about getting the bus back to the School in time for 'lights out'. If you missed the last bus, it was a long hard walk to beat the call, and even in the winter, we would work up a real sweat, hurrying to beat the authorities' deadline. One Saturday afternoon, RSM Ben Cook caught three of us boys, in the off limits coal/coke area. He ordered us to report to the Guardroom and stay there until he came to see us. It was quite late when he arrived, and we fully expected to spend the night there. However he merely lectured us about the incident and warned us not to do it again before sending us back to our barrack rooms just in time for lights out. On another occasion, during a cold spell in the winter, a group of us were running and sliding along the icy path between blocks B and C. Suddenly from across the square came the RSM's roar to stop sliding. We immediately slipped into the block and watched him come running across the parade ground and onto the path. After three or four steps on the icy surface, he slipped and landed flat on his back, which must have been very painful. He got up and staggered away, obviously hurt, but didn't catch any of us. I don't think he hurt himself too badly, as he was on parade the next day. I also remember the air raid by a 'Junkers 88', which brought the atmosphere of modern warfare a lot closer than we had experienced before, though it did no damage that I am aware of.

The medical and dental care we received at the school was very good, and stood me in good stead for many years afterwards. Two very fine dentists worked their way through the School and I had all my big back teeth (molars) filled. There was no 'freezing' anaesthetic at that time but the dentists still did a fine job. I am sure I still have a filling or two from those days with me now. When I was sixteen, I came down with a severe bronchial

problem, which got me into the school hospital (MRS?) for about two weeks. There I received the appropriate treatment but to no avail. I was then sent to the Military Hospital in Aldershot, where I was treated for acute bronchitis. There I was, a youngster, with mostly adult soldiers as patients around, and of course very much favored by the nursing staff who used to give me special treatment regarding desserts, etc. After three weeks there, I was sent to a convalescent home called Old Dean Hall, which had a lovely ambiance and was full of servicemen recovering from all kinds of wounds etc.

It was very pleasant, and I received a bottle of *Guinness* every day, to build up my strength. As I did not like the *Guinness*, some of the adult patients there offered me their chocolate ration, which came once a week, in exchange for my *Guinness*. (*Who remembers the old adverts, quoting "My Goodness, my Guinness"?* Ed.) This was great, as I was able to make the exchange with different patients each day. However this only lasted for four or five days as the sister in charge caught me out and 'tore me off a strip', after which I became a beer drinker. After three weeks at Old Dean Hall, I was sent home on three weeks leave, prior to rejoining my pals at Arborfield. The treatment really worked for me, as I never had an attack like that again.

There was a lad from Aberdare who knew my uncle, who was the mayor of the town at that time, and we used to get along quite well. He was an excellent table tennis player and I quickly changed my style from 'ping-pong' to the much faster game, which I have enjoyed for most of my life. The same lad, whose name I cannot recollect, was also a great cross-country runner. Without any special training, he would just put his head down and run, coming in first most of the time.

I remember WO2 'Lofty' Armstrong, who 'had a brother at home who was taller than him, but not so well-built'. I often wonder how tall he was, as I kept growing until I reached the height of six feet four and a half inches, which was very tall in those days, although today it seems not so extreme. Upon passing out from Arborfield, I was stationed at a Light Aid Detachment in Enfield, Middlesex, for about eight months before being posted to an Experimental Station just outside Stevenage in Hertfordshire, where I remained for the duration of the war. In December 1945 I was posted to India where I served with the RIEME with the rank of Sergeant, before being posted on to Burma, where I served until returning to the UK on leave in November with the acting rank of WO1. At the end of my leave period, I was stationed back to the UK and my rank reverted to that of Sergeant. I was posted to a Vehicle Reserve Depot at Bardney in Lincolnshire. Two years later, I was sent on detachment to serve with the 21st SAS Regt {Artists Rifles} Territorial Army unit, until my engagement ended.

I decided not to re-enlist and worked as a motor Mechanic for two years but, not seeing much future in the UK, decided to emigrate to Canada. There, I went back to my original trade of sheet metal worker for a period of eight years before gaining enough knowledge and experience to enter the Teaching Profession at High School level. I found this a most rewarding experience, staying at it for the next twenty-two years before retiring in 1985. I still live in Canada, and am in my 19th year of retirement. I thoroughly enjoyed my Teaching Career and firmly believe the training and experiences that I received at Arborfield had much to do with my success in later years.

***Footnote:** As editor of 'The Arborfield Apprentice', the recently published history of boys' (and now girls') training, I was attending the REME Museum with Ken Anderson (58A), in order to 'scan' archive photographs for use in the book. We happened to be there as Maurice and his wife Jane were paying a visit – in fact they were due to return to Canada that very same day. We had a brief chat and, realising that Maurice had been one of 'the originals', I asked if he could provide some memories for publication. Unfortunately, Maurice was unable to provide these in time for the book, but has been kind enough to allow me to forward the above story for use in the OBAN. Thanks Maurice – and we hope you get a copy of the book to reinforce those treasured moments. Pete Gripton (56B).*

JOBS WORTH

By John Loy, 39B

My first posting on leaving Arborfield was to a Workshop in north west London. This had been a Territorial Army unit pre-war, with a lot of the original personnel still serving. After the rigid discipline regime we had become used to, this was like being posted to heaven! The workshop was in what had previously been the 'Beetox' factory (pre-war, a rival product to 'Marmite') and was responsible for the repair of about a third of

London's Anti-Aircraft (A-A) defences. This extended out to include Windsor Castle and the aircraft factories of *Vickers* and *Handley Page* as well as into Central London, Hyde Park. We covered the full range of weapons then available – 40mm, 3" rockets, 3.7s, 4.5s and 5.25s, together with Searchlights and all the other associated equipment.

