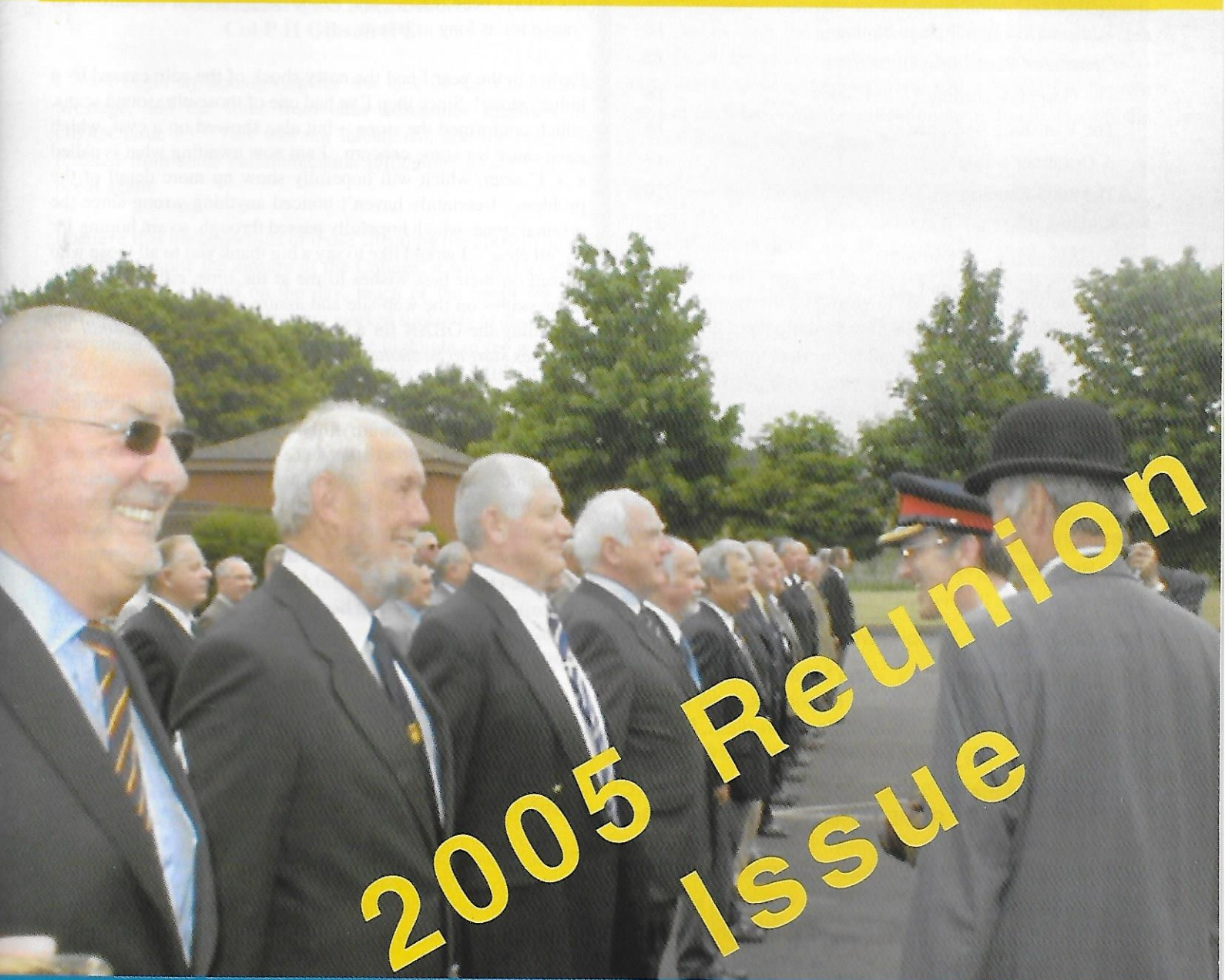
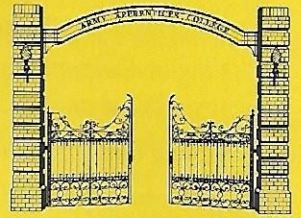


Autumn 2005

Issue 34



O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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EDITORIAL

As I sit at the keyboard this evening, terrorist bombs have killed scores of innocent people in our capital city. This comes just one day after London had the honour of being awarded the Olympic Games venue for 2012. Such are ups and downs of everyday life in the 21st century. Along with the good news from Singapore, I was also reading in this morning’s paper about the drop in recruiting across all services, which appears to be as a direct result of the continuing security situation in distant Iraq. Yet, despite this mixture of ‘first the good news, then the bad’, in the main, life continues to run a smooth course for the majority of us as we go about our daily routine. I suppose that’s the way it has always been really – and I’ll be happy to steer an untroubled course for as long as it lasts.

Earlier in the year I had the nasty shock of the pain caused by a kidney stone! Since then I’ve had one of those ultrasound scans, which conformed the stone – but also showed up a cyst, which gave cause for some concern. I am now awaiting what is called a ‘CT’ scan, which will hopefully show up more detail of the problem. I certainly haven’t noticed anything wrong since the original stone, which hopefully passed through, so am hoping for an ‘all clear’. I would like to say a big thank you to all those who passed on their best wishes to me at the time, either by e-mail or messages on the web-site and assure everyone that I hope to be editing the OBAN for a long time to come! *(Well, until my mistakes start to be spotted anyway!)*

It is now only a couple of weeks before the Reunion, the first to be held since the closure of the College last year. I do hope that there will be a good attendance and look forward to seeing all the old familiar faces – and hopefully many new ones too. I know how hard Bill and his ‘standing committee’ has worked, on putting together a package that will continue the *esprit de corps* so carefully nurtured over the many years that reunions have been taking place.

Pete Gripton 56B

Contributions

All contributions and articles for inclusion in OBAN are most warmly welcomed. We do prefer however to receive text in Microsoft Word format and photos/images in TIFF format.

Contents

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 or can be accepted.

Cover Picture

Happy smiling faces. Proud to be on parade once again and to be inspected by another Old Boy, who also made good!

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Printed in Great Britain by Chandlers Printers Ltd, Saxon Mews,
Reginald Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 3PJ.

OFFICERS REPORTS



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Col P H Gibson (PS)

I must begin by apologising for the lack of the Chairman's Message, and the notes from other committee members, in OBAN Issue 33. This was not intentional, and the omission resulted from some communication difficulties which will not occur again.

I believe that the consensus of those attending the 2005 Reunion was that, despite the closure of the College, it was just as good as always. As I said on the day, much of the credit for that success goes to Bill Cleasby who worked tirelessly to ensure that everything went to plan. As usual, the highlight of the weekend was the Saturday night dinner – held, this year, in the Bailleul Sergeants' Mess. The Mess staff not only laid on a really excellent feast but also looked after us all admirably throughout the weekend. We intend to continue holding Reunions, just like this year's, until Arborfield is vacated by REME at some time in the future.

By now, you may all have noticed that we have a new Membership Secretary. Fred Mills (51B) volunteered to relieve me of the task last year and received unanimous support from the membership at the 2005 AGM. I shall complete the handover to him by the end of September after which all membership matters should be addressed to Fred.

The recruiting of new members continues steadily although more are joining in their 60s than in their 30s (or even in their 40s!). We have recently taken the step of distributing posters to all REME units to remind the serving ex-apprentices of the existence of the Association. Perhaps now that our President (DEME(A) – Brigadier Nigel Williams) is an ex-apprentice, we can encourage more of the younger generations to become members.

On a personal note, I do not intend to remain as Chairman for ever! I strongly believe that your Chairman should be an ex-apprentice. The rank achieved during Army service is immaterial – the need is for a man with some organising ability, commitment to the Association and a small amount of free time. I shall be looking for a suitable candidate over the coming months so, be warned.

Peter Gibson (PS)

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Lt Col IWJ Cleasby (61C)

Life is just about back to normal after all the excitement of the reunion. Thank-you letters have been written, chairs returned to the Museum and the saluting dais put back in the Guardroom for another year. You can be assured that I have listened to your many constructive comments on the new format and, where possible, will try and implement them next year. Comments have ranged from the state of the transit accommodation to the undercooked vegetables on the Saturday night. As far as the accommodation is concerned, you need to be aware that the accommodation was heavily subsidised this year by the Association and next year it is intended to apply the proper charges. These will be in the area of £5, £6, & £7 for one night in the Transit Block, Sgts' Mess and Officers' Mess respectively, and £20, £30 and £40 for two nights in each type of accommodation respectively. Despite the increase, it is still cheaper than the local hotel!

I am hoping that the new DEME(A), Brigadier Nigel Williams, will take the salute next year – who is not only by appointment the new President of the Association, but also an ex-Apprentice – a tremendous achievement by any standard but long overdue. By the way, I am aware that many of the Association's more senior members fell madly in love with Zena, the splendid and ever so helpful member of staff of the Sgt's Mess. I have passed on your thanks and I have little doubt that she is looking forward to the next encounter with the guys. On a more formal note, I would be grateful if members could show some restraint during the Dinner speeches and save the anecdotes and stories for a more appropriate time. It is not easy standing up before such an august body and chattering in the background can be very off-putting. Many of you have asked for a heads-up on the dates for the next reunion and currently in the frame is the 21st to the 23rd July 2006. Please put these dates in the diary and we will try and make it the best ever.

God Bless, Bill Cleasby (61C)

MONEY MATTERS

Treasurer Major Mike Davis (60B)

It has been another busy year. Our Accounts are in reasonable shape moneywise, especially considering that costs are rising sharply for stationery, printing and (dare I say it?) postage. There have been 105 donations received in the last nine months (too many names to print each individual's donation), amounting to a total of some £800.00, which is really excellent.

I have not heard, as yet, from the Inland Revenue Charities office regarding our Gift Aid claim, but I am assured that these matters cannot be rushed! Finally, would all active members who have forgotten or neglected to pay their subscriptions for 2005, please do so at soon as possible.

All the best to evryone, Mike Davis (60B)

PUBLICITY MEMBERS REPORT

Ken Anderson (58A)

In the design and maintenance of any web site it is all too easy to keep the same page layouts and designs. This however can lead to any minor changes or additions that have been made being overlooked by regular visitors and even a reluctance to re-visit the site. Bearing this in mind the AOBA Web Site has now had a major face-lift. I believe and hope that visitors will agree that the new design has a fresh and inviting look to it.

Each page is laid out to position a horizontal menu bar with two content columns and a footer section. The Main Content area is divided into a number of boxed sections each with a background image providing a dashed top border and a graphical bullet to precede each section heading. The Horizontal Menu Bar has a number of 'drop downs' thus making navigation through the website fairly simple and straightforward.

At the same time a new and sophisticated statistical reporting engine has been incorporated that provides a far greater depth and detail of reporting compared to standard 'hit counters'.

From this, for example, we can not only track, which web pages are most visited by users but also the path and order of pages visited, which are the most popular pages and which the least popular. From the statistical reports we have also learnt that 55% of our visitors now use a screen resolution of 1024x768, whilst 34% use 800x600 and 11% 1280x1024. From this we can ensure that web pages work well for all screen resolutions and allow us to ensure that perfect resolution where our website will always look its best and optimised to suit the majority of our visitors.

We can also tell that 85% are using Microsoft Windows Explorer as their Web Browser and a surprising 15% Mozilla Firefox. Additionally 84% now use the Windows XP operating system, with only 12% using Windows 2000/NT and just 4% still using Windows 98 or ME.

At the same time the opportunity has also been taken to replace the original MSN Message Board with a new custom designed Web Forum and Message Board that offers a greater degree of

security and resistance to abuse. This AOBA Forum is proving to be very popular with members as shown by the high number now using it and regularly visiting it. As the format is quite different to that of the MSN Boards it does take a little patience to find ones way around it at first, but once the layout is understood is quite simple to use.

Members wanting to use the Forum must first complete a short registration process to verify their membership of the Association. This includes providing a valid email address as well as a Username and Password that is securely encoded. Acceptance and confirmation of registration is emailed back to the member thus ensuring a valid email address has been provided in the first place. If a member should ever forget his password then there is an automatic option to retrieve the details back to the users personal email address. This can be found in the 'Forgot your password?' option of the Forum Login screen.

Although the Website is our primary recruiting tool to gain new members into the Association we have also now produced a Poster, in both A3 & A4 sizes, that is being sent to all REME Workshops and LADs in an attempt to stimulate interest from those ex-apprentices of the 1980s and '90s. This poster is available to any member who may be able to use in their local British Legion or other ex-serviceman's club. We have also sent copies of the 'The Arborfield Apprentice' to a number of national newspapers and hope that they may use it in some positive manner for our benefit.

Ken Anderson (58A)

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Fred Mills (51B)

Having being appointed to this post at the 2005 AGM I am still finding my feet. I shall be in a better position to provide you all with a fuller report in the next issue of OBAN. In the meantime please keep in touch with me on membership matters at my email address frederick@mills4751.freereserve.co.uk.

Fred Mills (51B)

Obituary - Ernest 'Spanky' Roberts BEM, 39B

E L Roberts, known throughout his Army life as 'Spanky', sadly passed away on Saturday 6th August 2005. He was amongst the very first of those young Apprentices who joined the Army Technical School (Boys) in October 1939. As a member of 'D' Company, he quickly became popular, with his prowess at football and other sports, as well as his jovial spirit. While at the School, Spanky qualified as an Armourer and, in January 1943, he left Arborfield at the completion of his training.

At the beginning of 1947, he gained his 'wings' as a parachutist and was sent to join 3 Airborne Workshops in Palestine. In 1948, 16 Independent Parachute Brigade went to BAOR and Spanky joined 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment, where he remained as their highly respected Armourer for the rest of his Army service, until returning to civilian life in 1965. Whilst with them, he was awarded the British Empire Medal for his long and dedicated services to the Battalion. During his career with the Para Bde, Spanky was selected to play soccer for the Brigade on many occasions.

Upon leaving Army service, he trained and qualified as a chiropodist and remained in that job until his final retirement. Spanky was a proud member of the Old Boys' Association, membership number 1364. His funeral took place at Grantham, Lincs, on 16th August and was attended by a number of his old colleagues from Arborfield, the Airborne Workshops and members of the Para Regt.

Kindly contributed by George Streeter, also of 39B.

PERSONALITY SLOT or 'TRADING PLACES' Peter Marsh 65C

I joined the General Service Corps (GSC), as it was in those days, in August 1965 and was ordered to report to the Army Apprentices' School at Arborfield in September, to become 24068398 A/T Marsh, with the intention of becoming a Vehicle Mechanic (VM). I was allocated to 'D' Squad and later into 'D' Company. During the first term, I noticed older VM Divs coming out of the workshops with greasy hands and arms. Now MoD engine oil has its own particular aroma, so I thought, *"That's not for me!"* and, seeing all the Electronic Trades apprentices more or less going straight to the cookhouse, without the need for washing their hands, I duly applied for a trade re-assessment. This was granted and, whilst in 2 Div, I started Telecommunications (Tels) electronics training.

My time was mainly divided up between sessions on the sports field and trade training, with the occasional trip into the NAAFI for a pint of milk (we weren't old enough to have beer!) and a steak and kidney pie. *(Funny that, ten years earlier we were eating 'Snake and Pygmy' pies! Ed.)* In due course, I represented the School/College at football and was also selected to play for Slough Youths. I was also quite good at athletics, particularly in hammer throwing. At this discipline, I went on to win the Inter-Services as a junior. 1967 was my best year, when I won every military competition I entered, and was also Kent County and Southern Counties Champion and was fourth in the AAA Junior Championships. I also received my Army Colours after the Inter-Services games held at Harrogate.

Needless to say, I was travelling just about every weekend to some championship or other, which was brilliant, as I got away every Friday until Sunday evening. However, this attention to 'the sporting life' was reflected in my City and Guilds Tels exams! Not unexpectedly, I realised that I was going to be relegated. Another factor was that I also realised that I could not understand how something invisible to the naked eye i.e. electricity, could move through a solid wire! So I requested another trade change, this time thinking of promotion and money. I asked to re-train as an Aircraft Technician (Airframes and Engines), a glorified VM to some. Being over eighteen, I had to go over to the Depot for assessment, which again I passed, before being then told that I would be posted to SEME Bordon for initial training.

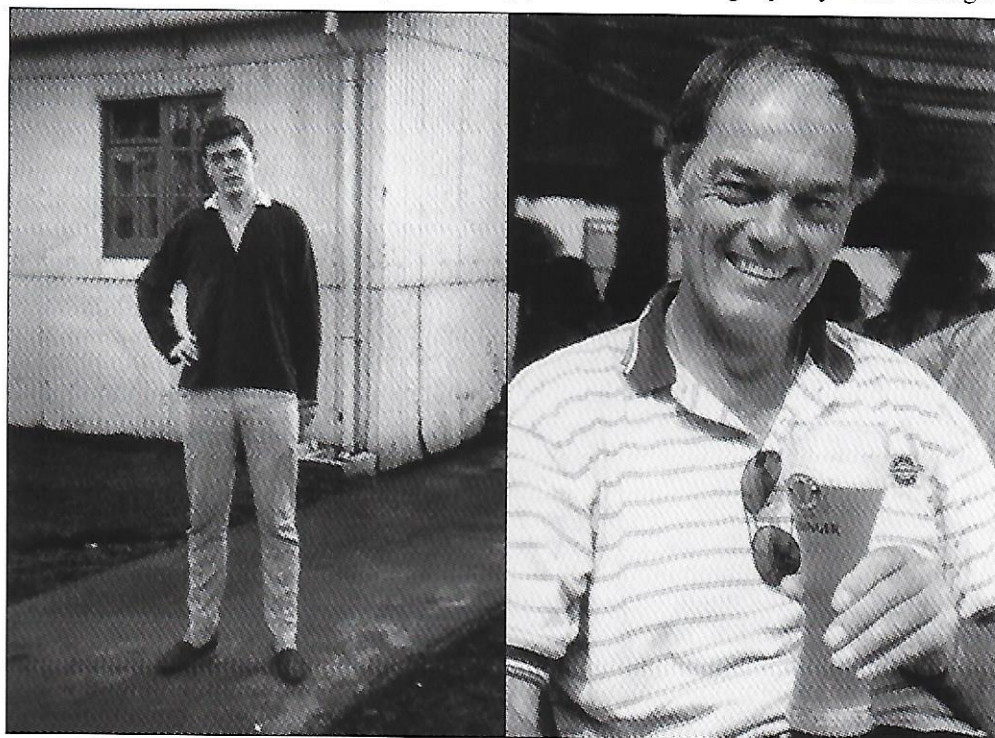
Shortly after arriving at SEME, I was presented with a trophy for 'Most improved junior Army athlete', which was basically thanks to my exploits at the College. But the shock of my failed exams made me now concentrate on my new trade, despite the fact that I thought the training facilities were nowhere as good as at Arborfield. I eventually got through

the course at SEME and met up with 'my' Div at the AETW, down at Middle Wallop. Basically I hadn't lost any time, I'd just taken a different route. I successfully got through training, with athletics remaining a 'good skive'. But people do not like having their sports ground looking like a battlefield after training, so I was doing just enough to get summer weekend passes.