Probably before Military Intelligence even became aware of the threat of German 'V' weapons, a programme was started to improve the heavy A-A defences. Amongst other things, this included fitting the 3.7" guns with remote power operated control and an automatic loading and fuse setting device. Before this, after the information from the Fire Control Radar had been dealt with by the Predictor, it was received by the guns via 'magslip' transmission to a pointer on a dial, which the gun layers had to match by manually traversing and elevating the gun. The fuse setting number also had a dial, which he had to follow, which varied the setting mechanism of the fuse setter. On the order to load, an ammunition loader would put the round into the fuse setter, where another man, operated two levers. One gripped the shell and the other rotated the setting ring and set the fuse. The loader then placed the round in the loading tray, moved it across in line with the breech and then rammed it into the breech by pulling on the ramming cable. None of this was likely to help accuracy.

I was one of those sent on a course with the manufacturers and taught how to fit the new automatic fuse setting and loading equipment. Installation teams were formed, consisting of a gun fitter an electrician and a general helper. We assembled at a workshop in Hemel Hempstead and, after the usual exchange of pleasantries, it was established that I had missed my first command by two days i.e. the other L/Cpl in our team was two days senior to me. We drew our equipment – those of you who remember those days will recall that when you had your full kit with you, together with your gas mask and steel helmet, you were approaching your limit as a beast of burden. In addition to our tool kits, mine alone required two men to carry it, having grown somewhat from the basic issue after two years working on gun repair. We had two *Black and Decker* power drills. One of these, the largest portable model they made, with a belly plate for applying the load, was a real monster; the other, a mid-range model, was much heavier than the equivalent model would be today. We also had a large reel of power cable, very necessary, as gun pits did not have a power supply. (Not an oversight by the designers but forethought, as I have no doubt the Gunners would have soon have had illicit toasters and electric fires installed, not compatible with live ammunition!) To complete the picture, the QM decided to issue us with rifles – he was either a comedian or had spare rifles he wanted to get rid of, as with all this lot we had to travel mainly by public transport. Our leader collected our orders and we found that our first gun site was located just outside the fair city of Edinburgh.

The day we set off did not start well. The early duty cook did not get his call so, as well as not getting breakfast, we did not get our 'unexpired portion' (our sandwiches) for the journey. We were taken to Watford Station to join the underground system and after that we were on our own. It was of course impossible to move everything at once and so we gradually developed a drill. No's 1 and 2 carry as much forward as they can while

No.3 stands guard on the remainder. No. 2 then returns to No.3 and hopefully they can then carry the remainder to join No.1. All very obvious when you think about it - until you try it getting onto a tube train, when you become very unpopular!

There had been a 'nuisance raid' during the night, which just added to the delays. Before we had got the drill properly sorted out, disaster struck. We were attempting to negotiate an escalator, I as No. 2 was holding one handle of a toolbox, on which we had balanced (amongst other things) the drum of cable. As we got near to the top, the plug on the end of the cable snagged on some obstruction and dragged the drum off the top of the toolbox, over my shoulder, from where it bounced down the escalator. This was fortunately clear of passengers! We had by then reached the top, so were able to press the escalator stop button. I left No.1 to sort out the mess and set off in pursuit of the cable drum. This had collided with the rear wall of the cross passage and was slowly but relentlessly rolling, not towards the south platform from which we had just alighted - and where it might have been fielded by No.3 - but towards the north platform where a train had just arrived. I was just in time to see it aim itself unerringly for the gap between the ends of the carriage units, where it dropped down very neatly beside the track. Left alone there, it would have been no problem but, not wishing to be bisected, I needed an assurance that the driver would not move the train while I was trying to retrieve the drum. A very fussy railway official appeared on the scene and it was soon more than his job was worth to allow me to retrieve the drum without the power being shut off. He would not accept that it was nowhere near the live line but quoted some regulation or other. In desperation, I agreed to let him go and get the current turned off and, as soon as he was out of sight, laid down on the platform, retrieved the drum and frantically rewound the cable. I joined up with No.3 and we staggered up the escalator with the rest of our equipment to rejoin No.1, who was by this time becoming a little anxious.

We were late for our train when we got to King's Cross. But in those days there were no barriers and the train had not yet left, so we were able to force our way into a crowded coach, crushing up those that were already standing in the corridor even further. The train had great difficulty in getting underway; a process repeated each of the many times we stopped. It was not surprising, as it must have been grossly overloaded - we certainly didn't help! We reached Edinburgh many hours late, only just making it on the right day. We were by then very thirsty and hungry, no refreshments having been available on the train. We heard from other passengers that there was usually a Salvation Army tea van 'open all hours' on the station. So, when we had unloaded, stacked our kit on a seat and covered it with ground sheets, we set off to get a cup of tea from the van, which we could just see on another platform.

After the time we had taken unloading, we were last in the queue and so took rather longer than we intended. We were just enjoying our cuppa when one of our team said, "*I can't see our kit*". We hurried back to where we had left it, only to find an empty seat. At first we thought we were looking on the wrong platform, not wanting to believe that that it had gone. But then panic set in; we were definitely in the fertiliser business! In desperation we tried the lost property office, hammering

frantically on the door and, just like a scene from an old Will Hay film, an aperture opened. But instead of announcing, "*Next train's gone*", this figure said, "*Can you not read?*" and slammed the sliding portion shut. In the gloom we could just make out a sign showing the opening times, the next of which was 9.00 am, being a Sunday. We stayed outside the door, hoping to ambush the attendant if he dared venture outside. But he either stayed there all night or had a secret inner door, as he did not come out. We discussed our future, as at that time we were not sure our kit was inside or not. One of the subjects discussed was life inside a Scottish military correction establishment and whether it might be better to get further south before we confessed!

We were well ready before opening time and to our relief, when we finally gained admittance, we saw our equipment. But our joy was somewhat tempered by the sight of all the lost luggage labels tied to it! This character must have worked all night writing them out. He informed us that it would cost us 9d per article to get it back - a ridiculous sum, as by that time we were down to a mere 5d between us, having spent the last of our cash on a cup of tea for breakfast. He pointed out that once a label had been made out it was "*more than my job's worth*" to cancel it. The conversation became somewhat heated as he quoted railway regulations at us, which I expect were probably true. We quoted military regulations back to him that were definitely not! The one dealing with the summary execution of those impeding soldiers in their duty brought the only semblance of mirth from him as he gleefully pointed out that he had our rifles. The argument eventually brought the stationmaster himself into the fray. He had clearly had trouble before from his overly zealous employee as, after hearing both sides of the story, just said, "*Lump it all under one ticket*" and then lent us the money to pay for it. 'Jobsworth' was furious and got his revenge by slowly taking the labels off one at a time and then entering the cancellations in his ledger - not at all helped by the kindly advice given by us. When we finally left, he told us as a parting response that he had a 'sister in high places' and he would inform her of our misdemeanours. What he did not notice was that, as he had so carefully loaded the barrow, all we had to do was take the lot away - for the very first time, we were mobile.