I was posted to 73AC Wksp in Celle (BAOR) in January 1969 (I had asked for Bahrain or Sharja!) and stayed there until October the following year, when I left the service on 'Reduction of Numbers' - today known as redundancy. During this period, I was selected to represent the Corps (BAOR) at football and at (what else?) athletics. Once out in the wide world of civvie street, I had to find work to support a family. We decided that we didn't want to go to Aberdeen so, in October 1971, I took a job in Cologne as a civilian worker with the German Air Force VIP Flight. In 1973, I worked for a crop-spraying company in Bonn, travelling to Nigeria in the winter and all around Germany during the summer. This lasted right through until 1978, when we moved to Bockhorn. Here I worked for a German/Norwegian helicopter company for the next twenty-one years.

In this time, I travelled to the USA, Canada, and also worked for a customer on his yacht when he was cruising. Then I spent three years helping *Daimler Chrysler* to build up a corporate flight department. I then returned to my previous employer as Chief Engineer. After another two years, I left and now work for *Bristow Helicopters*, based in Nigeria, seven weeks on / five off, in rotation. In retrospect, I am grateful for the time I had at Arborfield. Our squad Sergeant, Corporal of Horse O'Connell, and even some of the junior NCOs, unknowingly gave me many experiences that I can still fall back on even today.

Finally, I would like to say how much I enjoyed the recent 2005 Reunion weekend. After I got back home (I'm still living in Bockhorn), I started going through my old photo albums and came up with many photos taken during my stay at the College.



Pete Marsh outside F4 in 1966 and recently on holiday enjoying a cool beer

THE FEEDBACK CLASSROOM

By Ken Anderson 58A

In television programmes such as *'Who wants to be a millionaire?'*, it is nowadays quite common to poll the audience, using a small four-button keypad and then immediately display the results in some form of graphical display. But who was the inventor of this technology and where was it originally designed? Perhaps this article will throw some light upon the answer to that question.

All of us who enjoyed our Apprentice trade training, and then further ongoing or continuous training with the Corps throughout our service, would have been quite accustomed to regular examinations. Until the mid-1960s, most testing and examinations relied upon the students writing 'essay-style' answers to those questions asked of them - a fairly traditional methodology. Sometime in the 1960s, a new testing technique came into effect - that of the 'multiple choice question' (MCQ). Typically, a student was presented with some twenty or more questions at a time, with each separate one having four possible and alternative answers.

Example Question

If a dog rolls onto its back like a puppy, one is witnessing:

- A. a threat display
- B. a sexual display
- C. ritualised combat
- D. a display of appeasement.

My personal opinion is that this form of examination was very much a retrograde step, as the design of good test questions requires special care and is most time-consuming. Most instructors tend to favour direct 'recall' type questions, as they are the easiest to design and examinees cannot justify choices of

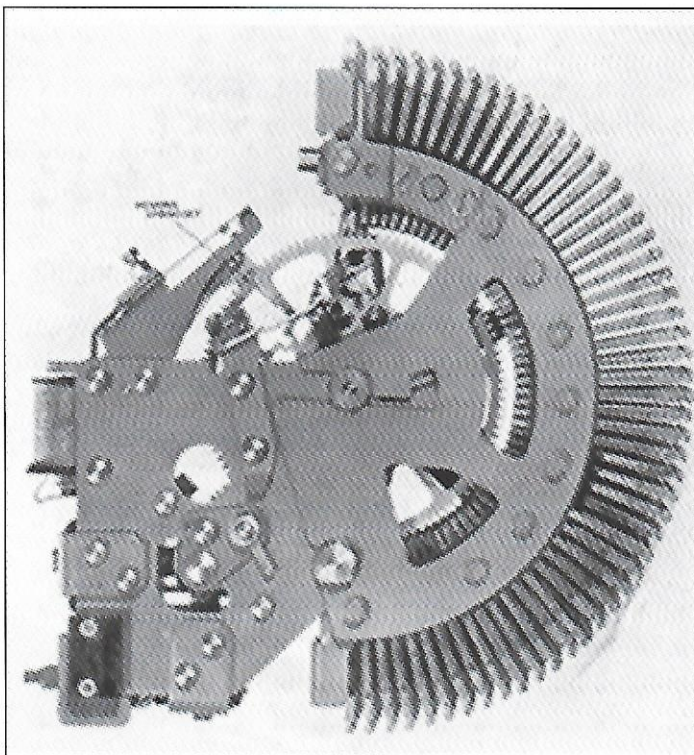
answer deemed incorrect by the examiner. But enough of that, for whether I liked it or not, MCQs were here to stay!

In the late 1960s, having completed my Radar Artificer Training, by the way my group (Art Radar 36) was the first group to have the opportunity to gain a HNC. After my course completed I stayed on at SEE for several months and spent some time assisting Young Officers completing their electronic engineering with the design of their electronic projects. I was then fortunate enough to be posted to the then by now Army Apprentices' College at Arborfield, as a member of the permanent staff in the Electronics Wing. There, I met up with and worked alongside many of the instructors who had trained me some ten years earlier. However, the most important person in the Electronics Wing was the ASM, WOI John Pewsey. John had previously been with RRE Malvern and had obviously gained much from that experience, as I was to see by working alongside him for the next couple of years. We were fortunate enough to have a free hand in undertaking a substantial number of interesting and original projects for the benefit of the apprentices in the Electronics Wing (*see the Satellite Article in OBAN32*).

Back to MCQs. These were now much in vogue at Arborfield, but the instructors were looking for some means of obtaining faster responses from the students in answering the questions - and also in obtaining answers from the students simultaneously, rather than individually or one at a time. The solution to the problem was to be the 'Feedback Classroom' - designed by John Pewsey. We constructed some thirty or forty Response Units - each of these was a small aluminium box (painted in blue *Hammerite* of course), having four push buttons, each with an associated coloured light next to it. These were individually connected by multi-core cables to an Instructor's Console, which had a sloping front and displaying forty sets of each four coloured lights. So that, when a student pressed a particular button on his response unit, a corresponding lamp illuminated on the Instructor's Console.

The circuitry to control all of this used a large number of 'uniselectors' (those stepping electrical relay mechanisms once seen in telephone exchanges). There was also a moving-coil meter on the console, driven by a small electronic circuit using an operational amplifier that indicated the percentage of correct answers. All of these units were then installed and cabled together in what used to be Bernie Cardrick's classroom - and hence to be known as the 'Feedback Classroom' I believe that it was in use for many years and I wonder how many ex-apprentices remember it. I also wonder whether or not one of those old boys took that idea and further developed it, for use in the *'Who wants to be a millionaire?'* television show and similar activities!

In the years that I had the privilege of working with John Pewsey, we seemed to have no difficulty in obtaining whatever materials, components and equipments that we needed. A quiet word with the storeman or, in special cases, a chat with the Tech QM, and all we needed arrived quickly in our workshop and laboratories. I'm sure that things are much different now, when even a humble pencil has to be accounted for - and goodness forbid if you want a few extra nuts and bolts or fuses as ready spares in your toolbox!



A typical motor unselector

On a final note, the Satellite Tracking Station and Feedback Classroom were not the only projects John and I were involved in. There was also a Polar Diagram Plotter, an Intercom System, an Acoustic Radar and a Basketball Scoring Desk, Console and Display installed in the old Camp Hall. The three years spent on the permanent staff, with such an incredible freedom of design and development on those projects, was to set me up for the rest of my career – but perhaps more of that in a future article for the OBAN magazine.

(I am sure Ken won't mind my adding a few comments to his article. Just to say that MCQs could well be seen as a waste of time if the alternative answers had no relevance to the subject matter – and I've seen a few rubbish ones in my time! The secret was always to have one correct answer and three very relevant – but incorrect – distractors. There was certainly an art in constructing good MCQs and their use was very good when automated examination marking came in across the REME Training Organisation. Provided that the MCQ response sheet was clean and tidy, an Optical Mark Reader would almost instantaneously give a printout of the student's performance.

As for the Feedback Classroom, both Ken and John will be pleased to know that there were three such beasts constructed in the Electrical Section at SEME Bordon. I was posted there as a young Corporal, in 1964 and went back as a civvie instructor in 1967 – and it was around that time that those particular classrooms were in use. As I recall, the coloured lamps actually illuminated on the student's own desk, so that the instructor could see not only who had an incorrect response – but which one. This enabled a discussion to take place, to find out why the student had gone for that response – instant feedback! Ed.)

'IT'S A SMALL WORLD' or 'WHEN EDITORS COLLIDE'!

by Pete Gripton 56B

My, how time passes. It seems like only yesterday that I was retiring from many years as a civil servant at SEME Bordon, yet already another five seemingly very short years have rapidly shuffled off into history. It was during the last couple of years at SEME that I started to put together a history of my local village of Greatham in Hampshire. At the same time, I was meeting occasionally with Brian Hornsey, when he was still putting in a few hours each week at the REME Museum. Both of us were serving members of the Old Boys Association Committee – myself as the 'SEME Rep' and Brian as the Editor of OBAN.

Looking at the work that Brian was doing on OBAN, with the nice layout of text and the introduction of photographs, I asked Brian if he'd be interested in helping me out with my local history project. As I'd hoped, the answer was 'yes', and I began to make regular visits to his home near Basingstoke, where Brian was able to transcribe my Word-format text into something of a publishable nature. As it turned out, that particular project never did come to completion, but it did lead to Brian's recommendation of me to the Committee as the possible future

author of *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*. I'm sure most readers will know the outcome of that little venture!

Brian eventually retired from his post at the Museum and kept himself 'ticking over' with his desk-top publishing system, working from home on an *ad hoc* basis. But he later decided to take up a regular job again – which he has since done. Meanwhile, I had spent three years on the Arborfield history project, almost as a full-time job, but when that was completed in 2003, I was asked by a mate in my village if I'd like to do some driving and delivering for him. He is a partner in a small engineering firm at Alton, Hants, and so I began working for the firm, eventually operating on a self-employed basis.

The job is basically picking up parts from the factory in Alton, then delivering them to various other firms in the south-eastern area. This has led to my becoming very familiar with the roads and traffic around such places as London, Reading, Eastleigh, Andover, Portsmouth and Gosport. But one such 'other firm' is based just outside Alton, only a few miles from the factory and well situated in the middle of some lovely countryside. On my first visit there, who should I bump into, in his post as stores manager, but Brian Hornsey!

I've since been over there on a few visits and of course we usually sit and find time for a chat before I have to dash off again. The other coincidence of course is that last year I had the privilege of being asked to take over as Editor of the OBAN, thus stepping into Brian's formidable boots! I hope that I've managed to keep them bulled, Brian! And, as I said at the beginning, it's a small world!

THIS ISSUE'S CAPTION COMPETITION



Can you provide a suitable and witty caption to this photograph taken at last years Reunion?

See the answers to the previous competition on Page 46.

We would like to create a new competition based on photographs of yourselves as young apprentices and now in later yeras as perhaps a little mature.

Please send your pictures to The Editor by post or email.

MY SAILING CHALLENGE THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME By David Braithwaite 56B

A chance remark led me to a 5,000 nautical mile trip from the Gulf state of Qatar to Spain in a thirty-three foot 'Westerly Storm' type of yacht, built for cruising and racing and rigged for 'short-handed' sailing. It was my brother Terry, who was working in Doha Qatar at the time, who made that chance remark. He owned the yacht, going by the name of 'Beryl Iris', and said that when he retired he wanted to sail her to Spain, where he intended to settle down and live. I was on holiday over there in Doha when he made this statement and, without giving it too much thought, remarked that if our retirements coincided, then I was prepared to be one of his crew. My thinking then, of course, was that I would be one of 'several' crewmembers. I had always enjoyed a sporting challenge and this venture had a certain appeal about it. I had never been 'off-shore sailing' before and wanted the chance to 'give it a go' before it was 'too late'! Two months on board the 'Beryl Iris' certainly provided me with my fair quota of deep water sailing, that's for sure. The trip proved to be a real 'baptism by fire' for me, mainly because not only was this my first such sailing trip, but it transpired that I was the only 'crew' that dear brother Terry had been able to muster! I suddenly realised that I had been caught completely unawares, having failed to realise the magnitude of such a sea journey. Mountainous seas, gale-force winds and a plethora of mechanical problems – these all added spice to the adventure of a never-to-be-forgotten trip.

We set sail from Qatar, bound for San Pedro, a marina on the eastern coast of Spain, where Terry had a berth booked for the boat, not twenty minutes from where he has his retirement home. The first couple of days were fine, but a south-westerly monsoon, blowing up the Gulf of Oman, hit us after we had called into Dubai for urgent repairs to the refrigerator. Terry, being a diabetic, needed to have his insulin kept cool, so this was definitely an essential repair. The monsoon was 'head-on' going through the Straits of Hormuz and we had to negotiate this narrow, but very busy, shipping lane, during the depths of night. I was on a



very steep learning curve indeed and knew that it was vital that I took on board everything that Terry told me, because I would have to take my turn on watch while he slept. We followed the coastline, remaining in international waters, and made it to Muscat - but not before having our rudder entangled in a metal hawser that was anchored to the seabed. It was inky black in the



early hours when, armed with a set of bolt-cutters, I plunged into the water to cut us free, before the rudder got damaged. It was just about then when the engine started to leak exhaust fumes and to lose power. It turned out to be faulty fuel injectors. In Muscat, we had the problem repaired. We then headed down to Salaha, only to be pushed back by forty-five to fifty knot winds, whilst trying to sail around the Ras al Hadd. We were making no headway at all, so we were forced to take shelter in a cove, before heading back to Muscat. Two days later we managed to get round Ras al Hadd and battled our way down the Arabian Sea to the island of Meseriah, where we were able to take on more fuel and water. After Salaha, the longest stretch now lay ahead of us. We made a short stopover at Aden (what a dump), before we set off again to head up the Red Sea, to Hurghada in Egypt. It's here that, with the spinnaker up in twenty-five to thirty knot winds, the 'baby stay' broke – this is the front stay, supporting the mast. Terry, anchored in a bosun's chair, set up a 'jury rig', before calling Southampton to have a new stay sent out to Cairo. But it meant that we were now limited to the use of the main sail only.

After the long haul up the Red Sea, 1,000 nautical miles, and negotiating the Suez Canal (with distant memories of 1956 and all that!) we arrived at Port Said. Here, we collected the new stay. With our repairs completed, we headed out into the Mediterranean. But we had hardly pointed our bow towards Malta, when more bad weather hit us 'right on the nose' once again. Then the auto-helm chose this particular moment to pack up. We eventually struggled into Malta, where we had more repairs carried out, before venturing on the last leg through the Western Mediterranean. As we neared Spain, and 'journey's end', we now encountered some of the worst and most uncomfortable weather of the whole trip. During the final forty-eight hours, neither of us slept a wink, because of the atrocious conditions. But the safe haven of San Pedro beckoned and, with it, the end to 'life on the briny' and it was this pleasant thought that kept me going. After sixty-four days at sea, I was looking forward to getting my feet planted securely back on 'terra firma'. I was also looking forward to giving up the dubious role of 'cook' that I had taken on, but at least we had eaten well! Yellow-fin tuna, waloo, barracuda and dolphin, fish cooked and eaten within hours of being caught. Salt-water bread, corn bread and my own version of pizza were all on the menu, and I can do wonders with corned beef!

Looking back now, I have to admit to times of 'good fun' but perhaps I have not really taken to sailing – at least not on this grand scale!

EXPERIENCES WITH THE M44 SELF-PROPELLED GUN

By Paul Hudson 58A

Following Charles Pepper's excellent article on American M44 SP guns, in issue 27 of OBAN, I could not resist adding my own experiences.

Being 'Easter Bunny' 58A entrants, we had the indignity of an automatic relegation to 58B as it was considered that we VMs would be unable to catch up with the February lot on trade training (odd that no other trades had this imposition). This meant that, whilst our February colleague VMs were posted straight out to Singapore, we had to endure a further six months, not passing out until July 1961. We were then posted en-bloc to Bordon for 5 months, to be trained as VM(A)s. In December 1961 we were then moved to Depot REME, whilst our postings were sorted out. Being 'A' Mechs, our fate was sealed, as where was the majority of Armoured Vehicles? BAOR of course, keeping Mr Kruschew on the other side of the fence! *(Or Curtain as the case was then! Ed.)*

My posting was to Hildesheim with 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery LAD REME. Within minutes of arrival, I was indoctrinated with the fact that I was now with 'the senior regiment of the British Army'. The next 'surprise' was seeing these odd looking vehicles, nothing like those that I had been trained on at Bordon, i.e. Centurions, Saracens, Saladins (or Salad Tins?) and Ferrets. And what the hell were those other monstrosities?

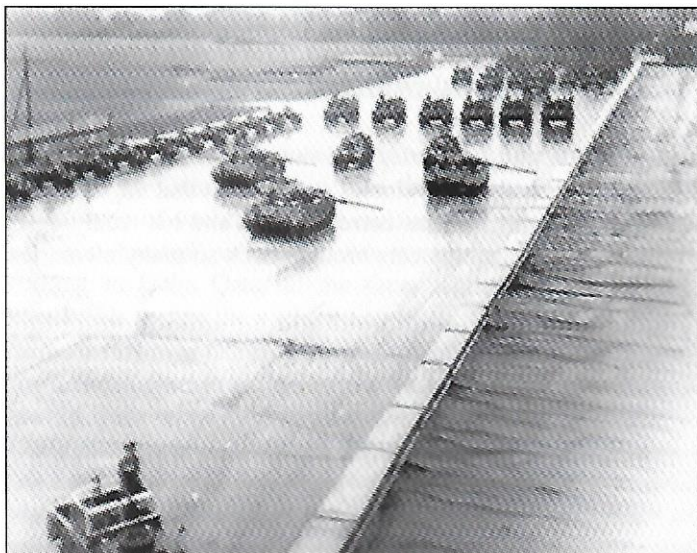
Now to Charles Pepper's article in issue 27 of OBAN. These 'odd looking' vehicles were none other than the M44 American

self-propelled guns. Charles said that, to his knowledge, only two regiments had these vehicles and thought that the other was a RHA regiment. He was correct in this and his recording of events with these equipments brought back so many memories, as he was so right!

I was assigned to 'E' Battery fitter section and my first encounter was to walk into the Battery Workshop (an enclosed area at end of an ex-Luftwaffe hanger), just as a removed power pack was started up. As described by Charles, the view was this massive lump of machinery with blue flames emitting about three feet each side and a noise level far above any legal limit of decibels. Being the 'Senior LAD' in the British Army, of course, we had specially made cradles rather than planks for support, it was considered inhuman to use the 'Plankies' as supports. *(I take it Paul that you are using the endearing term of 'plank' to describe our dear Gunner friends? Ed.)*

Charles mentioned that there is always a 'rogue' in any group of vehicles - right again, as we also had one in 'E' Bty, namely 'B-sub'. If there was anything, at any time, in any place, that could go wrong, then it did with 'B-sub'. After about a year of total frustration, we managed to get it back-loaded to Base Workshops and replaced with another recently refurbished vehicle. At last, we thought, the 'B-sub' jinx has gone to the great gun park in





the sky. WRONG!!! It must have been something about the ID 'B-sub', as we soon encountered all the same problems that we did with the original.

Not sure about Charles' 'nimble' description, granted the massive air-cooling fan screamed its head off during any motion, but they did seem to make heavy weather of all but the firmest of ground. I well remember one evening, out on a scheme, when 'E' Bty had parked up and we REME guys were comfortably set up in our location, somewhere on that well-known area of Luneberg Heath. Having done our bit for the day (and enjoying the odd Amstel or two), our peace was shattered when we suddenly heard this almighty racket approaching. The track adjacent to our location was a trifle muddy and uneven, to say the least, and another Battery was returning to their location on this same track. Six guns were really making heavy weather of it at a slow speed, engines labouring at full revs, air cooling fans screaming their heads off and seeming to say, *"This is ***** hard work"*. The guns were then followed up by the two Centurion Mk 3 OPs, gliding through the further churned-up track, with engines purring like well-tuned sewing machines and seeming to say, *"What the hell is all the fuss about?"* A clear victory for British vehicles over American crap.

I well remember the large rear access 'door', bad enough to swing down when the counter balance torsion bar was OK, but not very clever if one broke. The rear firing position spade was also a very cumbersome lump, which had to be lowered before the door could be dropped.

My first experience of being 'out in the sticks' and of 'live firing' was a major calibration exercise in March 1962. At least we had the luxury (?) of overnight accommodation in Hohne Barracks. Never having seen a real live firing of such a large gun, 155mm, I was looking forward to the experience. But I wasn't too sure when, on the first trial firing, I saw the Master Gunner affix the lanyard to the firing mechanism then walk back the full 25-ft length of the lanyard. My prompt reaction was to ensure I stood even further back! I soon learnt that, after a full day's firing on the range, conversation was very difficult for the rest of the evening. All I could hear was a high pitched ringing noise in my ears, this coupled with the stench of cordite smoke in my nose. As Charles stated, 'H&S' had not been invented in 1962 - nor had ear-defenders (either that or the Army could not afford such

luxuries).

Another well remembered occasion was a power-pack removal inside 'E' Bty hanger. We had just received our replacement Tiffy, who was fresh out of Bordon and clearly 'knew it all'. He decided to get involved with us and 'pulled rank' to control the action as he knew best (of course he did, as he had never seen sight of one of these vehicles before - but they had to be the same as any other armoured vehicle, surely?). The net result being that he gave the order to the Scammell driver to start lifting - *"But Staff, it's not ready yet"* - *"Be quiet, I know what I'm doing"*. Next thing, we heard this odd noise and saw petrol pouring out profusely, - *"Tried to tell you, Staff, that the fuel connector had not been separated"*. Our Tiffy was last seen running out of the hanger, calling out, *"Sort it Hudson!"*

Charles will know what one hell of a job it was to access and separate the connection through the floor access plate under the engine compartment, let alone the additional problem of petrol pouring out. Trouble was, the pipe had only partially severed and the hose connection was still made. Not a very nice situation, getting soaked right through with MT80 petrol and the lake ever-increasing in size all around me! Definitely time to wish for the Padre's presence, with a request to get on his knees and pray that nobody that in a five mile radius lights a fag, it was impossible to exit from underneath quickly enough.

One plus for the Gunners - whilst on exercise, if they had a breakdown (and many there were!), they always seemed to manage it outside or very near to a Gastatte! If this was impossible, they always ensured that a brew was ready by the time we arrived, following radio request.

They were good days, the Regiment looked after us well and treated us with absolute respect. The CO, Lt-Col M Janes, was always paying us compliments. On one occasion, when the Battery Commander had the entire 'E' Bty paraded outside the hanger after lunch break, the CO popped his head around the workshop door to request that we join him in front of the assembly. The reason? To thank us on behalf of the Battery for our *"excellent"* support during the tough exercise we had all returned from the previous day, concluded with a round of applause from the entire Battery.

One other occasion I well remember was the state visit of HM the Queen to Germany in 1965. This included two parades at Sennelager, a foot parade and a mounted parade. One almighty



row erupted with those responsible for the organisation of the mounted parade. With M44s, Centurions, Saracens, Ferrets, and two REME Conqueror ARVs to be set up in line they had, as normal Army practice, sized the formation to look neat and tidy. Without hesitation, Lt-Col Janes put in his objection, our colours (the M44 SP guns) are on parade, we are the senior regiment of the British Army and are thus entitled to 'Right-of-Line'. "Oh no, Colonel, that will spoil the appearance of the line-up sizing", came the reply. Needless to say, Col Janes won the day and eighteen M44 SP guns proudly took up their position, 'Right-of-Line'.

As a footnote, all vehicles drove past in slow time, one after the other in close formation. Once the last vehicle had cleared the runway, an almighty roar suddenly broke out as the two REME Conqueror ARVs drove past in a blaze of glory at maximum speed. 1st RHA may have had the privilege of 'Right-of-Line', but REME had that of 'Tail-end-Charlie' Grande Finale and, believe me, it was a sight to behold. Our REME support contingent was not actually on the parade but were on starting blocks in front of the crowd, HM included, in the 'crouch' position and slave leads at the ready, in case any vehicle failed to start when the order 'start engines' was given. Incidentally, not a single order was verbal, all were given by a signal cylinder on a pole atop the old windmill. Cylinder 'up' was the cautionary command and cylinder 'down' the executive command. The parade went absolutely perfectly and was an experience I shall never forget, especially about half a mile of armour in line, and remaining in line, during the 500-yard reverse, prior to drive-past.

I can remember most of the original members of 'E' Bty fitter section at the time - Staff Alderton, Cpl Lofty Williamson, Duffin, Dave Blowers, Chalkie f***ing White the elec f***ing trician (he had this habit of adding the expletive between most words and/or syllables!) and myself. I think the only name to escape me is the gun-fitter. The EME was Major (at the time) Neil Clothier and our ASM was WO1 Ron Selwood. I know Dave Blowers is now in New Zealand, as I am in regular touch with him - but if any of you are out there please get in touch, either at paulhudson@gwr48.fsnet.co.uk or via the Association.

I finish with an extract from the 1st RHA recruiting booklet of 1964:

Our Job in Germany *We are equipped with the American 155mm self-propelled gun howitzers, which have a cross-country speed of 35mph and fire a 95-lb shell a distance of 1600 yards. We also have Centurion tanks and armoured command vehicles. Several months of the year, particularly in the winter, are spent on training exercises all over Germany. The winter months are mainly spent learning trades, on leave and taking part in many sporting activities. Although we are now in Germany, we hope to move to the Middle East some time next year (1965).*

Facilities *Our barracks are pleasantly laid out and have excellent sports fields. The living quarters for single men are two-storey blocks that are centrally heated. There are between two and four men to a room and they are given every encouragement to make these rooms attractive and homely; bedside lights, pictures, and all sorts of personal belongings are encouraged. There are plenty of baths and showers close to the bedrooms.*

Within our barracks, there are several places of entertainment. The Globe cinema has nightly showings and the programme changes three times a week. There is a Regimental Sports and Social Club, called the 'Plume Club', where all ranks of the regiment forgather; in the club is a beer and snack bar. The Church of Scotland runs a restaurant and TV room. There are separate messes for Sergeants and Junior NCOs, and a good NAAFI club, with a fully licensed bar and restaurant. All ranks' dances are held regularly in the gymnasium.

Cigarettes and Drinks Are cheap with a packet of cigarettes costing just 1/- for twenty and all are sold at duty free prices.

Rates of Pay Per week with nine years guarantee of service are as follows:- Recruit: £7-1-6d; Gunner grade 1, £9-16-0d; Bombardier grade 1, £1-14-6d; Bombardier, grade II, £1-4-0d; Sergeant, £3-13-0d

TRINCOMALEE HARBOUR 1949 by John N Pewsey 45A

The picture shows me, aged just 19, punting a log (which we had earlier felled in the local jungle) on a raft constructed from branches off the same log and some 40-gallon diesel drums. The pilot on the front is a Gun Tiffy, Bob Woolnough, and the chap at the back a painter from Trinco workshops. Why? To modify the twin 6-pdr from Coastal Defence to the dual role of Coastal/AA - a fairly hopeless task, because you had to bring the breech up from high elevation to re-load after each high angle firing.

Why was a Radar Mech doing it? Because I had put all my CA 1 Mk2 Radars into 'Heavy-care preservation', prior to shipping them off to Ceylon - after which, I was later told, they were dumped overboard in the Indian Ocean, somewhere off Mombassa. We used the raft to ship large chunks of frontal armour off the gun, from the position, back to some spot where we could load onto a lorry - the path out to the gun-site from the mainland was narrow and precipitous.

'All-squared-over-pi', it was a wonderful time. We Brits stopped punting the raft round after several trips, after we noticed what looked like an Army blanket, swimming corner-wise just under the surface and decided that the manta ray was there first! So we let the Singhalese punt round, as they were all devout Buddhists and didn't harm living things!



TO KOREA via WOKINGHAM STATION 1953

By Charles E Pepper 43B

A recent letter in the AOBA magazine, suggesting that a plaque be shown in Wokingham railway station, in remembrance of the thousands of REME personnel who set out from there to go all over the world, reminded me of my first real overseas posting and its route by Troopship.

Sergeant VM, late 1953

My embarkation leave was spent at my parents' house at Cowes, on the Isle of Wight. Much of the time was spent in walking over the Island for the sheer joy of it. On the final night of that leave I heard my Mother say to Dad, "*Speak to him*", so he delivered a lecture, not about 'the birds and the bees', but about other 'birds' and the diseases so easily caught in a foolish moment. Next day it was webbing buckled, kit bag on shoulder and off to the REME Depot at Arborfield

Arborfield Depot - destination Korea

This was a big Draft and I noticed that some of them were already wearing the British Korea medal. I wondered at their reason for returning there; the £100 bounty, a large sum then, or a girl perhaps? We were in the Depot for several weeks, with the time spread out on preparations, kitting out and various duties. Odd moments were filled with working in the Sgts' Mess garden, trips out to 'California' boating-lake for an uproarious row-about, terrifying the incumbent ducks. Occasionally I would break out of Camp, through the flattened hedge that surrounded it, - and disappear to take long walks in the surrounding countryside. There were some visits to the boozers in Reading where, in one hostelry, we caused some consternation when we entered wearing our issue raincoats and shoes. I suppose the Army haircut made us look like 'rozzers'. There were some happy, rough evenings in the Clifton Hotel; does it still exist, I wonder? The Sgts' Mess had a typical TV of those days, small screen with B/W - that's black and white for those who have forgotten! Viewing TV in those days was like attending a cinema, all seated in rows of seats. To overcome the obvious difficulties, some ingenious soul had purchased a large lens, which magnified the picture by about four times, albeit with a slight distortion, but enabling all the audience to see the programme.

Draft medical inspections were carried out in what seemed to be a wartime gas decontamination centre or maybe air raid shelter - red brick, a thick flat concrete roof and a blast wall protecting the entrance, and standing close to the playing fields. The draft formed a queue up to the entrance and we entered the building one by one. The examining MO was an elderly civilian, most likely ex-military, who could be heard, in an increasingly angry voice, demanding of whoever it was 'to drop his trousers'. A whimpering response could be heard protesting, which only provoked more roars from the MO. One assumes that his inspection was eventually completed, as the man, well a boy really, ran out of the block with tears running down his face. Previous service at Arborfield, with FFI's (free from infection inspections) and such like, where seemingly the whole world was privy to one's genitals and other private parts, had already

hardened me to these necessary indignities!

Inoculations

Paraded in PT kit and greatcoats, we were marched to a hall where we then discarded our coats and formed two lines, with a medical orderly positioned at opposing ends of each line. When things were settled, one orderly ordered 'drop shorts' and jabbed a buttock, while the other orderly moved down the other line whacking a different concoction into the arm. When each line was completed, they switched to the other line and repeated their particular injection. An efficient system to be sure but the thought of shorts going up and down, with needles being stuck in all over the place, was surrealistic and produced much sardonic laughter. Then it was coats on again and we were marched back, at a far less sprightly pace than in the going.

A date was given for embarkation; civvies (clothing) and letters sent home. Equipped with Full Scale Marching Order (FSMO), a rifle and a very full kitbag, we de-bussed at Wokingham station at an early hour. Very few lights could be seen and the station was barely lit, with just one railway man on duty. The train pulled in and we were told to stack our kit bags on the platform, opposite the guard's van. A party was detailed to load the bags into the van and, once done, we entrained into a given section of the carriages and, after a short pause, we departed to Southampton. The dawn gradually broke and I could see that we were not following the familiar route down to the south coast, the train seeming to wander all over the countryside. The reason became clear when a stop was made at Dorking, in Surrey, and other troops boarded; this was a 'Troop Train', picking up several Drafts bound for the Troopship in Southampton. The transportation system had now got us in its grip and would not let us go until we were deposited at our destination on the other side of the world!

Southampton

We reclaimed our kit bags and clattered up the gangway to the allocated accommodation, which could only be reached by comparatively narrow corridors. Loaded as we were, with kit bags, rifles and assorted equipment, anything that obstructed the way was liable to get squashed - as the many curses that followed us indicated! Once on the Sgts' troop deck, I found that I was i/c of it. Each man had been allocated a small storage locker. The sleeping arrangements consisted of several vertical posts, each pair of posts supporting a canvas cot on each side, which could be raised to the vertical to give more floor space. It was a two-tier arrangement. With the cots down, it meant that the occupants were virtually sleeping side by side.

Our first job was to label our rifles and equipment, and to extract vital necessities from our kit bags and place them into storage. Occasional visits were to be allowed during the trip, in order to replace or collect items deemed necessary. A white canvas 'sea bag' was used to store clothing etc. required on the troop deck. The Sergeants' eating place was initially a large room with long, bench-like tables, served by volunteer ORs who were paid by a whip-round among the Sergeants. S/Sgts and above were accommodated in cabins and able to use the dining saloon. There was a bit of difficulty in finding a 2i/c for the deck. I have found that, if a unit is travelling as a body, it can be difficult to get an

individual to do anything outside of that unit, but eventually I got it settled. The admin was established and we were set to sail on the good ship 'TS Hallidale'.

It was time to leave Old Blighty's shores and slowly make our way up Southampton Water. Orders were given, "Go to emergency boat stations", mine being on the port side. We reached the Solent and the ship bore slowly right, affording me a full view of Cowes, IOW, where only a few weeks ago I had spent my embarkation leave at my parents' home. There was a lone figure standing on Egypt Point, a promontory just outside the town, waving a large yellow cloth. We could only stand silent and watch from the ranks. I wondered if it was my Father, as he had a green-grocery round in that area. (When I returned three years later, tour completed, I asked if it was he - but it was not.) Just after this, stand-down was given but I stayed on deck and watched as the ship slid by the places I had often walked over. Rolling waves were coming up the Solent from the Channel, causing the ship to pitch slightly and then it was out into the Channel and away.

Our course took us into the Bay of Biscay. Old hands cackled with malicious joy about the Bay's propensity to produce seasickness - they were absolutely correct! The sensation was indescribable; the worst of hangovers are mild compared to it, dizziness, arms and legs completely out of control while the stomach has an endless output of green bile - one just wishes to die to get away from it all. It was said by Sailors that the only cure is a glass of seawater. This was no problem, as our washing facilities were of seawater, used with salt-water soap. Grasping my mug, I staggered to the nearest tap, filled it, swigged its contents and the effect was immediate! My head and eyes felt fit to burst, my legs collapsed under me and whatever was in my stomach came up like a fire hose. But it worked - everything slowly returned to normal and sea sickness never effected me again on the journey! The heavy seas caused an unpleasant case of 'getting your own back'. Pressure in the sewage outlets returned our bodily waste to the latrines, up over the top and onto the floor. Special cleaning parties were formed to clear up the awful mess. On occasions, I had to visit troop decks lower down in the ship. They had sealed-glass portholes, which sometimes went under the sea's surface to reveal seaweed gently passing by.

Into the Mediterranean

Beautiful clear blue water, with passing islands whose names had been made familiar during the war. Port Said - here we were to transfer to another Trooper - a bigger vessel than the 'Hallidale', whose name I cannot now recall. We disembarked at night, using RE landing craft, and filed through an unlit gate guarded by an Egyptian soldier. How we got from there onto the new ship I have no idea, but the same procedure with kit etc occurred and I was once again designated the Sgts' troop deck NCO.

Daylight provided plenty to see from the ship. Bumboats came to sell us articles; a rope was slung up and, once a price has been agreed, a basket hauled up with the goods and then re-lowered with the money in it. There was a steady babble, with the bumboat men drumming their wares, but one redheaded man stood out. He introduced himself as 'Jock MacGregor'

and claimed that his father was a Scottish soldier, which could have been true, as he had a glorious fund of English obscenities that increased in intensity the more the squaddies laughed. A magician, known as the 'Gully Gully' man, came on board in a galabera and fez. He performed tricks that fascinated the children on the trip, with chicks appearing and vanishing from unusual places, accompanied with shouts of "Gully Gully".

This was the first time I saw the 'smashed watch' trick, where an expensive watch was requested from a man. It was then wrapped in a cloth and beaten with a hammer and the bits thrown over the side into the sea. The performance continued, leaving the perturbed owner trying to look like a good sport but obviously worried. After a while, to the owner's great relief, the watch reappeared in the cloth. A whip-round then followed to pay the magician - worth every penny. Some modern conjurers still copy both his style and fez. (*The late great Tommy Cooper comes swiftly to mind! Ed.*)

There was great activity around the ship as replenishment water, food and fuel lighters busied themselves, connecting up and unloading their contents, with pilots scrambling up and down rope ladders lowered from the ship. Across from us, on the other side of the harbour, lay a French troopship bound, I assumed, for French Indochina, latterly Vietnam, and the fierce war being fought out there. Oddly, we just stared at each other, making no other contact. A large amount of pornography appeared, in the form of badly printed text on poor paper; there was no shore leave, so it must have come from the bumboats. It was all rather vivid on first acquaintance, but was far too crude and soon ended up in the bin.