Our next stop was at the RTO's office, for another rapturous welcome. He refused to let us use his phone and insisted that the clerk did it for us. With the inevitable result that, instead of phoning the workshop for transport, he got the duty officer at Redford Barracks, who promptly ordered us to form up in threes and march smartly to the barracks, a mere 3 ½ miles. Even the RTO could see the absurdity of this order and said he would issue us with tram ticket vouchers, nearly as daft. The tram stop was on Princess Drive as I remember it now, a quarter of a mile up a one-in-two slope. We dragged the barrow to the top and eventually the correct tram clanked into sight. We were halfway through our loading process when Ghengis Khan's sister, heavily disguised as a conductress, clattered down the stairs and screamed, "*You can't come on my tram with that effing lot*" and, with that, flung every thing that we had loaded in the general direction of the pavement. She was one tough madam! It requires a strong arm to throw a Fitter's tool kit! Her final remark was of course, "*It's more than my job's worth to let you on my tram with that lot*". The pigeons that had been roused from their slumbers and taken to the air in terror circled

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEWS

Farewell to Arborfield - Narrated by John Smithson 46B

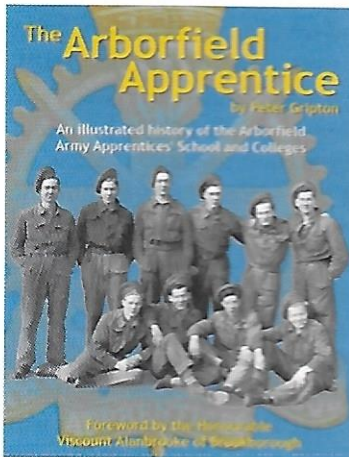
This video is a comprehensive record on film of the 2004 AOBA Reunion held at Arborfield in June 2004. It covers the Reunion from the Saturday morning to the Sunday church service. This movie is available as a DVD or a VHS Tape and it does great justice to the last Reunion to be held on the Rowcroft Barracks site with most of those who attended being recorded on film. It also includes a clip of the final POP on the 12th August. To top and tail the movie two black and white historic movie tone clips are also included of the early days of the Army Apprentices School.

The movie which is available as a DVD or VHS Video Tape can only be obtained from the Arborfield Old Boys Association Secretariat based at the REME Museum in Arborfield. The cost in either format is just £14.00. Post and packing charges are:

DVD - UK £1.50, Europe £2.00, Rest of the World £2.50; VHS - UK £2.00, Europe £3.00, Rest of the World £4.00
Cheques should be made payable to AOBA. Overseas members may use the PayPal system on application to the Webmaster.



The Arborfield Apprentice By Peter Gripton 56B an illustrated history of the Arborfield Army Apprentices' School and Colleges ISBN 0954514203



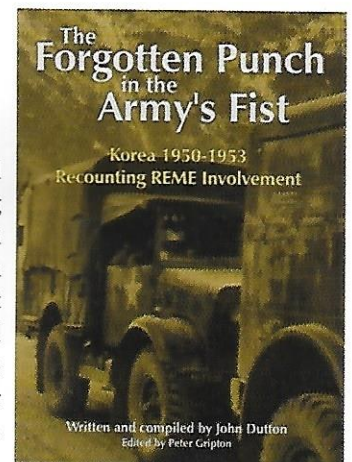
This important historical record written by ex-boy Peter Gripton was published in September 2003. With an introductory foreword by the Honourable Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookborough the book chronicles junior soldier tradesman training over a period of 60 years. Starting with the Army Technical School in 1939 and culminating with the Army Technical Foundation College today the book is an important archive for all those who served an Army Apprenticeship or served at Arborfield. The book is published in hard back form and contains over 500 pages and more than 200 photographs

Peter Gripton has done a great service to all Arborfield Apprentices and staff members in writing the history and he certainly deserves the accolades of the many Old Boys who will welcome this rendering of their story. His light and readable style gives all the appearance that he enjoyed writing this history. But, bearing in mind the dictum, 'that which is written without pain will be read without pleasure' – there is ample evidence that Peter took great pains to ensure that his readers will enjoy his book. Many of his readers will have actually made the history that he has so

faithfully recorded. The author has been punctilious in awarding an equal balance to each period of time. The Army Apprentice system has been an outstanding success from its foundation. It is excellent that this chapter of a great tradition has now been recorded for posterity. The Arborfield Apprentice is available for just £18.50 Association Shop in the REME Museum of Technology Arborfield.

The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist Written and compiled by John Dutton 43A Edited by Peter Gripton 56B ISBN 0954621816

The story of the War in Korea and of the part played by the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, REME, from 1950 to 1953 as told by various individuals of that Corps, makes fascinating reading. The support and devotion to their colleagues is most apparent, but typical of the British soldier, these experiences are balanced with a sense of sympathy for the unfortunate Korean civilian population caught up in the conflict, and it wouldn't be a true story of the British soldier without its sprinkling of 'squaddie' humour. John Dutton has provided an excellent compilation of personal accounts in this comprehensive story of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers at war where the positioning of Light Aid Detachments and Field Workshops was just as important to senior commanders in their tactical planning as was the medical back-up of a Regimental Aid Post or a Field Ambulance.



Please note that the recommended selling price for the book is £18.50 and this is the price you would expect to pay from High Street bookshops. However the book is available for just for just £12.50 to members of the Arborfield Old Boys Association, members of the British Korean Veterans Association, their families and friends when purchased from the Association Shop in the REME Museum of Technology Arborfield or from local branches of the BKVA.

lazily and resumed their roosts. Then, as the tram clanked away into the distance, this other 'Jobsworth' could be seen giving us a 'Churchillian' salute - or it would have been had she held her hand the other way round!