Down the Suez Canal we sailed, emerging into the Red Sea. On the left, Mount Sinai, of great biblical significance; on the right Tewfik, with its vast plain, and dark brown cliffs rising in the background: a miserable place that, during WW1 was a huge British camp. I find it amazing how much knowledge one has of such places and stories, obtained from books, which would only ever be seen on journeys like this. The temperature increased greatly and permission was given to sleep on the upper decks, at least until deck washing-down time, which tended to be rather early.

Aden

The prospect from the ship was not exactly attractive, shimmering heat and lots of high, dark, jagged volcanic rock. Shore leave was granted and I went ashore but, as it was my first visit, I had little idea of where to go. I rambled about a bit and saw the married families' swimming enclosure, the swimming area fenced in to keep the sharks out. But, as we had been warned that the dry heat would cause severe sunburn to pale skins, I put off the idea of sunbathing. Eventually, inevitably most likely, we ended up in a lean-to bar that was cut back into the rocks, learning the pleasure of Dutch 'Oranjeboom' beer, which, as fast it was drunk, reappeared in purified form as sweat! In the course of time, I had two shore leaves on other postings and found Aden a much bigger and more interesting place than I had first thought.

There was all the usual harbour business and troops disembarking, with some extra people coming on board. One of them was a

Sergeant, dressed just like 'Lawrence of Arabia' - the full rig in dazzling white, very impressive. He was lodged on my troop deck, where he later became a damn nuisance to me. He would not fold up his bedding or keep the floor clear. It all came to a head on an inspection, where he fell foul of the inspector, and thereafter appeared in normal uniform - not looking anywhere near as impressive at all.

I must mention here a most curious officer who had boarded at Southampton. He was a Captain in the General Service Corps, a more un-military man you never saw. He was tall and elegant, with a talent for telling comic stories to an audience of all ranks gathered around him. He was accompanied by a rather pleasant, middle-aged, lady. The pair of them appeared to be theatricals, but not part of ENSA. We nearly lost him during a boat-drill in the tropics. Being an officer, he was given duties and, in this case, it was our boat station. So he appeared in blue silk shorts and vest, with bare legs and sandals. The only military thing about him was his cap! Inspecting the troops, as it were, and making comments, his sandal got hooked under a lashing ring in the deck, which tripped him and threw him against the ship's rail. I don't suppose there was any real danger of his going overboard but there was a general rush to grab him to haul him back. Subsequent comments from him were most pithy!

Out into the Indian Ocean we sailed, with no land visible now, just the sea to look at. Porpoises were leading at the bow and flying fish skittering over the water; often a sea-snake, wriggled along on the surface, and there was the ever-present phosphorescence in water disturbed by the ship. What with duties and ship's routine, the days were full. Entertainments of various sorts were held in the evening; open-air cinema shows under a magnificent night sky and, on one occasion, a fancy dress competition. This was a bit of a laugh, as 1st-class passengers had the material to go the whole hog, while we others were warned not to think of mucking about with a life jacket, it was an offence. Something must have happened previously I suppose. I won a prize of a bottle of champagne for some competition, but there was so little privacy I was obliged to share it out.

Orders were given that, due to the increase in internal heat in the ship, all unnecessary lights would be switched off. Once, whilst on Orderly Sgt duty, going on the rounds checking certain lights were out, I came across a scuffle between a Sergeant in the Military Prison Staff Corps and a soldier, who I assumed had been a 'customer' of same. *"Bloody hell! What am I supposed to do?"* Fortunately, they had dispersed by the time I had got on the scene; a blood match most probably. A small scandal came to light, a REME Captain was found in a compromising situation with a lady passenger, 'lucky devil' thought the rest of us. The draft had been controlled by NCOs from the beginning and ne'er was a REME Officer seen, so we wondered 'where did this Captain come from?'

Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

Shore leave again and I went off for my usual wanders. Something that struck me was that, in all these ports, there were large numbers of bookstalls, selling a great range of subjects, mostly in English. Colombo was no exception. During one night, two contrasting scenes occurred. I passed a bar filled with

naval ratings having a fight, it was like a scene out of a Somerset Maugham story. Later, while waiting for the liberty boat to take me back to the ship, I sat among a crowd of religious pilgrims awaiting their own ship. The men were plainly dressed but the women wore beautiful fabrics and much decoration, in the form of golden bangles and more gold about their head and faces. I sat there for some time to observe this, a memorable sight. Vendors came aboard selling diamonds. I purchased one for ten shillings, it was a small thing of about 1/8th of an inch across, which I carried with me for the whole three-year tour and still have today.

An indication of Germany's growing industrial growth in the 1950s was the sight of German ships laden with locomotives and such like pushing on into the Far East. Our ship's engines had been playing up in the Indian Ocean and speed was reduced. Rumour had it that the ship was a pre-war German liner that had been confiscated after the war, so some trouble was to be expected I suppose.

Next stop Singapore

A Troopship coming the other way passed by, too far away to make out those on board. The usual cryptic messages were passed between ships and broadcast over the whole ship, to the amusement or otherwise of we outward bounders. Nearing Singapore, a Sunderland flying boat circled the ship, its inmates waving, while wives and children were saying, "Look, there's Dad!" and waving furiously in return - a very noisy greeting! No shore leave, so the city had to be reviewed from a high deck. Many old buildings still existed; 'Go down' store houses, wooden jetties and occasional humps of a hill, with palm trees on the top. Not all that different from old paintings that I had seen. Many Aussies were on the jetty, with all the usual mutual banter concerning cricket, which went right over my head, as cricket has always been a mystery to me.

Much 'em' and 'dis' barking - among the embarkers were a few Aussies. Off again into the China Sea, another different sort of scene appeared for us - a jagged coastline, with magnificent sunsets and waterspouts. There was a rule forbidding flip-flops for safety purposes, to prevent tripping on the numerous stairways. The Aussies appeared on deck wearing such footwear and were rather annoyed to be told to revert to sandals or shoes.

Hong Kong in sight

Those in the know pointed out Lion Rock, which does resemble a lion's head on the skyline, then we swept into Kowloon Harbour. A memory that stayed with me was the sight of a vast amount of water ahead of the moored ship, which seemed inexplicable at the time but was explained when looking at a map recently; Kowloon lies on a great estuary leading to Canton.

The last 'married families' and those on leave from Malaya disembarked and the ship appeared much emptier. The harbour was full of shipping, both Westerners and Chinese. Small sampans were waiting alongside the ships' swill outlets and collecting the discharged waste food in bags mounted on poles, hopefully to feed the animals kept on the bigger junks.

Shore leave

Those with previous service here scuttled off to reacquaint themselves with civil and military friends, the rest of us stuck out like sore thumbs in our untailed OGs, not yet having the benefit of the Colony's available facilities. Not knowing what was in Kowloon, we went off to the Island on the 'Star Ferry' to see the sights. Somehow we reached the summit of Mount Davies and looked out over the wide sea, which seemed full of jellyfish. Even from that height they looked enormous - their white bodies standing out in the blue water. Although it was a bright day, there was a curious phenomenon to be seen; a cloud would rush up the seaward side of the Island and shoot over above our heads - rather alarming at first, but this became a matter of amusement in time.

'Shoeshine boys', mere children really, developed a trick of dabbing one shoe with whitening if you declined their service. That single white mark became almost hypnotic at each step, obliging one to have the shine. Hong Kong was to be the last port of call with British connections - we were on the way to Japan. The journey was taking longer than planned due to engine troubles. Away into the Pacific Ocean, somewhere on the left was Shanghai where my father served in the Shanghai Defence Force in the Twenties. To me as a child, it had seemed then like the 'end of the earth' and here I was now, sailing past it to a place even farther away.

In December 1953, we arrived at Kure, Japan, a journey of seven weeks, much longer than anticipated due to those engines. The ship moored against not a jetty, but a great area of metal, which was said to be the flight deck of a sunken Japanese aircraft carrier. To my surprise, among the awaiting guide parties were some old friends from my service in the RASC after Arborfield. We REME personnel were taken to the Japan Reinforcement Base Depot, JRBD, which was located by a stretch of water, otherwise surrounded by close-packed housing, giving all the usual domestic noises and clatter, plus the squawk of chickens.

JRBD received reinforcements for 1 Commonwealth Division, consisting of British, Aussies and Canadians. Most things were quite acceptable, but the latrines were of the greatest interest! The thunder-boxes had a seat hemmed in by wooden sides, just wide enough to sit between, and a backing board that pushed one forward so that, when all places were full, the occupants were sat with their heads leaning forward, looking like racehorses in the starting box. A bucket placed under the seat was unceremoniously pulled away for emptying, regardless of whether one had finished or not. Route marches were ordered, which turned out to be a pedestrian tour of the district. Up in the hills, paddy fields were cut into the slopes as terraces. We passed long straw-roofed huts where, at one end, scrap iron was being broken up and then emerged at the other end as files, being cleaned and put into boxes. The major roads were full of Vespa-like scooters with names like 'Pigeon' or 'Rabbit'. Japan was just starting upon its remarkable expansion.

Once, when on a country road, an Australian column passed, coming in the opposite direction. Formal greetings were made but the thing that caught my eye was that their Sergeants carried walking sticks, as if on a country stroll. I cannot recall many

amusements, other than sitting on a bollard and watching fishing vessels making out to sea. It was suggested that we visit nearby atom-blasted Hiroshima but I declined.

While at Arborfield after VE Day, I had formed the uneasy idea that our fieldcraft training was becoming distinctly jungle oriented. We wandered around the orchard that lay just outside the school's fence, looking for signs of snipers hidden in trees and patrolling in places with heavy vegetation. People of my age took war against Germany as normal, but against the Japanese in deep jungle - no way! I was home at Cowes, IOW, on leave from the school, it was early morning and a man was running down the street shouting, "It's all over, the Japs have surrendered". There was little response but I felt a sense of relief, I had escaped. Later, we heard of the atom bombs and now I was near enough to see the cause of my release, but I could not face seeing it. I had already seen enough war damage, both at home and in Germany, to satisfy any lust for revenge.

I received news that my younger brother's ship had docked somewhere in Japan, he was a Merchant Seaman and his ship was working for the Government. A sum of money, Japanese Yen, was sent to him and, being seven years older, I had to be a 'Dutch uncle' and issue the same sort of warning my father gave me on leaving home. Whenever we meet now, he often ribs me for what was in that letter. We never met in Japan, as his ship sailed and went up to Inchon in Korea - what they were doing up there was most unclear.

I suppose most of us recall leaving some outlandish place to go on leave, somewhere more civilised, and before you can get out of the gate a lecture is delivered by a person who, with malicious and imaginative delight, describes procedures which the optimists hope will prevent sexual infection. The things that could be wrapped around the penetrating organ ran from handkerchieves and other materials, topped with multiple condoms. The lecture usually ended with a sinister, "*And you will still get pox*". I do not suppose that it was a dampener on those who had other ideas!

It was January 1954 and the REME draft was called into the Base theatre, a relic of the previous Japanese forces that, to my disappointment, was the same as any other theatre. A REME Captain mounted the stage and stated the posting for each person, Japan or Korea. I had an individual posting to Korea - the Commonwealth Div's Ordnance Field Park (OFP), an RAOC unit, as their VM Sergeant.

Those bound for Korea assembled on the docks, shepherded by Regimental Police, who had been on our Troopship. Spick and span as usual, but now sporting the ribbon of the United Nations Korea Medal, the 'Butcher's Apron' with its blue and white stripes, which raised much derisory laughter among us. The little ship, whose name I have forgotten, appeared to be one of those China Seas traders, with gates and shutters on the decks to stop boarding by pirates. The interior was of the old-fashioned varnished wood and polished metal. Once underway, I came across the cooks, squatting around large basins in the corridors. Here they were preparing our food, which was quite reasonable when served. A large part of the trip was by night and I found the sound of the wind, whistling in the rigging, familiar. When

daylight came, a small cubicle could be seen on the left side of the ship's bow, which turned out to be the lavatory. Once seated, one's posterior was projecting out over the bow-wave and one followed the principle used on 18th-century ships, whose 'heads' were in the same position. The bow-wave would clean the ship's sides of any deposits! The trip took the better part of a day and we docked in Korea the following morning.

Pusan, Southern Korea

All passengers disembarked, a collection of different cap badges, to join the Commonwealth Div in the northern part of the country. The transport to the railway station awaited us - an American, open-topped, semi-trailer. We piled in, just able to see over the trailer's top, and wended our way through Pusan, a town which seemed to be built of flattened tin cans, odd pieces of sheet metal and anything else usable. The town did not seem to have recovered from its siege by US forces a few years ago. The route took a rather steep gradient that afforded a wide view over these miserable conditions. At the station, we piled out of the trailer and boarded the train, which didn't appear to be in good condition. It rattled and rocked along the track and, alarmingly, bridges were little wider than the width of the rails, so that one was often staring into the chasm being crossed. There was a form of dining-car, where we sat three aside a table but, although the food was edible, it was difficult to eat, as only two or three various eating-irons were put on the table. Any requests to the Korean servers were met with a blank stare. Some ingenious methods of transferring the food to the mouth were developed.

It is hoped that readers will not misinterpret this third reference to latrines! We are trained, in our culture, to adopt a given posture when defecating. Thus, when obliged to use another culture's lavatory, it can be an uncomfortable business that impresses itself on one's memory. In this case, facilities on the train were holes in the floor, with no handrails. All made worse by the train rocking from side to side, it could be a messy business if one was desperate!

Two hundred miles later we detrained at the Commonwealth Div's Railhead, Tok Jon. The first sight was a market selling aluminium utensils. Had I any sense, I should have bought a bowl or two, as these things were always to be in short supply. There were the usual 'dirty postcard' vendors and the inevitable begging children. Canadians, driving American 'deuce and half' 2-ton trucks, arrived to drop us off around the Div. Somewhere along the route, a gang of young boys threw stones at our vehicle, cracking a cab window. The driver leapt out of the cab and pursued them, but they escaped. The man, understandably, was enraged, and we offered to be witnesses to the event. We drove around various units and eventually arrived in the OFP to start my year, one of three, in Korea. An experience never to be forgotten and a long, long way from Wokingham station!

Overheard at the Reunion

An old boy was telling another, "*I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four hundred pounds, but it's state of the art, just perfect*". "Really", answered the neighbour, "*what kind is it?*" "*Almost twelve thirty*" replies our valiant hero.

ANAGRAMATICALLY SPEAKING

I'm sure you know that '*Eleven plus Two*' equals '*Twelve plus One*', but as well as arithmetically, look at the equation again. Yes, the same letters balance on each side, in what is called an 'Anagram'. People have given a lot of thought to the construction of such word-teasers and I present just a few below for your entertainment. Perhaps you can contribute some more?

Dormitory – Dirty room
Presbyterian – Best in prayer
Astronomer – Moon starrer
Desperation – A rope ends it!
The eyes – They see
The Morse Code – Here come dots
Slot machines – Cash lost in me
Election results – Lies, let's recount
Mother-in-law – Woman Hitler
Snnooze alarms – Alas, no more Z's
A decimal point – I'm a dot in place

Also overheard at the Reunion

An old ex-boy, went to see his doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the same doctor saw him walking down the street, with a gorgeous young blonde on his arm. A couple of days afterwards, the doctor dropped in at his home and said, "*You're really doing great, aren't you?*" To which he smilingly replied, "*Just doing what you said, Doc – 'Go get a hot mamma and be cheerful'.*" To which the doctor said, "*I didn't say that. What I said was, 'You've got a heart murmur, be careful'.*"

HISTORIC OBAN ARTICLES

OBAN 11 Spring-Summer 1997

Transports of delight – Tom Pearce Feb 44
The Wade family at war Pt1 – Dick Wade 39A
Those local Inns Part 1 – Brian Hornsey 54A
Reminiscences Part 3 – Walter Jobber Oct 43
Scrapbook Memorabilia – Alan Morton 51B

OBAN 12 Autumn-Winter 1997

Personality slot – Mike Dickinson 42A
Reminiscences Part 4 – Walter Jobber Oct 43
Wade family at war Part 2 – Dick Wade 39A
Reunion 1997 – report by John Northam 47A

OBAN 13 Spring 1998

Personality slot – Ken Burren 42A
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RSM McNally (an appreciation) – Pete Gripton 56B
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Some reminiscences – Ron Savage 39A
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Years to remember – Dusty Miller 41A

OPENING OF POPERINGHE GUARDROOM, REME MUSEUM OF TECHNOLOGY

This article is based very much on that published in Craftsman magazine for January 2005. I am indebted to the editors of that worthy magazine for their kind permission in letting me use and adapt the article for inclusion here. I would also like to thank Bill Cleasby for allowing me access to his own article, which appeared in the REME Journal. Peter Gripton

On Monday November 1st 2004, Mr Malcolm Pink, a Managing Director of Taylor Woodrow, formally opened a reconstruction, based upon the old Guardroom from Poperinghe Barracks, perhaps better known to hundreds of ex-apprentices as the 'Depot REME'. Also in attendance at the opening ceremony were Brig Tetlow MBE ADC(DEME(A)), Brig Rickard (Brig REME Training) and several civic dignitaries from the neighbouring town of Wokingham, including the Mayor. Among the invited guests were former Trustees of the Museum, former Commanding Officers of Trg Btn and Depot REME, as well as many other retired officers of the Corps.

This reconstructed building has now taken up residence as the new 'front entrance' to the REME Museum of Technology. It houses an excellent and much-needed tea-room, an up-market reception area, including the REME Association shop, and a display of a typical REME Guardroom, as it would have looked like back in the 1950s. Indeed, if you step up onto the verandah and try the door handle, you will be accosted by the ghostly voice of an RSM, handing down a stern warning to ensure that you are smartly dressed and ready for parade – otherwise you will be spending more time than you'd like in the Guardroom!

Poperinghe Barracks, named after a small town in Belgium, was previously located in the south-west of Arborfield Garrison, having been built back in 1939 to accommodate two Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiments of the Royal Artillery. These remained at Arborfield until just prior to D-Day in June 1944. Following their departure and up to July 1946, the barracks were then used as an Army depot for the assembly and dispatch of troops bound for service in north-west Europe.