We reloaded the barrow and considered dragging it to Redford Barracks but decided that the Waverley Street Lost Property sign on it might raise a few eyebrows. The barrow, which had behaved itself impeccably on the upward journey now displayed a steering fault and, unless let down backward, kept lurching towards the nearest gutter and tipping over. Had the man who invented abseiling seen our performance he would probably have rewritten his manual, or more probably added another chapter on 'things to avoid'; the pigeons certainly got plenty of exercise. The RTO, who by this time must have been heartily sick of the sight of us, must have seen us coming as, before we reached his hut, he came out and without as much as a glance in our direction disappeared into the distance. When we reached the hut, there was a sign on the door saying 'Closed until 1800 hrs.' We sat on the steps discussing plans B, C, D, E, and F etc and were rudely interrupted by 'Jobsworth No.1', who accused us of (a) stealing his barrow (B) saying nasty things about his sister and (c) giving him impossible advice on what to do with his barrow.

We thought of busking to raise money for a cup of tea, but as no one could sing and the pigeons had had enough to put up with for one day, that idea was abandoned. We sat despondently on the RTO's steps to await his return. Not long before he was due to return, we saw our salvation, a utility vehicle bearing the familiar REME logo. The driver greeted us with, "*Where have you lot been? I came to meet you yesterday but you didn't turn up*". We were taken to Redford Barracks but almost wished we had not bothered. We were too late to get anything to eat and there was no supper on Sunday nights. We were then given a palliass cover and were told that the man in charge of straw filling had gone home. We were then allocated a room that had once been the kitchen in one of the married quarters, which must have been built when Queen Victoria was a very young girl. One of us slept on the cooking range, one on the sink and draining board and the other on a stone shelf. Anything made of wood had long since been burned, so it was a bit draughty and we were frightened of being bitten by a rat or a marauding Haggis if we slept on the floor.

We did not require the wailing of the pipes to wake us at six o'clock next morning. Those who claim to like bagpipe music should try them at that time on a bitterly cold morning in Scotland. We were first in the queue for breakfast on the Monday morning, our first meal since Friday tea. Before we had finished, an officer came and introduced himself as being responsible for installation parties in that area and actually apologised for the way we had been treated. He said that we should not have been allowed to fall into enemy hands i.e. the resident regiment. We were the soon on our way this, time by military transport, to our first gun site. For the next five months or so we were constantly on the move. As I remember, we had a four-gun site to modify every three days and, after each two sites, we were off to different part of the country. We went from Edinburgh to Reading; back to Scotland; down to Dover; back up to Scotland; down to Ashford; up to Scotland once more and then back down to Folkestone and so on. The travelling was always on our supposed day off. When we were waiting on a station platform, as we so often were, it was not unusual to see the unmistakable sign of an installation crew travelling in the opposite direction and we wondered if perhaps 'Jobsworth' really DID have a sister who worked in high places!

THIS ISSUE'S CAPTION COMPETITION



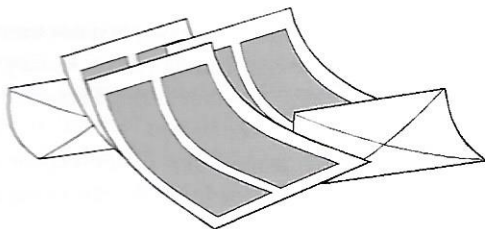
Can you provide a suitable and witty caption?

Cenotaph Remembrance Parade

We are planning, this year for members of the Association to participate in the Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph in London. It is also planned to have a Dinner the night before and also a special Remembrance Day Luncheon.

If you would to join in the parade or just attend the dinner or lunch then please contact the Assistant Honorary Secretary, Keith Evans, who is now based at the REME Museum and is available most afternoons by telephone on 01189 763 384.

OBAN LETTERS



Peter Hayton (70C) is looking for

I was in the 1970C intake in 'D' Company. My best friend at the College was Tony Higgins 24190070. Tony was of Jamacian origin and lived in Reading "which was lucky for him at weekends". Tony was doing an electrical apprenticeship which lasted a further year than mine. Tony was an excellent football player so wherever he went from Arborfield I am sure that he would have joined a local team. I am desperate to get in contact with him. I did hear he stayed in Germany and married a local girl. Any help would be most appreciated.

Pete Drake (57A) writes

Having received a copy of 'The Arborfield Apprentice', Pete Drake (57A) wrote to the editor from Perth in Western Australia:

I received the book yesterday (Friday). My word, what a publication. I did not expect such wonderful production, I had in my mind a softback, with badly typed pages put together, so you can imagine my surprise upon receiving such a great book. I have glanced through it and it looks to have a great deal of detail, so I need to get back in the armchair and put my nose into it.

I met up with Tony (that's Domoney of 56B) on Wednesday for an hour; it was very good and we had a long talk of what we had been doing through the years. He is going overseas for a couple of months on contract, so we will meet again on his return. In the meantime I will try to find Hank (Tony Hallam 57A) in Thornlie, so he can join us. You seem to have stayed very close to the Army throughout your working life and even now, being at Liss in Hampshire, you still have plenty of contact. I thought you would have gone back to your home county of Lancashire. George Vince will not be far from you, do you get to see him at all?

When you look back and think about relationships, I do not think that outside of Arborfield I have had that bonding and closeness with other people. My first posting was OK, as there were a lot of ex-boys from Arborfield in the 94 Locating Regt RA at Celle, Germany, including George and others of our intake. But my next posting was to 14/20th Kings Hussars, an Armoured Regt, and most of the REME lads were from Chepstow, so I was a bit of an outsider being from Arborfield. Middle Wallop, with the Army Air Corps, was fine because there was a good mix of all intakes from Arborfield and life was great.

I also left 'the mob' in 1967 and in that first year out I had more jobs than there are weeks in a year and I think I would have signed up again if I had not met my wife to be. What the hell am I going on about? The past is the past and can not be undone. I do not regret any of it, it has all been good. I practice many of the things we learned in those three years at Arborfield and they

have held me in good stead and life is great.