In that month of July 1946, the REME Training Centre was formed and a Regimental Training Tactical Wing was established in the barracks - now to be known as 'Training Battalion and Depot REME'. The Barracks consisted of wooden huts mostly grouped in 'spiders', each spider being made up of six huts joined by corridors to central washing and utility rooms. An extract from the journal of ex-L/Cpl Cyril Kirby recalls his first impressions of the Depot in 1952. ".....it seemed to be overcrowded, there were troops everywhere. The accommodation was crowded as well, as all the huts had bunk beds, making about forty of us in a hut instead of twenty.

With so many troops there, the queue for meals had to be seen to be believed. The dining room was about as big as a tennis court and, as you were walking up to it, you could see the queue winding round the outside of the building. After standing for some time, you would eventually reach the door only to find that the queue went all the way round the inside of the building as well!"

It was to be thirty-one years later, in October 1977, when the barracks finally closed as a training centre. Over the whole thirty-eight years of its existence, literally thousands of REME soldiers passed through the gates of Poperinghe Barracks, on their way to operations and postings all over the world – as well as to their final destination of 'civvy street'.

Following the Depot's closure, much of the old barracks was demolished, save for a few wooden buildings, including the Guardroom. These provided a location for administrative facilities and a centre for local Garrison amenities.

In late 1999, the Poperinghe site was sold to fulfil the needs of local housing and its last building, Poperinghe Guardroom, was finally pulled down around the end of 2002. Attempts were made to salvage the old building, but this proved impossible - and unhealthy! – due to its asbestos roof, ship-lap construction and steel girder lining. Thus came the project to reconstruct the building, which finally came to fruition in November 2004.

The Project

A considerable number of people, both from the Museum and outside agencies, were involved in the project, led by the Museum Director, Lt Col Bill Cleasby, who also 'doubles up' as Hon Sec of the Old Boys' Association of course. The staff, Judy Booth, Hazel Crozier, Maddy Scott, John Blaney, Lt Col David Keymer and Brig Martyn Clark, have worked their socks off as researchers, artists, editors, designers, project managers and general dogsbodies! In fact, you name it and they did it! Bill will quickly also acknowledge the able assistance given to the project by many others – it was a tremendous team effort and it is to be hoped that future visitors to the Museum will be suitably impressed and pleased with the final result. No doubt the Guardroom will become a hive of activity during future Old Boys' Reunions - please give it your hearty support.



THE VANISHING BEDSPACE

By John 'Doc' Houghton 56B

I was home on leave from the 'School' and attending the Saturday night dance at my local town hall with my best mate. A little into the evening, he nudges me and points out two pretty girls on the dance floor who he informs me are 'not local'. To cut a long story short, I spent the rest of my leave seeing one of these girls on a daily basis. No, she wasn't local, she told me that she came from Sidcup in Kent, her name was Barbara ('Babs' for short) and was currently on a short holiday, staying with her grandmother in my home town of Gainsborough, Lincs.

Our friendship blossomed and we agreed to keep in touch once I had returned to Arborfield. After a few weeks, Babs invited me to stay for a weekend at her parents' house. But how could I? Apart from the monthly 'free Sunday', days away from Camp, let alone a weekend, were impossible. Desperate to see Babs (we were all in love at that age - or was it lust?), my young fertile mind started to work overtime - how could I secure my illicit weekend away from Camp without being declared AWOL?

I then hit on a seemingly brilliant idea. The Company Orderly Sergeant (usually Permanent Staff) was responsible for conducting the nightly bed check. They didn't bother with a roll call - provided that each bed space was physically occupied at the time of their visit, this seemed to fulfil their roll call criteria. The solution seemed simple - get rid of my bedspace for the duration of my intended unofficial weekend absence! With a full barrack room i.e. all the spaces occupied, my plan may not have been viable, as a gaping space would have stuck out like a sore thumb. However, I was fortunate, in so much that the barrack room I was in had a couple of vacant unoccupied bed-spaces. I started planning the 'The Vacant Bedspace' with a certain amount of secrecy, although I did discuss my 'cunning plan' with a couple of my trusted friends whose thoughts were along the lines of 'mad', 'bonkers', '...you'll never get away with it' etc etc.

The Company games room was in the same spider as my barrack room. This games room was also the home of the odd empty six-foot steel locker or two, that were deemed surplus to requirements at the time. The plan was therefore simple - dismantle my bedspace and secrete it in the games room for the period of my absence. But it was not such a simple exercise, a few obstacles had to be overcome if my plan was to succeed. Firstly, it had to be achieved without the knowledge of the A/Sgt in charge of the barrack room. Fortunately, the weekend of my planned absence coincided with the A/Sgt being away playing a sport for the one of the school teams. I was also on friendly terms with the A/L/Cpl in the room, he therefore agreed to turn a blind eye to my scheme saying, "...I don't want to know..."

With those two obstacles out of the way, the next task was the dismantling and relocating of all the items that made-up my bed space. Disposing of my six foot steel locker wasn't a problem - with the help of a couple of guys, the locker was easily manoeuvred out of the barrack room, along the corridor of the spider and into the games room, alongside a couple of existing unused lockers. One of the unused lockers also became the temporary home for my blankets, sheets, pillows and bedside

mat. My wooden bedside locker was also conveniently hidden in the games room. The last items of my bed space to be disposed of were my bed and mattress. The bed was dismantled into three pieces and hidden, along with my mattress, behind three of the lockers against the barrack room wall in the games room. All this activity was taking place after the Saturday morning parade, when boys were busying themselves preparing to depart Camp for a Saturday afternoon/evening in nearby Reading or Wokingham (or had already done so). Mission accomplished.

All I had to do now was leave Camp, via the unguarded back gate, without 'booking-out', and transport myself to Sidcup. This was all pretty straight forward and I duly arrived down in Sidcup, to the delight of Babs. The weekend was enjoyable and it went well. (*And that's all you're admitting to eh, John? Ed.*) It was not until travelling back on the train to Arborfield that I started to have nagging doubts as to the possible success of my endeavours to sneak a weekend undetected away from Camp. Doubts, followed rapidly by fear of being caught out, raced through my mind - was I at this very moment being declared AWOL? I was beginning to become concerned. All the initiative, planning and execution may have come to nought 'if' the Orderly Sergeant has been extra vigilant, or suspicious, of the additional space in my barrack room.

And so I slipped unnoticed back into Camp early on the Sunday evening to learn, to my great relief, that I hadn't been missed at all. With some assistance, I rapidly resurrected my bedspace in its rightful place ready for that evening's roll call. It came about that my friendship with Babs waned shortly afterwards. To some degree I was relieved, as I don't think I could have pulled-off the same stunt again - nor do I think I could have withstood the accompanying stress.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST ELIGIUS

WO1 (ASM) J Reavill sent us this, although he admits he cannot claim credit for it. Capt Brookes, the then OC of 47 Fld Regt RA LAD, gave this version to the Tradesmens' Entrance Club in Merseburgh Barracks.

In the beginning there was chaos and the chaos was the Infantry, for they were alone and so afflicted. And fear was with the Infantry, for they cried out to the Lord, 'Save us, for we are afraid'. And the Lord heard their cries and put some of them on beasts of burden and these he called Cavalry, which later became Armour. But, as time passed, the Infantry and Armour again cried out unto the Lord, saying, 'Save us, for we are afraid again'.

And the Lord said unto them, 'Fools. I will send among you a race of men who are strong in spirit and noble of heart and these men shall be called The Royal Artillery. And when you need light, they will light your way by bursting stars in the sky; and when you need cover, they will provide a smoke cloud and ye shall have high explosives when needed; with a fire mission, these will be yours and more'.

And the Lord gave the Artillery big guns and other small pieces,

such as Spartan and many sophisticated objects. At this the Infantry and Armour were jealous, for they had so little. The Lord gave the Artillery nuclear capability and, when the Infantry and Armour saw this, they fell to their knees in wonder, saying, *'Surely He is on the side of the greatest and the greatest is the Artillery'*.

And the Lord said *'Correct'*, for they were correct.

But the greedy Artillery were not satisfied; they demanded bigger and better weapons and more such noise that even God was heard to cry *'Enough!'* So he gave them Javelin and the Artillery marvelled at the gift and then went out to play forthwith and drove exceedingly fast. But the Javelins and Guns did not work. At this, the Infantry and Armour now laughed, because the Artillery began to be afraid.

They cried out to the Lord, *'Help us, for we are the greatest'*. And the Lord gave them a ground-to-air missile as an extra – the Rapier. But there was more chaos and the Infantry continued to laugh with much merriment. The Artillery felt ridiculed and helpless. *'Oh Lord'*, they cried, *'we are not so great any more'*.

And the Lord marvelled at such humility and said, *'I will send you my only begotten son, a Craftsman, for you'*. And so Craftsman Christ came down and fixed the Rapier and other mechanical machines and, with the help of his disciples from the FAMTO, provided the loaves and the boxes of spare parts. Now the Guns, Javelin and Rapier all worked and the Artillery, Infantry and Armour marvelled at such a man.

And so it came to pass that the Lord gave the Artillery, Infantry and Armour a whole Workshop or LAD, each with many skills, saying, *'These are my sons. If you ignore them, your Guns, Radios, Land Rovers and Rifles will not work'*. All three Arms tried this and found it was true, and gasped *'The REME, surely these men must be the Greatest?'*

Here endeth the lesson.

(The above was passed on to me at the 2005 Reunion by John Roden of 47B. It came into his possession some years ago and I have not changed a single word! Ed.)

A DRUMMER'S TALE

By Russell 'Jock' Dodds 56B

It wasn't actually my fault, I certainly hadn't planned on becoming the Drum Major of the Army Apprentices' School Pipe Band! It was my mate Innes Muir who first asked me whether I'd be interested in joining the Pipe Band as their bass drummer. Innes was in the same Company as me and that must have been in the early days, perhaps either 2 or 3 Div. I had no previous musical experience but, as I had always loved the sound of the pipes, I told him that I'd give it a go – forgetting all they used to say about volunteering! As it turned out, I absolutely loved it and it was certainly a great way of escaping the confines of the Camp. We performed at so many fetes and open days that

it is difficult now to recall just how many there were!

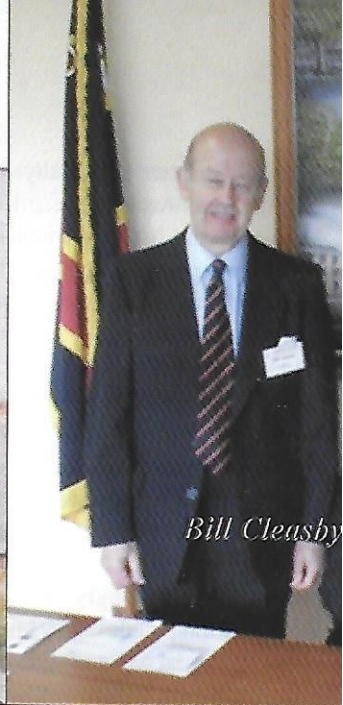
The one thing that I can't forget, however, is 'the heat'! Bear in mind, if you will, that all these musical functions took place during the warmest times of the year. Then picture the apparel worn by the bass drummer. First of all came my number one dress type jacket, buttoned up tightly right up to the neck, and worn with a pair of dashing tartan trews. On top of all this came a heavy 'lookalike' leopard-skin on which the big bass drum rested. From this, you will appreciate that it could get pretty damn warm inside! Apart from this undoubted physical discomfort, they were wonderful times, and I was more than happy to be participating in the Pipe Band. At that time, we were under the care of Pipe Major Jack Massey of the famous Gordon Highlanders. Unfortunately, there eventually came along the dreaded end-of-term trade exams. As explained earlier, it wasn't



actually of my own volition that I'd joined. Innes Muir, who was the leading tipper in the drum section, and seemingly destined to lead the Band, sadly managed to fail his trade test. Consequently, this meant that he couldn't be promoted and, as I was next in line in the drum section, I was given the proud position of mace-bearer. I couldn't actually become the next 'boy' drum major, because I was still only in 5 Div, although I often wondered afterwards about a possible accelerated promotion!

I subsequently went on to become the drum major on reaching 6 Div, but I was always aware that Innes, with his brilliant skills as a side drummer, should have become the 'leader of the band'. Despite those thoughts, those days still remain one of the happiest periods of my life, even now as I approach the fiftieth anniversary of joining 'boys' school'.

Together again after 50 years!

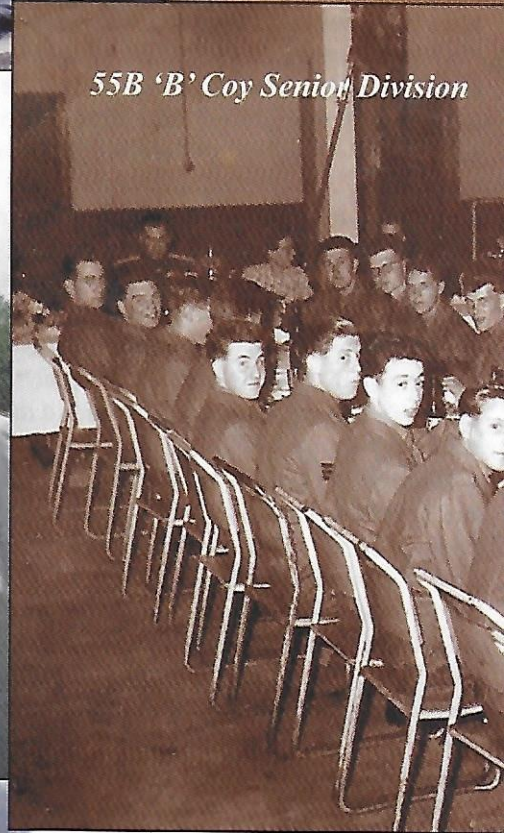


Bill Cleasby

Col Nigel Moore shares a word with Herbie Coles 66B



55B 'B' Coy Senior Division

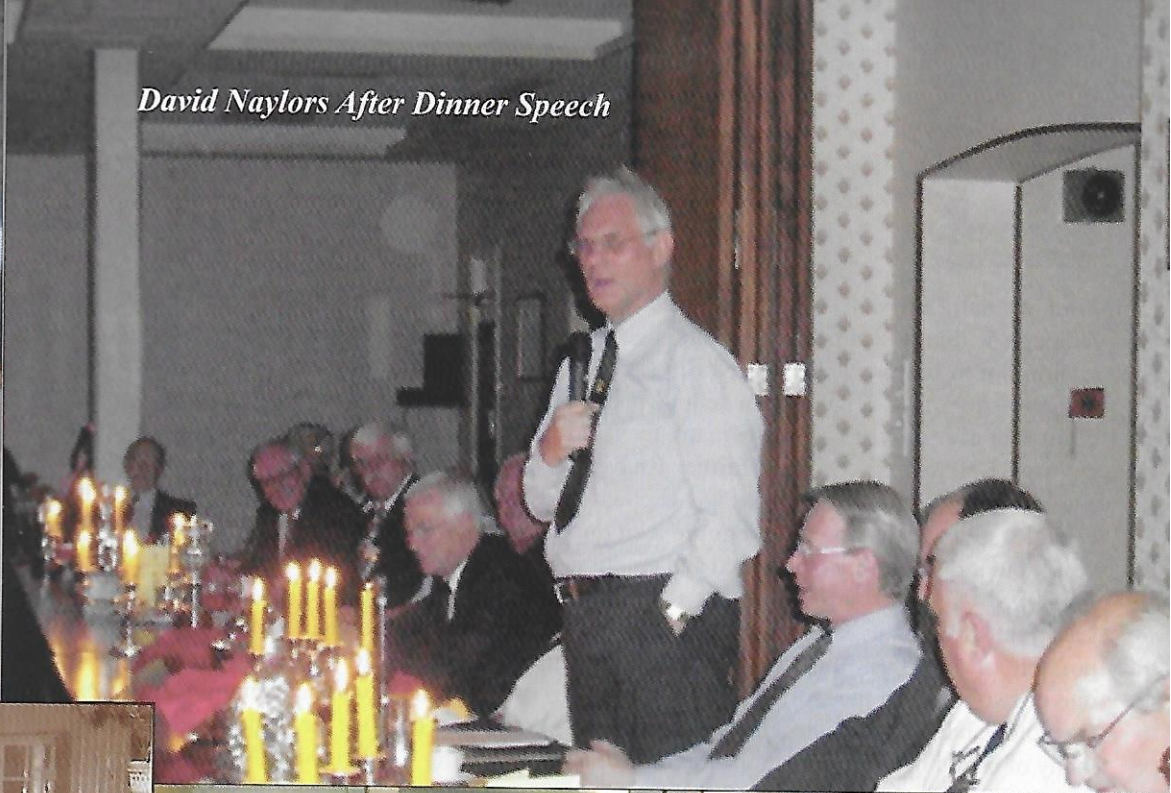


*I really don't know
why I'm the only one standing to attention*





David Vaughan



David Naylor's After Dinner Speech



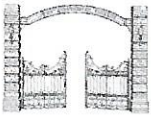
Why can't we still have this sort of Breakfast every day?

A really smart turn out.



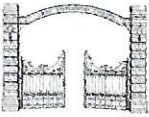
Col Nigel shares a joke with Brian Glossop





THE 2005 REUNION - WAS IT ONLY YESTERDAY?

By David Naylor 55A



Well it finally arrived! We had reached our 50th anniversary although it didn't seem like 50 years since we arrived at the guardroom to be 'greeted' by Fred Silvers. I found it slightly embarrassing since I have been telling people (including my wife) that I'm only 55 – but perhaps they didn't believe me anyway. Before I proceed any further I have to confess that I was only told that I had to write this account late on Saturday evening, so if these random jottings are a bit unclear then I hope you'll put it down to my being tired and emotional at the time.

Last year those of us who attended decided to get as many as possible of the '55ers together this year, but as usual it fell to one or two to do all the work. Our thanks must go to both John Reynolds and John 'Ginge' Harte for succeeding in getting so many of us old boys of that era together for 'our' weekend.

On Friday evening there was the usual efficient reception and then we all met up, swapped stories and had a very enjoyable supper. This year we had new accommodation. Most if it was good (mine certainly was) but I missed the comradeship of chatting and sleeping in a communal room – although I didn't miss the snoring of certain people!

Saturday was the big day. After a great breakfast, eating all the things I'm not allowed at home, we met up for coffee, swapped a few more stories and got ready for the parade. Now we had reached the big five-o we were put in Senior Division, having finally graduated from the 'Jeeps'. I found it all a bit of trial because as is well known, marching and me don't go well together. The RSM clearly didn't know this so he selected me as Right Marker! We all formed up, turned right (or was it left?) and marched off. Restraining an impulse to swing my arms and legs together, I did what all good right markers do and just followed

the guide in front hoping that he knew where he was going! One thing that has always puzzled me is that I don't know why Drill Sergeants have a down on us marching with our arms and legs swinging in unison. I've always found it very easy, and it gives a certain unique roll to marching! The reviewing officer was the REME Regimental Colonel, Colonel Nigel Moore, a former Commanding Officer of the Apprentice College, accompanied by our AOBA President Colonel Peter Gibson, himself a former Commandant. With these hawk-eyed inspecting officers I was pleased that I'd cleaned my shoes, but I hope that they hadn't noticed that I had left my web belt off because I hadn't had time to Blanco it (too much time in the bar). Having marched off without stumbling or tripping anyone else up (to my great relief) we then adjourned to the bar. The recently appointed DEME (A), Brigadier Nigel Williams, himself an ex-boy, joined us for lunch and was presented with a copy of 'The Arborfield Apprentice' – that gripping tome which we all scan to see if we are mentioned, and also to see what it says about other people! (Only joking Pete, it's a great book!)

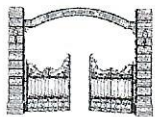
The museum and the hangers at SEAE were open and many of us relived old memories (did I really manage to sleep on a bench in a Tels Commer?) marvelled at the new technology, or possibly retired to our beds for refreshing nap. Then the AGM and tea came and went, more stories were swapped and then we followed the Piper into the Reunion Dinner. It was a terrific meal with plenty of wine to set the scene and one I thoroughly enjoyed myself until remembering that this year I was the one to give the speech on behalf of the fiftieth anniversary old boys. I stood up, saw this sea of faces fading into the dark corners, and with trepidation I launched into my 'speech'. Well it wasn't exactly a speech, more the ramblings of an itinerant *Tels Mech*, but I finally got through it and we all repaired to the bar, yet once again!



Can you recognise any of these faces from 'D' Squad of Intake 55B

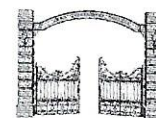
On the Sunday morning we all met up at breakfast once again to swing a final lamp and then to say goodbye to so many old friends until next year. So was it a good reunion? In my opinion it was one of the best that I have been to and despite the many difficulties that Bill Cleasby's team had they certainly put on a superb reunion weekend. I know that I speak on behalf of everyone who attended in saying *"Thanks Bill, it was a great weekend and one to remember."*

And finally RSM – as I managed to get through the parade as the Right Marker without turning the wrong way or marching out of step, please may I finally pass out of HQ Company?



REUNION 2005

Roll Call



Jim Silby	38B	John Smithson	46B	Arthur Hodgkins	53B	Marshall Day	58A	Byron Hooper	66C
Wally Footner	39A	Larry Le Var	47A	Bob Bailey	54A	Paul Hudson	58A	Frank McKenna	66C
Ron Savage	39A	Roger Carew	47B	Allan Delbridge	54A	John Kelsey	58A	Lyle Shore	66C
Bill Smith	39A	Tony Hoare	47B	Mike Perdeaux	54A	Dave Wayland	58A	Egon Taska	66C
Steve Stephenson	39A	Stanley Horne	47B	John Rainey	54A	Tom Pearce	59B	John Nicholls	66X
Ernest Roberts	39B	Terence Lackey	47B	Brian Stone	54A	Alan Harris	59C	Nigel Wickenden	67A
Arthur Sainsbury	39B	Robin Loader	47B	John Whitehead	54A			Jack Shram	67C
Peter Styles	39B	John Roden	47B	Brian Edminson	54B	Trevor Guest	60A		
Allan Tucker	39B			Dick Glistler	54B	Christopher Mackey	60A	David Vaughan	68A
Les Dangerfield	39C	George Byrne	48A	John Smith	54B	Garry Middleton	60A		
		Derek Hillier	48A	Mick Toogood	54B	Mike Davis MBE	60B	Dave Mills	69C
Lawrence Nixon	42A	Joe Sobolewski	48A			Trevor Taylor	60C	Mark Plimmer	69C
Bob Bradley	42B	Pete Brunnen	48B	Guy Alway	55A			Wattie Walker	69C
Mike Funnell	42B	Ray Derrick	48B	Tony Church	55A	Chris Rhodes	61A	Mike Wherton	69C
Mike Allcock	42C	Bill Freeman	48B	Bob Giles	55A	Alistair White	61A		
Keith Hadaway	42C	Eddie Hind	48B	Ken Hill	55A	Laurie Blakley	61B	Phil Graham	71C
Alan Pritchard	42C	Ray Jenkinson	48B	John Lee	55A	Brian Hutchins	61B		
Ron Ward	42C	Joe Young	48B	David Naylor	55A	Bill Cleasby MBE	61C	John Wright	77B
				Alf Stubbs	55A				
Stan Bates	43A	Tony Hughes	50A	Brian Wells	55A	John Swarbrick	62A	Dave Chapman	78C
Doug Boucher	43A	Robert Harrison	50B	Sam Beatson	55B	Ian Tilson	62A		
John Dutton	43A	Tom Lennox	50B	Colin Drasutis	55B	John Beuzeval	62C	Peter Gibson	PS
Michael Grantham	43A	West Robertson	50B	John FitzPatrick	55B				
Tony Guy	43A	Arthur Ward	50B	John Harte	55B	Dick Mussell	63C		
Bob Jones	43A			John Howes	55B	Brian Whitbread	63C		
Jim Macdonald	43A	Bill Butler	51B	Ray Howorth TD	55B				
Mitch Mitchell	43A	Arthur Fenlon	51B	Geoff Knox	55B	Jeff Bendall	64A	Apologies	
Les Scapens	43A	George Fleck	51B	Mike Lomas	55B	Bob Castell	64A		
George Wooley	43A	Graham Goodwin	51B	John Reynolds	55B	Dave Grint	64A	Ken Green	37
John Horwood	43C	Fred Mills	51B	Steve Shaw	55B	Bob Hambly	64A	Peter Spargo	39A
		Alan Morton MBE	51B	Ken Smith	55B	Geoff Hatt	64A	Bob Dougall	39A
Alex Bax	44A	Keith Tilly	51B	Clive Smith	55B	Tony House	64A	Bert Kelly	39A
Ken Jenner	44A			Rodney Strachan	55B	Peter Howes	64A	Patrick Roche	44A
George Knight	44A	John Bodle	52A			Robin Cooper	64B	John Adams	45A
Pat Patterson	44A	Bill Gibson	52A	Ian Bradley	56B	Peter Chetwynd	64C	Eddie Broomfield	45A
Len Poulton	44A	Eddie Hind	52A	Russell Dodds	56B	Alec Powell	64C	Dick Colquhoun	46A
Alan Richardson	44A	Brian Paton	52A	Pete Gipton	56B	Ray Stevens	64C	George Marshall	46B
Patrick Roche	44A	Chris Powell	52A	Larry Jarvis	56B			Gerry Malone	47A
Peter Shinn	44A	Terry Reddin	52A	Syd Urwin	56B	Dave Brock	65B	Stan Guscin	48B
John Brown	44B	Trevor Stubberfield	52A			Dave Bornstein	65C	Pete Henry	49B
David Ferns	44B	John Todd	52A	Brad Cockwell	57A	Dave Cosway	65C	Max Warwick	49B
Dave Higgs	44B	Trevor Trill	52A	Les Fountain	57A	Colin Jamieson	65C	Charley Ayre	50B
Syd Kite	44B	John Williams	52A	Jim Gardner	57A	Bill Loughlin	65C	Mike Jackson	53A
John Maddox	44B	Richard Barnett	52B	Brian Glossop	57A	Pete Marsh	65C	Derek Scanlon	53A
		Eggy Eggleton	52B	Mike O'Driscoll	57A	Barrie Parker	65C	Ginger Chilton	53C
Keith Evans	45A	Kaye Gilpin	52B	Bob Sisson	57A			Ben Hebden	54A
Edward Grant	45A	Derek Pullen	52B	Roger Traves	57A	Herbie Coles	66B	Colin Chance	58B
				George Vince	57A	Andy Dickson	66B	Mike Cheesman	62C
Tony Head	46A	Robert Beckett	53A	Adrian Webber	57A	Tony Higgins	66B	Hugh McCutcheon	PS
Peter Horwood	46A	Aubrey Gardner	53A	Derek Wheatland	57B	Rob Southcott	66B		
Eddie Edwards	46B	Dave Chapman	53B	Kenneth Wilson	57B	Ray Younger	66B		
Roy Jones	46B	Dennis Elshaw	53B			Bill Everett	66C		
Harvey Liddell	46B	Mick Harold	53B	Ken Anderson	58A	Brian Greenhorn	66C		





We all formed up in front of the old ATFC Regimental Restuarant but under SEAE RSM and his staff who soon knocked the cobwebs out of our boots!



ANECDOTES FROM ARBORFIELD 1956-59

By G W 'Gerry' Hincks 56B

I'm pretty sure that my introduction to the Army Apprentices' School in the summer of 1956 was much the same as thousands of other young lads, but I promised 'Scouse' Gripton to 'tell the tale', so here goes! These are just random thoughts, in no particular order, so I hope they make sense and that readers will find some amusement in them.

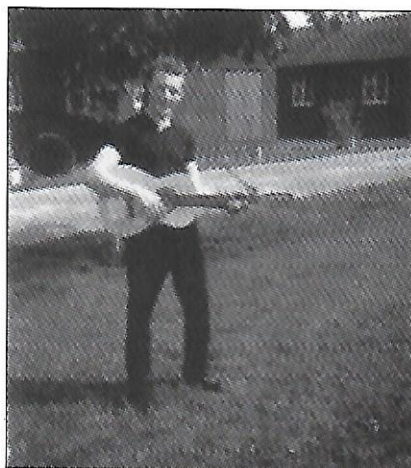
One thing that stands out about my arrival, which happened to be late afternoon, was my first visit to the Dining Hall – or Cookhouse, as it was also well known. I can't recall exactly what we had to eat, but have a sharp memory of the layout of the place – long wooden tables and bench seats, no table cloths and plates full of jam and butter everywhere. Being 'Junior Division', this was a state of affairs that we soon became accustomed to.

After passing out from 'HQ' Company after the first six months, I was sent into 'B' Coy, to share a room with some eighteen other apprentices, in one room of what was known as a 'spider'. Life passed by in a blur of academic training, trade training, fitness activities and sports – plus the inevitable and seemingly endless parades, which filled our every Saturday morning. After a spell in 'B' Coy and promotion to A/L/Cpl, I was fortunate enough to find myself posted back to 'HQ' Coy – as the NCO i/c Games Room! This was a great job, as the position attracted no other duties and came with my own separate bunk in the said Games Room – total bliss!

All good things pass they say, and upon further promotion to A/Cpl, back I went to join my own Div in 'B' Coy once more. During this period, I became a member of the AAS gymnastics display team. The display routine closely followed the pattern of that seen at the Royal Military Tattoo held at Earls Court in west London. The team attended many military and civilian events, where we were able to show off our abilities, agility and fitness.

There were two West African boys in 'B' Coy, one named Sam, who became a great friend of mine, and the other one named Tutu. I think in fact that they were both from a country called the 'Gold Coast'. Many years later, when I was attending SEME Bordon on my Artificer course, I bumped into Sam once again, in the SEME Sgts' Mess – that was the old wooden building, before it was 'accidentally' burned

down! Sam told me that Tutu had been killed in one of the African tribal wars that were rife at the time. We also had a number of Burmese boys at Arborfield. They were quite privileged, being paid large sums of money by their government – and received a ration of 200 'State Express' cigarettes every month. I think that would be very



Budding Rock Star

much frowned upon today!

Illegal transportation

In those days, we weren't permitted to own our own transport, except maybe for a bicycle – motorcars and motorcycles were definitely off the agenda! Not that it stopped everyone of course! My first purchase was a 1932 *Sunbeam* drop-head coupe, which I obtained from a guy who kept a number of ancient cars in a local barn. I used to go and clean it each Saturday and prepared it to drive home on leave, either late 1958 or early 1959. I remember that, when I made the trip, up to my home in Leicestershire, Russell 'Jock' Dodds, also of 'B' Coy and a member of the Pipe Band, accompanied me.

A certain amount of subterfuge was required and I caught the 'leave coach' to Reading Station, along with lots of others. From here, I then caught a service bus back to Arborfield to pick up the car from the barn! This was followed by a drive back to Reading to pick up Russ, before we were able to head up north. That *Sunbeam* was a bit of an oil burner to say the least and, in the end, I had to leave it at home, where my father eventually sold it for the princely sum of ten shillings and sixpence – fifty-five pence at today's rate! Fortunately, I still had my train warrant for the return journey to Arborfield.

There was a distinct dress code at boys' school, with checks at the Guardroom to make sure we didn't wear any apparel deemed too outlandish! This led to many an illegal breakout, via the gate in the perimeter fence just behind Fred Silver's greenhouse. The object of my affections at the time was the daughter of S/Sgt Gunner, a permanent staff instructor, who later became a 'civvie' instructor at Bordon. I think the young lady's name was Valerie – I'll have to ask Jock, as I think he also vied for her attention in those days!

I later bought another car from the same 'Staff' Gunner. This constituted two illegal transactions – mine for buying it and his for selling it to me, knowing I wasn't allowed to own it! This second car was much more modern – a 1938 *Morris 8*! It only cost me £34 and was a great little runner. I managed to keep it at *Smokey Joe's*, a much-loved 'greasy spoon' café out on the road down to Wokingham. On the same day that Fred Silver's greenhouse was smashed by hailstones the size of golf-balls, those same hailstones tore many a hole in the canvas roof of my pride and joy. I had to make some quick repairs with masking tape.

I recall taking some other lads with me in the car, to see the Henley Regatta, just along the Thames a few miles away. I'm pretty sure that Jock was one passenger, Mick Stevens another, but cannot recall the third. On the way to Henley, the brakes failed and we had to make a rapid exit off a roundabout. From then on, I drove it 'on the handbrake', whilst still applying the brake pedal to make the stoplights come on! Shortly afterwards, Mick Stevens bought the car from me for the same £34 I'd paid. I know he drove it at times, but for some reason unknown to me, it was subsequently found abandoned on a grass verge at the rear of the REME Depot. The first I knew of all this was when approached by S/Sgt Gunner, asking me what the hell was going on? Unfortunately, the local Bobbies had traced the car back to

him – and he could hardly say that he had sold it to an apprentice. He was even more peeved off when I told him that I'd sold it on to Mick! In the event, the car finally disappeared from the verge – but I don't know what happened to it after that.

Several boys owned motorcycles – in 'B' Coy alone I remember 'Fritz' Fry and Brian Mockford. Those machines were stashed away in various back yards, sheds and garages around the area, no doubt for a small rent. Another lad, 'Chick' Elliott, had his sickle confiscated and stored away in the fire station. He was cheeky enough to clear it with Fred Silver that he could go in now and again to clean and polish it during its enforced confinement!

Entertainment and sport

Nights out were always well attended – out on the bus to Reading, drinking pints of lager and 'scrumpy'. On one occasion, a gang of us all bought 'Andy Capp' style headgear, all the rage for a while. Then there were the dance nights at Wokingham Jazz Club, all competing to dance with the prettiest girls. It was Chick again who scored very well, with a girl called Gloria – smashing looking bird with a figure to die for, but also very sweet natured. Once when Chick copped for seven days jankers, he asked me to meet Gloria off the Wokingham bus and see her into camp via the back gate near the hospital. That tale ends right here!

The only other point of contact with the fairer sex was the dance class each week in the Camp Hall. But during at least one flu epidemic, we did have some QARANC nurses looking after us in both the Camp Hall and the hospital. Apart from that, there was only Miss Gunning in the WVS Room!

Cross-country runs were a favourite pastime on Wednesday sports afternoons; at least it got us out of camp! On one occasion we ended up at the lake in Little California, running up and down the pier to keep warm. Someone decided that it was Hincks' turn to learn how to swim – and promptly shoved me into the lake! To this day I don't know how I managed to struggle to the bank and get out of the water. Strangely enough, I didn't learn to swim properly until I was stationed in Libya in 1967.

More nefarious activities

Like it or not, bullying was a fact of life then, mainly carried out by senior boys on junior boys, that's just the way things operated. One lad in my intake was noted for his 'hardness', coming from the East End of London, he'd had a tough upbringing before landing at Arborfield. I won't name him, but here's one tale I recall. Another lad had loaned a combination lock to the room NCO, and 'our hero' bullied him into revealing the lock code. He then went into the NCO's bunk, unlocked the locker, and proceeded to tie the immaculate white belt into knots and slashed the toecaps of the

previously gleaming best boots. He'd obviously had a run-in with the NCO, but this revenge was over the top. The sad thing is that we all knew about it, but the 'never tell on your mates' attitude prevailed.

Heaven forbid if you were suspected of nicking from your mates. One lad who came under suspicion was hung upside down from the room rafter; his hands tied behind his back, and then lowered head first into the fire bucket – filled with water of course! I believe this activity was known as 'lulu'ing' (pronounced loo-loo-ing). Another sure-fire way of 'obtaining a confession' was to hold the culprit down on the six-foot ironing table, then plug in the electric iron. Unknown to the 'culprit', the iron that was subsequently pressed onto his bare back was in fact a cold one – but his imagination didn't know that, so the shock to the system was just as deadly!

Around the time I was in 5 Div, I recall that a deserter from the RAF came and 'hid out' at the School. We learned that he had previously been thrown out of boys' school, so knew that it was the perfect cover! His cronies thought this was a hoot and he was soon kitted out in denims and allowed to sleep in an old mate's room in 'A' Coy lines. It is alleged that he even took a party on fire picket duty, under the very nose of Fred Silver, the Provost Sergeant. He was certainly not short of money, as a gang of senior boys would come round every barrack room after pay parade and demand 'any loose change'. It is said that this guy (Paddy Claydon) obtained about £14 a week in this manner – a lot more than the ten bob (50p) we had each week.

There was more than a fair share of other activities that would provide an episode of 'Porridge' on TV! We had our very own 'loan sharks', lending money at extortionate interest rates, to be paid back when 'credits' were dished out at the end of term. Then there were the 'baccy barons' – "I'll lend you one ciggie now for two back tomorrow!" Perhaps I've painted a rather black picture above, but there were certainly more good times than bad! To prove it, I survived my three years and have enough affection to attend 56B reunions on an annual basis – so it can't have been all doom and gloom!