(Pete Drake, who hailed from Leeds, used to cut my hair at boys' school, he was pretty good at it too! Having myself visited Perth in 1985, 1992 and 1996, it is pretty annoying to find that Pete was living there and I didn't know about it at the time! I did get to visit Tony Hallam in 1985 and 1992 – and then Tony Domoney in 1996, which has been previously documented. You certainly find lots of ex-boys in all sorts of places! The attached photograph shows the 'two Petes' in their (much!) younger days, circa 1958. Pete Drake is on the left, yours truly on the right. Ed.)

Maurice Hope (59B) writes

Having attended my first, but not going to be my last, reunion in June, and spending a weekend that I and I am sure everyone else that attended will never forget, like them, I have since received my copy of OBAN 31 and enjoyed the coverage it (the reunion) got. The only comment I really have is that it was such a pity a list of all attendees, and their intakes, was not published in the issue. I feel it would have been the 'icing on the cake' to see the whole range of years and names covered and to be able to feel the bond that, like it or not, holds us all together – "We were there". Are there any plans afoot to put a list together for publication in the next edition? I am sure that if it was put on the website forum, there would be a lot of support for the idea.

Tony Wilson (56B) writes from his home in Tonga, South Pacific:

I saw the AOBA entry on info regarding civilian instructors. I well recall Bill Riddiford. Prior to AAS, I think he worked at the Harwell Atomic Energy facility. He used to ask us to request his books from our local libraries when going on leave. Another theory instructor I recall was a guy who had recently been demobbed from the RAF. He had a red sports car, possibly a *Triumph*, which he parked directly outside the classroom window so he could keep an eye on it! He was a good guy, very relaxed. Another good bloke was a Staff Sergeant. He had a teenage son who was about to go to RAF Halton.

You mention a Brian Mockford in one of your e-mails. I recall him, he came from Eastleigh, Radar or Telemech, bit of a boffin always messing around with intricate things. He was in the same barrack room as Hank Smith, Johnny Johnson and myself.

Some members of 56B must be retired or getting close to pensionable age. I heard a BBC radio programme in which it was said that most people in the UK retire at 62. Is that the retiring age? The qualification in NZ for a full pension is 20 years residence, 5 of those since the age of 50 and one must be in NZ at the time the pension starts. I met the first qualifications but not the latter. I am 65 at the end of next year so, in January, will return to 'live' in NZ until I turn 65, then return to Tonga. The following year my wife will have to do the same thing. We have an apartment in Wellington, so it's not too bad. The pension, once started, is fully portable so we can draw it here.

I still follow events in NZ on the radio and by reading NZ newspapers 'on line'. There has been a lot of publicity in NZ recently about its equivalent of AAS, known as Regular Force

Cadet School (RFCS - now closed). There is to be an inquiry by a retired Judge into bullying at the school during the 60s and 70s. Arborfield seems like a holiday camp compared to the RFCS. For details read nzherald.co.nz/cadetschool or just nzherald.co.nz and search under cadet school for the past month.

(Tony must have originally contacted me through accessing the website – he is obviously still maintaining contact with ‘old boys’ stuff via that medium. But he and I occasionally contact each other by e-mail too. The ‘guy with the red sports car’ he mentions above was Bernie Cardrick, I remembered his name but not the details! Well done Tony! Ed.)

Tony Church (55A) is looking for

Reading Peter Gripton's excellent tome, (yes, my son took the heavy hints re desirable christmas prezies !) I noted the mention of Tom Murray, 58A, who passed out as A/CSM of J Coy. We were both attached to 13 Field Survey Sqn RE in Aden 1964 . Tom returned to UK in '65 while I continued till Jan. '66, returning to the depot for demob. We had some great times and I often wonder what happened to him. He was from Huyton in Liverpool and does not appear to be a member of the OBA. Anyone out there shed any light ? Can anyone help?

Derek Holbeche (52B) emails

First off, many thanks for putting together “*The Arborfield Apprentice*”. It's about a paragraph that I am writing. Getting to the end of the '56-'59 era, start of the last paragraph, I read “Three young members of the same family”. I had to read this twice just to make sure that I had read it right. I met up with the ‘brothers Clough’ when I was posted to the Queen's Own Hussars in Munster, Germany. John, Terry, my assistant armourer Robert ‘Dinger’ Bell and I drove over much of Germany, Belgium and Holland, me having the car. Dinger and I were introduced to Glenna and many of the staff at BMH Munster. Glenna was then posted to Rinteln and, soon afterwards, the QOH moved to Detmold. The drive got much more ‘hairy’ at that time. There is much more to ‘The Four Mucky Ears’, but that at a later date. I lost touch with John and Terry when I left the QOH for civvy street. I tried the Chepstow site, but it was all REs. I did not know that Terry was an Arborfield brat, as it did not come up. When I saw your piece and you mentioned the ‘Yorkshire Press’, I wondered if that was in fact an actual newspaper and, if so, do you have an address for them?

(I mailed back to Derek that the relevant piece was no doubt ‘borrowed’ from the pages of Craftsman magazine and suggested that he contact the Editor of same. Ed.)

Charles Pepper (43B) writes

I was watching the Cenotaph (Remembrance Day) Parade on TV and it struck me that the Beachley boys, RAF Halton and HMS Ganges were represented. Beachley boys do contribute to the Aoba magazine. Perhaps their numbers are dwindling, as ours surely will with all the changes taking place. Why not compose an ex-Army Apprentices’ delegation, which would cover Chepstow, Arborfield and any other type of school that may develop in the future? Considering the present situation at

both of our now defunct schools, is it not time to drop any rivalry and instead show our commonality, history and service to the Army, by marching together at this Parade?

(I will certainly make your views known to the Committee, Charles, so that perhaps it can be discussed at the next meeting. Ed.)

Tom Murray (58A) writes

Many thanks for the excellent book, for which I enclose the appropriate cheque. I must sit down and read it, rather than skipping through the years to pull out ‘little gems’. The background and personal info on some of the subjects is fascinating. In our time at Arborfield we were obviously not privy to such details. I will write soon and hopefully provide some input of my own!