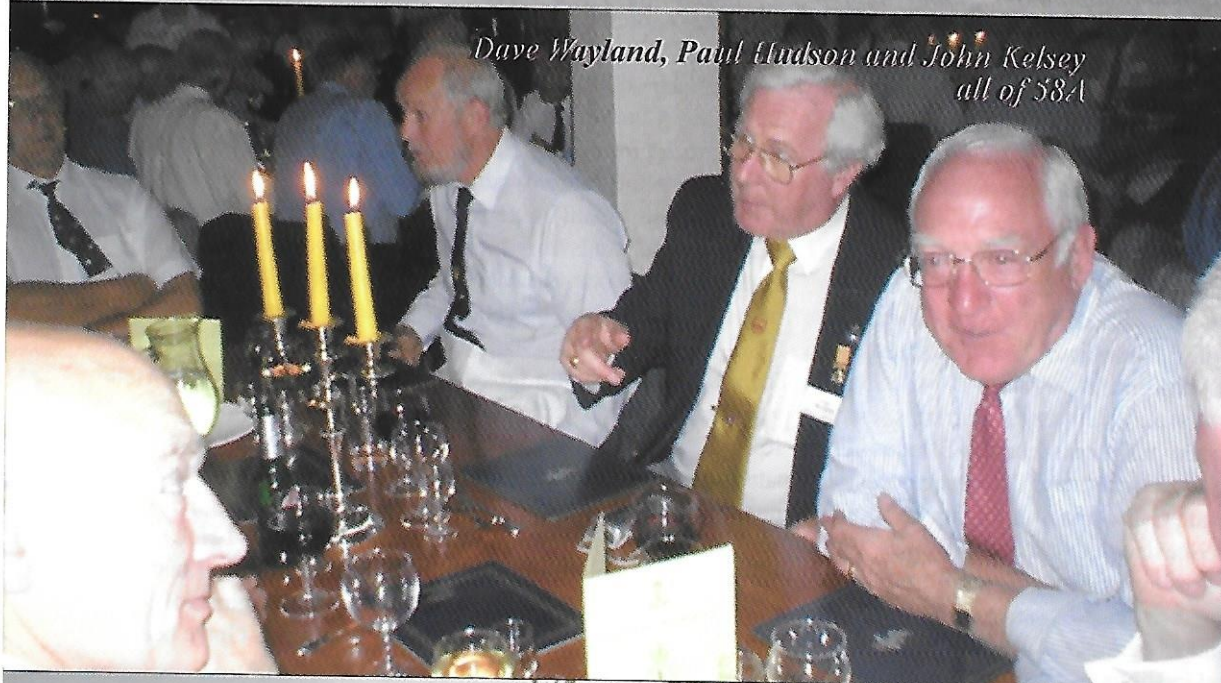
A night out with 'B' Coy



*The SEAE RSM and Standard Bearer
Trevor Guest 60A lead us onto the Square.*



*Shoulders
Swinging 1*



*Dave Wayland, Paul Hudson and John Kelsey
all of 58A*



Scouse Mawd



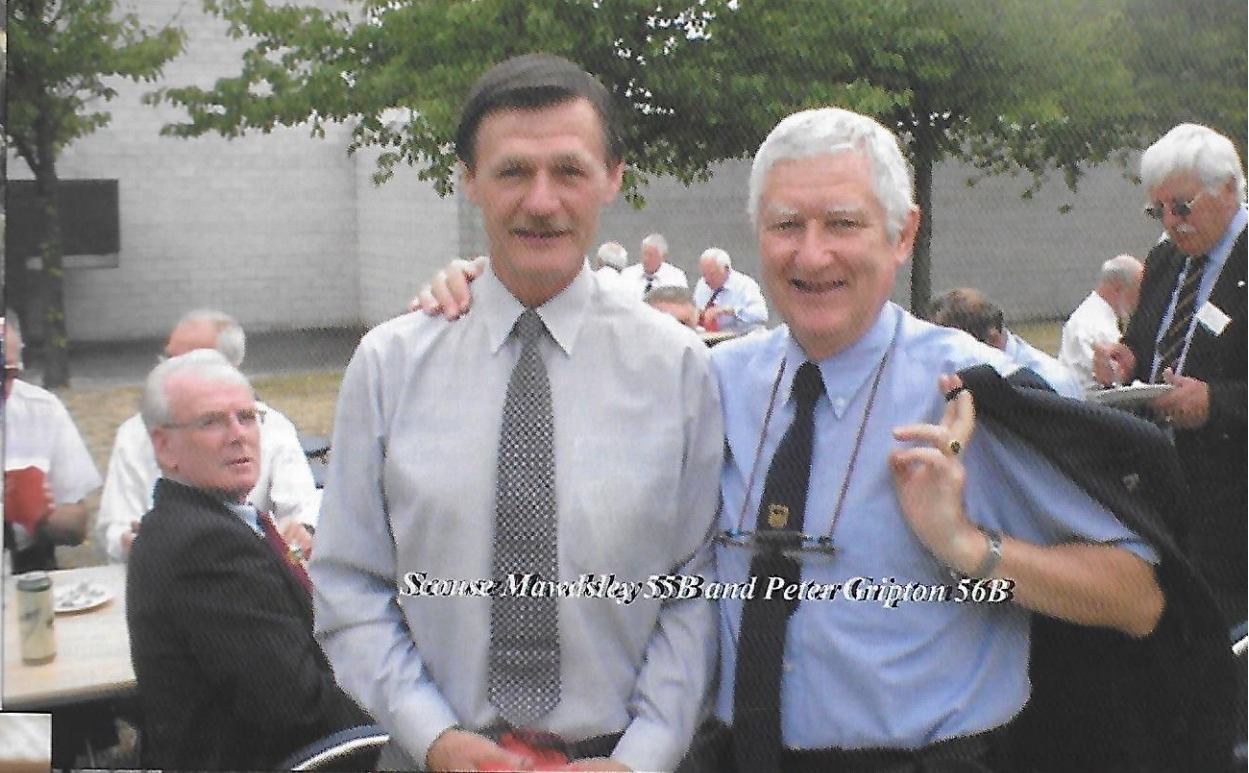
The BBQ Lunch was great and the weather behaved itself!



Treasurer Mike Da



*Chest Out
ms front to back...*



Scouse Mawdsley 55B and Peter Gipton 56B



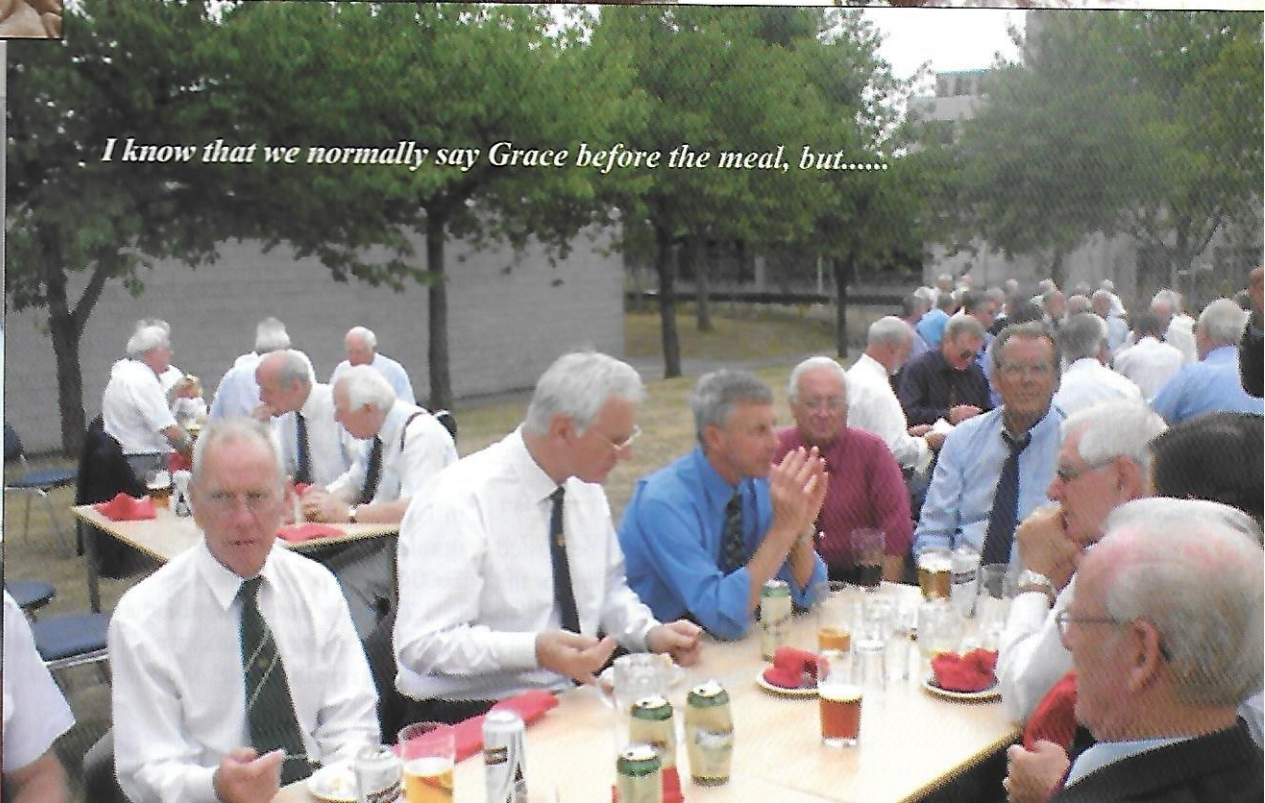
and Ginge Harte 55B



A smiling Chris Rhodes 61A with some old friends



Chairman Peter Gibson.



I know that we normally say Grace before the meal, but.....

MOSTLY LATE - OR NEARLY LAST

By Bob West 50B

When, as one does in later life, I look back over my service history, it occurs to me that perhaps I should record at least some of it. The thing that prompted me even to start to write was the unusual number of times that I was either late for something (but never for a parade) or one of the last in a posting, just before it ceased to be. I don't think it was anything I did – just a continuation of the general shrinkage in the Army commitment and its speedier deployment. In any case, it all started from 'Day One' of me joining up as an Army Apprentice.

When I left school at Faversham in 1950, good jobs were hard to come by, the best being snapped up by ex-servicemen who were still being released from their wartime call-up. I managed to get a job that nobody else wanted - as a clerk in a local garage, which involved invoicing customers for vehicle servicing, when just about all I knew about cars was the difference between a steering wheel and a road wheel! When I plucked up the courage to ask how my future might take shape, I was told I would "*take over David's job when he retires*". As David was then in his twenties, I wasn't impressed enough to continue! And so, on my father's recommendation, I decided to work towards becoming a qualified ex-serviceman myself.

The next few days introduced me to the way the Army can pull out all the stops when it wants to. My application resulted in the assessment, medical examination, enlistment and the issue of joining instructions, along with a rail warrant together with (I think) two days' pay - all within the space of a day or two. The reason for the haste, I discovered later, was because my application would normally have been considered for the March 1951 intake. I would then have been well beyond the maximum age for apprentice training of 16½. Because I had School Cert., the War Office (as it was then) issued instructions for me to be taken in without delay – and taken in I was.

The Lone Recruit

I arrived – just a lone recruit – at the Army Apprentices' School, Arborfield, on 10th October 1950, to discover that I had missed all six weeks' square-bashing. What I didn't miss out on though was the four days' leave, which everybody in HQ Company (except me) had earned! It took me all of the rest of my time in HQ Coy to catch up on what I had missed, with 'private' drill instruction and Saturday afternoon Rodeos - but I did eventually. It was at the School that I had my first experience of being one of 'the last' somewhere. In this case, it was 'D' Company being disbanded, due to falling intake levels, and I thus found myself transferred to 'A' Company for the rest of my apprenticeship. It wasn't until the beginning of 6 Div that I was promoted to A/L/Cpl, so late that it was totally unexpected. What was even more unexpected was the award of my second tape halfway through 6 Div!

Before passing out as a Craftsman in 1953, I was due to be posted to the workshop at Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire (home of the famous pork pie!), the name of which I have never been able to recall. However, this too was changed and I found myself on my way to 34 Base Workshop at Donnington. Apart from passing

my Second Class Trade Test, losing the Colonel's dog, getting married to the Adjutant's daughter (we are still married!) and being promoted to Corporal - both the latter before losing the dog - not a lot of interest happened. I was once 'volunteered' to take over the Post Room one Saturday morning, to allow the permanent postman to take advantage of a long overdue weekend pass. I was not late for this; in fact I was unable to carry out the duty at all, as the postman went home with the Post Room key, and the post spent the whole weekend in the Orderly Room safe, whilst the postman spent the following week on jankers!

Eventually, I was sent on draft DLADO to Korea in 1955 and, from here on, the 'nearly last' episodes of my tale seemed to take over, one after another. My initial posting was to Britcom Base Workshop, Kure, in Japan, where I sat and passed my First Class Trade Test, followed by my Artificer Prelim. No sooner was this over than I was detached to 1 Commonwealth Div Infantry Workshop in Korea, to become part of an Inspection Team, made up of all manner of tradesmen gathered in from all corners of the theatre. Nick Webber was the other Corporal Tels Mech (or technicians, as we were to be called later).

The inspections took about three months to complete, during which time the whole team inspected everything held on the 'AFG 1198' in the forward zone of Korea. The team was then disbanded and everyone was ultimately 'RTU' (returned to unit). Nick and I spent a little more than a week burying unserviceable small arms, which had been 'acetylene torch' cut to render them beyond further use or repair. The Commonwealth forces were in the process of pulling out of Korea and Nick and I attended the Commonwealth Division Farewell Parade as spectators, before Nick went back to Inchon and I returned to Japan.

Some Fairy!

I wasn't long back at Base Workshop before that too was being run down, ready to close. During this period, I appeared in the workshop pantomime, '*The Pied Piper of Hamelin*', as the Fairy Queen! I think it was the fact that I was 6ft 3ins which influenced the producer's casting, but I found the experience thoroughly enjoyable. The female and children parts were all played by American service families, for whom Japan was a 'married' posting. The workshop finally closed and I was posted to the Base Ordnance Depot, just over a mile away, which was also in the process of closing down. I never did have any real telecommunications work to do, possibly because all the war stocks being returned from the field – mainly 19 sets, 62 sets, AR88 and R101 receivers – were having their valves removed and smashed, before the sets themselves were passed on to the acetylene cutters. I still wonder how many of them I had inspected in Korea! I returned to the UK in 1957 on the penultimate Troopship, a chartered Norwegian luxury liner - spoiled rotten we were!

My next posting was to 21 Command Workshop at Burscough up in Lancashire, where more of my time was spent practising for the unit shooting team on nearby Altcar ranges than in the Tels Section. This was not a long posting, because I was due to go to 2 Training Battalion, at Honiton in Devon, for the start of my Artificer training. Just as well, because this workshop was about to become civilianised!

When I arrived at Honiton, I quickly learned that I was 'last' at something else, in that I was the only course member not to be sporting three stripes. My previous unit seemed to have no more awareness of the need than I did. Luckily, I was met by WOII Middleton, the RQMS, who had been in the same post at Donnington when I was there – the perfect man to issue me with the stripes. He said I had half an hour to sew them on if I wanted a meal in the Sergeants' Mess. Well I did want the meal, so I went to the billet to sew them on and there met the other members of the course - Nick Webber, Brian Duffield, Colin (Nibs) Newby and Fred Waters being the ones I already knew well.

The course, through its further stages at Blandford, Bordon and Arborfield, was largely uneventful. That is until the last three months or so, when I was admitted to the Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot with a pilonidal sinus (abscess on the base of the spine), being the result of riding a bicycle with an over hard saddle. When I was released from hospital, the course had finished - late yet again! I was allowed, fortunately, to receive my missed instruction and take my exams as an individual. Due to my stay in hospital, with nothing to do except swot, I was able to draw the diagrams of the mechanical operations of the Teleprinter 7B from memory and obtain a very high mark as a result. Needless to say, I never came across another teleprinter from that day on!

A new Tiffy!

As a new Artificer Radio, I was posted to BAOR in 1959, where I found myself in transit at 32 Armoured Workshop, Liebenau, waiting for somebody to decide where I should go. This time I was neither late nor last – I just didn't get to the unit I should have. There was another Staff Sergeant called Morton (not Alan) awaiting onward posting. We were of similar age, height and appearance and, as a result of some Orderly Room Clerk getting his wires crossed, he got our postings crossed in sympathy and I found myself *en route* to 7 Armoured Workshop at Fallingbommel. It was S/Sgt Morton who told me this story when I met him later.

After 2½ years, I was posted to 24 Infantry Workshop, Kahawa, in Kenya. My wife and I flew out on our seventh wedding anniversary in 1962. This was a "fire brigade" unit and all was confusion when I arrived, the unit having been just one day back from Kuwait. The hot season of the year seemed to be the time for hot spots in another sense. We were all reminded of the fact that we were soldiers first and tradesmen second, in that in successive years, workshop personnel were involved in (a) securing Nairobi airport during the Kenya army mutiny; (b) helping to quell the uprising in Swaziland (only three of us were detached there to support the Gordon Highlanders); and (c) the conflict in the Aden Protectorate. I was in Kenya for 2½ years before this workshop was also disbanded. Thinking about it, I contributed towards a great many farewell presents, without ever receiving one myself!

My next posting, in 1964, was to 12 Command Workshop, Liverpool, in Western Command, as a member of the DDME Inspection Team (North), based in Chester, the southern area being located at Bridgend. The workshop itself had been civilianized, probably at the same time as its sister workshop

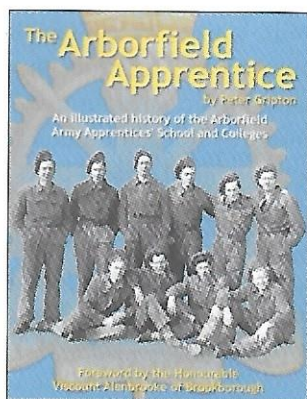
at Burscough. The Inspection Team leaders, apart from Radar, were all REME Artificers, while the inspectors and drivers were civilian. We all got on extremely well, without exception. It was while I was here that my six years waiting for promotion to AQMS finally ended. Our task was to inspect annually every item of technical equipment held on charge by Regular Units, TA Units, Officer Cadet Corps and School Combined Cadet Forces, in what was then Lancashire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Shropshire and the whole of North Wales and Anglesey. This organisation was not closing down when I left – but the next one, which I joined in 1969, certainly was! (They must have known I was coming!)

This was Tels Branch, based at the Signals Research and Development Establishment, Somerford, near Christchurch, Hampshire. Here I was involved with Plessey at Havant, in the development of a new HF manpack radio in the *Clansman* range, known in the early days as the CPRC26. (I seem to remember it was going to be known as something different later). This subsequently involved providing trials support to the Royal Signals seven days a week for several weeks, never working less than an 80-hour week and once working a 121-hour week. I started smoking again after an abstinence of four years - and it took me another twenty-four to stop again. As a result of cutbacks, SRDE was due to be amalgamated with its sister radar establishment at Bradford-upon-Avon. I was one of the first to leave, being posted to SEE, in 1972, for my third stint in Arborfield. This was to be my final posting - but not the final time I was late for something!