(I made contact with Tom, following a request from Tony Church (55A) looking for Tom's whereabouts. Don't know if Tony has yet made contact, but it's been good for me to have spoken to Tom several times over recent weeks. As gathered from above, Tom purchased a copy of ‘The Arborfield Apprentice’ and has promised to try and write an article for future publication – more power to yer pen Tom! Ed.)

Carl Hayhurst (53A) writes

Please, please, please tell me that RSM McNally was famous and not ‘infamous’, as per the RSM's comments in OBAN31 page 7.

(As a mere jeep of 56B, I couldn't possibly comment! Ed.)

Ken Dawe (56B) writes

I am sorry to hear that you haven't been able to open the CD that I sent you, maybe if you try it on your DVD player, you will have a little more luck. On my system it opens automatically. If you are still experiencing trouble after that, ring Larry Jarvis, as he was able to open it, maybe it has got something to do with antiquated English Hardware. (Ha-Ha) I am on XP Pro, but that is another story. Thanks for the recent newsletter regarding 56B boys, interesting to see so many names from the dim and distant past - or is it me that is dim and distant? That could be what has been troubling me for so many years. Keep smiling. *(Ken attended his very first reunion in 2004, having settled down to live in Celle, where many ex-boys will have served when in BAOR. The CD he sent me contained several photographs of the last reunion at Rowcroft – I passed it on to Ken Anderson, who has been able to include some of them in the previous OBAN – Issue 31. It was good to catch up with Ken Dawe after a time interval of forty-five years. Ed.)*

Denis Marshall (46B) writes

I have just received my issue 31 OBAN and wish you the best of luck on becoming the new editor, I am sure you will do it brilliantly. Your ‘Arborfield Apprentice’ book was totally captivating, what a lot of work went into it, I could not put it down! Congratulations on it.

Thank you for the couple of mentions I had (page 88). My wife still does sterling work here as a retired priest, licensed to the Bodmin team ministry. On page 97, I am 5th from left and my twin brother George is the last one on the right. I remember most of the names of the boys from 'D' Coy who were in the 'Toy Soldier' display team at Olympia, London, we were from intakes 45A, 45B, 46A and 46B. This particular photo was taken in Reading, on stage somewhere when we did a charity show, the girls were not part of our act but just posed with us at the end of the show. All of this group was from 'D' Coy.

My wife and I recently celebrated our Golden Wedding and had the pleasure of entertaining John Northam and wife June, as well as Derek Williams (45A) ex-REME and RAF and his wife Hazel. Plus my 'big brother' Fred (45A), known as 'Lulu' at Arborfield because of his Cornish accent and, of course, twin brother George, also of 46B. I think we were the only three brothers ever at Arborfield at the same time.

For the record, the photo on page 103 (bottom left), the CSM of 'D' Coy on the right was Eddie Mullen of the Somerset Light Infantry, and who came from Plymouth. He was a very nice man, very fair, he used to come around the outside of the barrack rooms after 'lights out' and look in the windows, to catch anyone smoking. Of course he was always 'Sir' to us boys.

I did 28 years in the Army, finishing up as a Captain and retiring in 1974. I served on the Gold Coast (now Ghana) with the RWAFF; Singapore; with the Malaysian Army at Kuala Lumpur; Aden and the Persian Gulf; Germany; as well as at the School of Signals. It was all a splendid time, what a pity that most of this is now gone.

(Denis – thank you for your comments, much appreciated. Also thanks for the details regarding the photographs – you have a good memory! I get into Bodmin most summers, my niece has a bungalow in Padstow, which we regularly use. This year we cycled all the way from Padstow to Bodmin and back on the Camel Trail. It's a lovely part of the country. Ed.)

✍ **Tony Domoney (56B) writes** from West Australia

Thank for your message and I enjoyed reading the account of the last 56B reunion. I hope that you gave my apologies and good wishes. I have got myself involved, playing first trumpet in two local bands and am also attending an internationally accredited Cricket Umpiring course at the 'WACA'. *(That's the West Australia Cricket Association ground in Perth. Ed.)* Thoroughly enjoying myself and I think this may be my salvation as I enter the Retirement circuit. Whilst I am nominated in a number of projects, nothing as yet has materialised. Slowly I am realising that I may not get any more work, so the other activities suddenly become very important. We are settling into our new home and presently installing a large patio in the back garden. We have also engaged an architect to design a courtyard and frontage to the front part of the house to give more character - also to enhance the value. 'Tis winter, cold but sunny. Although I love the freedom Perth offers, I still miss the UK and am being sort of 'pulled' between the two. Looking forward to seeing the photographs of both re-unions. Wish I could have been with

you. Maybe next year.

(This was written back in 'our' summer and it wasn't long afterwards that Tony was again attracted by the offer of a short contract to work on his beloved 'Air Safety' career, somewhere in the Middle East I believe. Ed.)

✍ **'Johnno' Johnson (56N) writes** from South Africa

Thanks for the informative report on the last 56B reunion at Diss *(sent electronically by the wonder of modern science. Ed.)*. The part about the fried bread brought back a flood of memories. At last, proof that I am not abnormal (as claimed by the wife) because I love cold fried bread! Good grief! If it wasn't for the supplement of cold fried bread, how would we perpetually hungry young men have lasted from breakfast to lunch? I only volunteered to take the workshop trolley to the cookhouse in the hope of scrounging some of those delectable leftovers. I filled my overall pockets with slices, often managing to filch a bit of greaseproof paper to wrap them in.

Do you recall the tell-tale grease-spots that would appear on the denim jacket pocket, if one wasn't careful? We always scrounged a slice or two for ourselves and as many as we could grab for our chums. To this day I love my fried bread - in fact I had some this morning with a fried egg. The walk back to the workshop, pulling the trolley, allowed just enough time to eat one of the slices, hoping none of the permanent staff would catch you 'eating in public', as it were. I remember too that, whilst the tea wasn't always sweet enough, or too sweet or too strong, the Cocoa was always just right and usually only issued in the winter months.

✍ **R O 'Bob' Bradley (April '42) writes**

I was very pleased to see that the photograph of the Memorial Gates at Lenham was reproduced so well in the latest issue of the magazine and to read that you will be including an article with the photographs in the next issue. I'd be grateful if you could include an acknowledgement to the photographer, Ray Schram, as I intend to show him the publication. The incident is reported in 'Craftsmen of the Army' (Volume 1, page 213) and the unit is named as the 6th (Guards) Tank Brigade Workshop, so I think you should quote that.

The autumn issue is very impressive, especially the colour photography, hats off to Ken! I haven't read it from cover to cover yet, as I am very busy pushing the production of my book through the printers – and writing the next one. Part 1 of the new book covers my time at 6 Central Ordnance Depot, Greenford, in the summer of 1944. I have been trying, without success, to contact other ex-A/Ts who were there at the time and wonder whether you could include an appeal for help in the magazine.

Part 2 is about life in BAOR between 1946 and 1949. If it would not be stretching your patience too far, I would like to hear from ex-boys who were in 737 (AFV) Servicing Unit and No.1 X-Ray Repair Unit at the time.

(Bob – many thanks for writing again regarding Lenham. Since

issue 31, we have had a couple of kind responses, offering to obtain further details, and hope to have an article of some sort to publish in issue 32. As for your requests for information on Greenford and BAOR, all we can do is publish your letter in the magazine and leave it to the great audience out there to respond as applicable! Best of luck. Please keep us informed about the success of your publishing efforts. Ed.)

Maurice Hope (59B) writes

Having read John Swarbrick's (62A) letter, referring to a certain RSM J Stewart (Irish Guards), it has stirred my idle mind to reflect on those far off times, you know the ones, those that seem like just yesterday, back in June. I can't really think what those lads must have been hoping to achieve, on the night of the 11th of March 1962, when they carried those buckets of paint and brushes onto the Cookhouse roof and adorned it with the large white intake number of "59B". Surely they must have realised that it would be seen by everyone on the morrow's Passing-out Parade - naughty boys!

Back to the aforementioned RSM Stewart ---- I wonder how many of the lads from the early sixties recall the morning parade that was held, on the morning that followed that historic day, when a certain Colonel Yuri Gagarin was shot into space - presumably by someone he must have upset. That parade followed its normal format, with the RSM's usual greeting to all assembled. "Good morning gentlemen (did he really call us that?), the sun is out, the sky is blue, blah, blah, blah". But when the time came to march off, our bright spark's comment went something like this, barked loudly across the Square ---- "Bandmaster, to commemorate this historic day, let us all march off to some rousing Russian music".

The brusque reply came back from S/Sgt Alec 'Paddy' Parker (Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders), "Certainly, Sir". At which point the Band struck up and the parade marched off - to the very familiar tones of the School's quick-march, 'Scotland the brave'! I mean, what sort of misplaced drill-pig would expect us to turn into Cossack musicians at an instant! Rumour has it that there was a very cool relationship in the Sergeants' Mess for several weeks after the event!

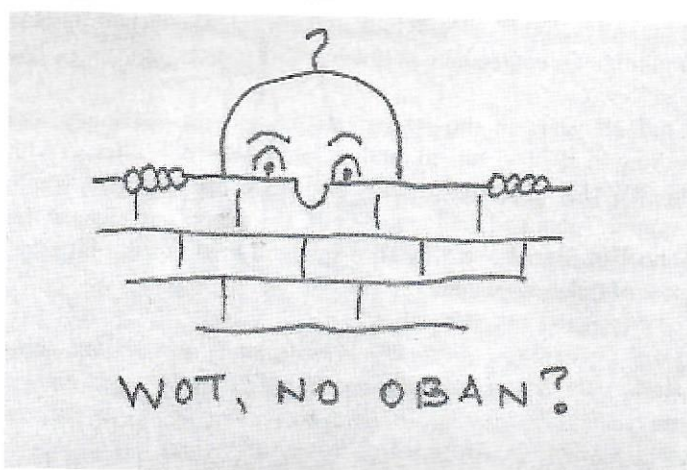
Mauric signed off thus 'From a non-Russian-playing solo Tenor Horn player, in what must have been the best ever School Brass Band.' so thanks for those memories Maurice, it is always great to get a reaction to an article published in OBAN - proves that people do read it! You obviously have a flair for tale telling - ever thought of putting down some of your own memories, I'm sure you must have a few. Ed.)

Molly Pewsey (nee Cook) writes

I felt that I must enter a caption for the latest competition - OBAN 31. If that is allowed from Ben Cook's daughter! "And if you press that button, Sir, the device will explode!" The looks on the soldiers' faces make me laugh every time I look at the picture - especially as I imagine them looking all ragged and torn after the button has been pressed! (Images of 'Tom and Jerry' cartoons spring to mind! Ed.) I was sorry not to get to the last Arborfield reunion, but was quite moved to

read Mitch Mitchell's reference to having visited my Dad's grave. My mother is interred with him, as she died aged ninety-seven only last year; also, the ashes of my brother-in-law, Leo Kemp, who many REME folk will remember. Peter Simmonds' mention of my father and 'the coal-yard' brought back many memories - it really was a focal point during the war and its coal rationing. Good to see that Peter retained his stripes! At least this was a 'new' story, different to the 'Gilbert and Bob' ones. Recently, an ex-boy living at Shanklin got in touch with me to relate some memories about 'Dad and Bomber' that I hadn't heard before. I have been promoting your book 'The Arborfield Apprentice' on the Island and I know several copies have since found their way here. We are surrounded by 'old boys' and I often hear yarns about my Dad. Keep up the good work - issue 31 was very interesting.

(Molly, it was good to hear from you again since you assisted me on the mini-chapter about Ben - who, of course, I was far to young to know! Now you have us all intrigued by 'an ex-boy living in Shanklin'. If he has some stories we haven't heard - how about persuading him to tell all? Ed.)



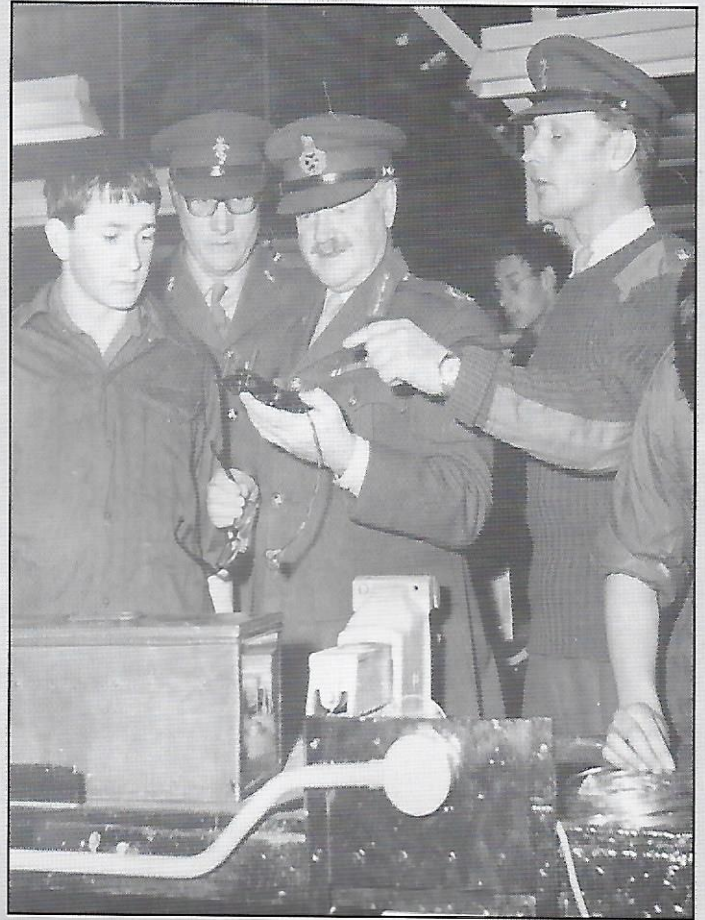
and husband John (45A) emails

HELP! - I lent my copy of the 2004 reunion edition to my son, William, who was in 74A(?) (I think) intake, on the strict understanding that he returned it after reading. His wife, bless her cotton sox, who is a tidiness freak, binned it!

Great Silver Ridna writes

My name is Greta Silver Rindner, I am the niece of Fred Silvers and daughter of the late Bugle Major Reuben Silver. I was pleased to find the page describing my uncle, which is correct, and not having been in contact with him since 1960 when my father died in Berlin is how I remembered him. As a child, memories are that he was tough and scary. It is sad to hear that he had passed away. The reason I am writing is that the surname was SILVER and not Silvers. I am trying to trace Fred's two children, Freddie and Mary Silver and also his brother Bert (Moni) Silver who was in the 1st KRRC band. However I left the UK in 1959 and have not been in contact since. I know its a shot in the dark, but maybe, as the historian, you have some records? Also, please correct the surname. Thanking you so much., Greta Silver Rindner

Results of the OBAN 31 Caption Competition



"Press that button Sir and the A/T will vanish!"

The winning entry submitted by Eddie Cooper 52A

We also had from Mick Oulds 57B

"If he presses that bleedin' button we'll all go sky high!"
from the officer with glasses.

&

"Wish the twit behind me would put his hand somewhere else!" from the A/T on left.

&

"What the hell is a Game Boy, Lieutenant?" from the Genral.

and from Kaye Gilpin 52B

"For interactive television, just press the red button Sir!"

and from D Palmer 54B

General to A/T: *"This is the control switch off my wife's washing machine. Have it mended by tomorrow or I'm in trouble"*

&

A/T to General: *"It detects and raises the alarm on any approaching Drill Instructor"*

&

Major to General: *"Please can I have my gun back now?"*

Finally from Frank Fendick 45A

"That's it, sir. Her clothes come off when you tilt it."

Now have a look at the competition in this issue on Page 26

John Smithson (46B) writes

Congratulations on your new job as editor of OBAN, I am sure there will be plenty of material to keep you fully occupied. Perhaps by now you have had the chance to see 'Farewell to Arborfield' and approve of your own sterling performance! (*Not sure about that John! Ed.*) I am personally well pleased with the final result and I am sure our membership will be also.

(John was highly instrumental in the making of both films about Arborfield life and is himself to be congratulated – and thanked – for all his efforts on behalf of us all. Ed.)

John Maddox (44B) writes

I received the DVD this morning and have just played it through. I shall play it again this afternoon and probably every morning for the next week or so. It is the best produced and filmed production I have seen in many years and I am not ashamed to admit that I watched much of it with a tear in my eye. My grateful thanks to everyone concerned.

Jock Ainslie (61B) writes

I'd like to extend sincere congratulations to all those concerned with the making of the movie. I received my copy of the DVD today and have appreciated every minute of it...again and again! It is such a worthy tribute to all aspects of the College and the Association and I consider myself honoured to have been part of the Reunion.

Chas' Bradley (55B) writes

First off, I've just started reading your excellent book, and it is pleasing to know how much influence the 'Dukies' had on the School/College. Why that is, I do not know. When I left the Dukies, there were ten of us who joined - either at Arborfield or Chepstow. We eventually finished up here with eight. It occurred to me that, with the closure of the School, if you would do me an article regarding the final days and the future.

(Elsewhere in the magazine I have announced the forthcoming publication of 'the final chapter', which I hope meets your wishes Chas! Ed.)

Maurice Hope (59B) writes again

Having attended my first, but not going to be my last, reunion in June, and spending a weekend that I and I am sure everyone else that attended will never forget, like them, I have since received my copy of OBAN 31 and enjoyed the coverage it (the reunion) got. The only comment I really have is that it was such a pity a list of all attendees, and their intakes, was not published in the issue. I feel it would have been the 'icing on the cake' to see the whole range of years and names covered and to be able to feel the bond that, like it or not, holds us all together – *"We were there"*. Are there any plans afoot to put a list together for publication in the next edition? I am sure that if it was put on the website forum, there would be a lot of support for the idea. Kind regards - keep up the good work (I proudly marched next to the Webmaster on the parade.)



Above - December 1959 HQ Coy 'A' Squad with Sgt Elliot (Devon & Dorset)
 Below - 59B Apprentice Radar Technicians both photos courtesy of Tom Pearce 59B