I arranged that my resettlement course and terminal leave should take up the last two months of my service - I always liked to have things tidy! Three days before the start of my terminal leave, I was offered a post as a training officer in High Wycombe, at a salary 10% higher than my final Army salary - which of course I accepted. That same evening, I was visited at home by a Captain, who said that he had been instructed by the Colonel to inform me that my promotion to ASM had come through. I was thus being given the opportunity to sign on for an extra two years to qualify for the pension of that rank. This offer came just four hours too late (surprise, surprise) and I never did wear my new rank. Two days later, I handed in that 1098 equipment I was not allowed to retain. Luckily, I was totally prepared for the transition to life outside REME, but have never been really sure that I did the sensible thing. I like to think I did!

Since becoming the qualified ex-serviceman I set out to be, my tendency to end up in situations, which could well have meant my needing to seek new employment, remained with me until I retired completely six years ago. I had seen the company for which I was working taken over three times. The difference in each of these cases was that I stayed where I was, while those around me were being made redundant. This, I am convinced, was entirely due to the quality of the technical and character-building training that I received in the Army – firstly as an Apprentice Tradesman at Arborfield, then built on by another twenty-plus years in REME.

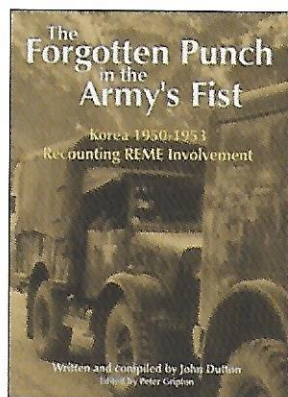
ASSOCIATION ITEMS FOR SALE



THE ARBORFIELD APPRENTICE is an illustrated history of the Arborfield Army Apprentices' School and Colleges By Peter Gripton 56B. 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 FORGOTTEN PUNCH IN THE ARMY'S FIST.

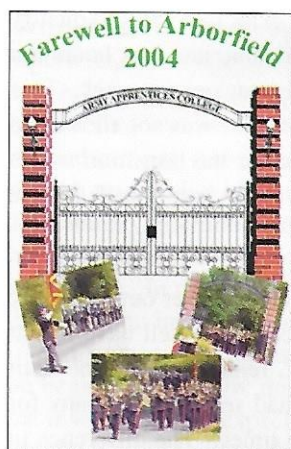
ISBN 0954621816

is written and compiled by John Dutton 43A and edited by Peter Gripton 56B.

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 £12.50 to members of the Arborfield Old Boys Association, members of the British Korean Veterans Association, their families and friends and when purchased from the Association Shop in the REME Museum of Technology Arborfield or from local branches of the BKVA.

'The Arborfield Apprentice' is available for just £18.50 and 'The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist' for just £12.50 from the REME Museum Association Shop at Arborfield.



FAREWELL TO ARBORFIELD 2004 (DVD/VHS Tape) as narrated by John Smithson.

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 is available as a DVD or VHS Video Tape and 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 + p&p.



ASSOCIATION TIES

We also have an Association Tie bearing an attractive logo and available in the four Company colours of blue, red, green and yellow. These cost £7.00 each and are also available from Arborfield Old Boys Association Secretariat at Arborfield.

FROM BOY TO MAN

By Bill Wenborn of the March 1941 Intake

Size isn't everything

I think its safe to say that Peter Langley covered our recruit days, as well as quite a few other experiences, most eloquently in OBAN Issue 24 and, in so doing, spurred me on to add my penny-worth. Congratulations Peter, I enjoyed your article and I'm sure so did many others. You were right by the way, you did have too many lads in your barrack room, some of them were in 'J5'. Your reference to my height amused me. I met Bob Griffen shortly before he died and his first remark was to the effect that he always thought I was bigger than I really was! I had to point out that he himself had grown somewhat over the years, whereas I had not. In fact I was only five-foot eight inches when I joined, and am only five-foot ten now. Six-foot tall fourteen-year olds are not abnormal nowadays, but were very rare creatures then.

Staying with the question of size, two of our friends amused me during my service. Both were posted with me to 21 Command Workshops at Burscough, Lancs. One was 'Pewee' Edwards (I believe ex-'A' Coy). On our way to Burscough, we stopped overnight in Chester. Needless to say, having just escaped from Arborfield, we all trooped out for a 'taste' of freedom in the local tavern. Unfortunately, the landlady took one look at 'Pewee' and said something like "I'm not serving that little kid". So we then had the problem of getting drinks to him for the rest of the evening, but it was a good feeling to think we were all grown up.

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

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

Around 1965, while on ADME inspections at Aldershot, I was inspecting the arms at Sandhurst. The Armourer there told me that Bob was with the Coldstream Guards at Windsor and had a 'demonstration company' at Sandhurst, so it was arranged for us to meet. The next time I was inspecting at Sandhurst, Bob walked up behind me and said, "Hello, Bill". When I turned round, I really had a shock. There was this great big fellow of about eighteen stone or more, with large heavy jowls - I could hardly recognize him. I know there were a good few years since we last met, but that really was a shock. That's enough of sizing



Bill at his 76th Birthday

people up, except to say that I was the same size when I was thirty-five as when I left Arborfield, when Bob and I were like a couple of beanpoles together.

Some tales of boys' service

Going back to the period of our recruit training, when the rest of the School had gone home, we found an old bicycle (I don't think it was lost); it was minus brakes, mudguards and a few other parts. We were having great fun, racing down the road where the shelters were, towards the back of the Armourers' Workshop, taking an acute left bend and trying to stay on the road. However, following a few near misses from crashing into a hut, we posted a lad between the road and the hut. Once, when it was my turn to be the 'stop man', Paddy Silcock (being the rider) suddenly appeared round the bend with absolutely no chance of staying on the road. I grabbed the centre of the handlebars and the front of the bike stopped dead - but not so the rear! I then found myself looking Paddy in the eyes from a height of about eight feet in the air and still firmly seated (all in slow motion, just like the cartoons!). Paddy then decided to part company with the bike and jumped clear, while I managed to stop the bike from falling on him. We certainly didn't wish to damage the bike and spoil the fun; Paddy was a tough 'Soldier to be' and soon bounced back, with no damage done.

Another little mishap that occurred later in our boys' service concerned Taffy Howell in 'J5'. Some bright spark had decided on a little 'barrack room gymnastics'. The idea was to stand on the towel rail, attached to the partition (opposite the NCO's bunk), leap forward to grab the beam, then swing forward and land as far up the room as possible. When it came to Taffy's turn, he failed to get a good grip; his feet went up but his head

came down, and he knocked himself out cold. Now what do we do at a time like this? --- PANIC! -- Since it was his head, we all thought 'no great damage done' (if you read this Taffy, sorry, just couldn't resist it mate). Anyway, he soon came round but, joking aside, we knew we had to get him to a doctor. So the next stage was a barrack room conference, to ascertain how it could have happened. The tale decided upon was that "*he came running into the room and tripped over the bumper handle, which had dropped down across his path*". Now we could get him to a doctor.

He saw the doctor and all seemed well. Then, that evening in the Camp Hall, waiting for the film to start, we first had the usual very colourful display on the screen, which looked like a mobile kaleidoscope. We were quietly watching this, when Taffy asked, "*Why is it in black and white tonight, Bill?*" I think my answer went something like, "*Oh dear, Taffy, you really shouldn't have fallen on your head*". Fortunately, by Monday morning he was back to his normal state, whatever that was! I'm sorry to say I have never seen him since leaving Arborfield, I do hope you never had any repercussions from that fall, Taffy.

Posted 'oop north'

When the School closed at the end of February 1944, as I said earlier I was sent up to Burscough, along with Bob Nash, Bill Cranston, Peter Ryan, 'Pewee' Edwards, Stan Dunning, Mac McAlease and a few others, but sorry to say I can't remember them all. One little incident that happened there that I thought was very funny and still makes me smile, was when the Armourers' Shop WO1 (who had started there as a National Service L/Cpl and somehow got to his exalted rank) decided to give us a good rollicking. He got us all into his office and started by telling us he had had enough of our pranks and bad behaviour and that he was going to 'sort us out'. Whereupon Stan Dunning, always with a dry sense of humour, retorted with, "*Don't worry, Sir, where we've just spent the past three years, we were chased around by real soldiers*". I don't think the poor chap really appreciated our sense of humour!

While at Burscough during 1944, we started to see the return of some ex-infantry men, who had been re-trained in India to be Armourers. Three of them had just completed twelve, eleven and ten years' service in India and Burma. Now that's what you call 'overseas service'.

One sunny afternoon, we were sat round a regimental L/Cpl, just a lad really, who was 'instructing' us on the Bren gun. This included the above mentioned three 'old sweats', who (surprise, surprise) were not showing a great deal of interest. So the instructor called on one of them to demonstrate 'changing a firing pin'. Well, the demonstration was rather unconventional, but very fast, in fact it was difficult to follow. Then the L/Cpl was naive enough to ask where he had learnt that! The soldier just smiled and said something like, "*That's how you do it when you have to*". We then let the poor lad into our secret - that he had just spent the past half-hour teaching about twenty Armourers how to strip a Bren gun; I don't remember ever seeing him again! (*The 'First IA' when instructing is: make sure you know whom you are instructing.*)

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

Off to the Far East

However, VJ Day saw Bob Nash and myself on a train heading for the REME mobilisation and holding centre at Hucknall, near Nottingham, on draft ROBBJ. When we arrived, we expected to be able to get out and celebrate, but no such luck. We had to go through the whole procedure of booking in and kitting out before they would let us out on the town. When we did get out we did our best to catch up, and ended the night dancing round a bonfire somewhere on a bomb site in Hucknall, with some of the local talent. Our olive-green kit indicated Far East. In those days, everything was secret, but not too difficult to work out. After a couple of days, we were transferred to Bestwood Lodge on the edge of Arnold, just north of Nottingham (and just five miles from where I now live). We stayed there for six weeks.

We were then put on another ship bound for Rangoon. I've forgotten its name now, but it was designed to be used as a hospital ship during the war. It would be used to carry troops in, and then 'lay off' and wait to take off any casualties. It did not have a Red Cross, as the Japs would have used the cross as an aiming mark. That's the way they were. When we first heard we were to travel on a hospital ship, we thought we would be travelling in style, lying on comfy beds tended by pretty nurses, but we should have known better. The beds had metal slats, with about six to eight inch squares for arms and legs to fall through, a couple of blankets but no mattress of course. (We can't have the men being too comfortable can we?) Bring back the hammocks, please.

We arrived in a transit camp, just out from Rangoon, after five days at sea, on Christmas Eve 1945 - and had a great Christmas and New Year in this camp. We also had a chance to see what was left of Rangoon. It was obvious that it had been a beautiful city, but it was sad to see how badly it had been damaged. There was a cluster of camps in this area, including ours, for in-coming troops, and another for homeward bound troops. About two o'clock, on the morning following Boxing Day (with a high proportion of us sleeping off good Christmas celebrations), we were woken by a burst of small-arms fire, including a machine gun, followed by a couple of grenades. One of the camps near-by had been attacked by bandits (I believe we called them 'Dakoits'); we were later informed that some of these bands were led by ex-Japanese officers and NCOs.

What we had not realized before was that the area command centre was close by. We were able to gather, from the conversation over the air, that it should have been the homeward bound camp's turn to 'turn out'. The fact is that many had been celebrating, as they were to be on their way home the next day. I don't think I need explain the nature of the conversation we overheard! These guys had just finished fighting up and down

Burma for up to four years, and had no intention of 'stopping one' on their last day in the country. They eventually turned out to be a unit of Royal Engineers. For our part, we had no idea what was happening or where the firing was coming from. And since we were already lying on the ground, it seemed a good idea to stay put! It was of course a tented camp. We never did find out what it was all about, but only that there were no casualties. It was a good introduction to Burma, a very violent country.

Service in Burma

It was one evening during the first week in January 1946 that they bundled us onto a train, heading for a town called Prome, about 130 miles 'up country'. It was easy to see that Burma had once had a first class railway, but it had been badly damaged. We were located in what would have been a compartment for fourteen people, with their own steward, equipped with a small kitchen and bar. Needless to say, this was not for us - the reality was for about twenty of us with full kit, stuffed into this space, where there were no doors or windows. (*Help! Send for the health and safety boys*). This little trip took about twenty hours, and was extremely cold through the night.

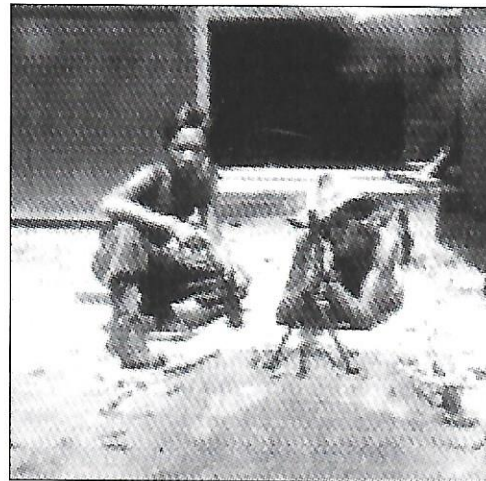
About the only excitement to amuse us on our way, was when a pack of monkeys ran through the trees alongside the track, racing the train for about five miles. The high pitched screaming was horrific, but it's amazing how so little can amuse so many, when on such an uncomfortable and boring journey. It was on this journey that we learnt to make tea, by running along to the engine platform, to get the driver to let off some boiled water from the engine - no chance nowadays with diesel.

The sight of Prome on our arrival was a real shock, we could see where buildings had stood but, apart from a few small pagodas and statues of Buddha (including one over eighty feet high), there was nothing left standing. We were told that the town had changed hands four times when we were driven out, and again when we advanced down Burma. It was a highly strategic position on the Irrawaddy River. We were attached to a Nigerian Brigade Workshop to await our postings throughout the 82nd Division. They had arranged three 46-gallon drums of water between about thirty of us, for us to get washed and refreshed, but there were no basins, tins or anything for us to be able to share the water. Our ex-boys' ingenuity had to work fast if we were not to have a dirty water wash. Bob Nash and I quickly stripped the padding from our tin hats, replaced the screw, and 'hey presto!' we had washbowls, albeit rather small. It was the only use we found for having carried these tin hats halfway around the world!

The unit had not long been in this location, and to say that everything was 'basic' would be an understatement. There was a marquee erected within the walls of a badly gutted cinema, with a few tents scattered around, but of course, no beds. Bob and I, plus a couple of others, managed to lay claim to a small room, underneath what had been the projection room. Here, we rigged ourselves a form of hammock in bamboo frames, at least it raised us off the ground.

While we were here, there was a scare about 'scrub typhus', something even the Medics did not seem to know very much about.

As a precaution, we were instructed to sprinkle DDT powder in the inside of our clothes. Something that does not bear thinking about, considering how damaging this stuff was found to be in later years. Thoughts nowadays turn to 'Gulf War Syndrome', with the untested precautions and treatments being prescribed.



Bill with Burmese helper on the test range

One thing stands out (in what memory I have left) was seeing the large sail boats coming down the Irrawaddy River in full sail, carrying a full load of timber from Mandalay to Bassein. It would take them four days to come down, and then another three months for them to manhandle it back to Mandalay.

Bob was posted to 2nd Btn Gold Coast Regt. at Henzada, on the Irrawaddy Delta, while I went on to 1st Btn Nigerian Regt., just down the road from where we were in Prome. This camp was built from bamboo and grass. I was told that the Division had marched over the mountain range from the Arakan, and each Battalion had left their 'pioneer platoon' at a bamboo area. Here, they cut sufficient bamboo of various sizes to build rafts, which would actually take the weight of a platoon, which they then sailed down river to Prome.

As the Division halted along this road, they went into the jungle about fifty yards. Then, with a combination of bamboo (by courtesy of their respective pioneer platoons) and whatever was available in that part of the jungle, so they built their camp. There were no tents or any other equipment available to them. It really was amazing what they had accomplished, with so little equipment, other than that wonderful tool - the machete. My stay with the 1st Nigerians was short-lived, some admin mistake I believe. But before I left I was given a scrub typhus inoculation. There were to have been four of these (one a week). With the benefit of hindsight, I should have been worried, since a week before we had been sprinkling DDT powder in our kit, because they did not seem to know what they were doing.

Anyway, a week after arriving there, I was given a travel warrant to some remote village on the Irrawaddy Delta, with a posting to 1st Btn Gold Coast Regt. This I must admit was a bit scary. I duly packed my kit that afternoon and was taken to catch a train that evening to go a few stations down the line. I've forgotten the names, but I then had to catch another train to Henzada, where I knew Bob Nash was. Getting off my train at about 22.00 hrs, I made inquiries for my next train, and was told by the rather disinterested Burmese RTO, "11 o'clock". "Great", says I, "just another hour then". "No", says he, "another thirteen hours!"

Everything was in darkness and there were no units in the area,

so he directed me to a rather black hole of a room at the end of the platform. After accustoming my eyes, I slowly made my way to a corner, and soon realized I was alone. But a while later, I saw the silhouettes of three others creep in. I already had 'five in the magazine', so I then wrapped the sling round my wrist and stayed awake the rest of the night, only to find at daybreak that three smiling Gurkhas had guarded me. I could have had good night's sleep!

My train arrived about 11.00 hrs - a goods train. It was only a couple of hours to Henzada and I soon met Bob and enjoyed a pleasant evening with 2nd Gold Coast Regt. The following day I was put on my next train, which consisted of two large goods trucks towed by a Jeep, with its tyres removed and a gang of coolies to get it going. Rail bridges had been destroyed all the way down the Delta and this was the makeshift transport, with footbridges to cross the chasms. I was very grateful when I found I only had to walk across one of these. It was a long way to the bottom of the chasm and about fifty feet or more across. I found it hard to see the funny side of this, while walking across loaded with full kit and my rifle.

An unexpected promotion!

The next train took me to Bassein (to where the sailboats brought the timber from Mandalay). Here, I had to catch a small riverboat to a little village called Maubin Pyapon, I believe about two and a half hours on. I was rather surprised (and thick) to find several captains of these boats shouting each other down to have me travel with them. I later discovered it was me and my trusty rifle they wanted on board, in case of being stopped by bandits. I've never felt so popular since. I eventually arrived at my destination, very sweaty, scruffy and tired. As a British soldier, attached to an African unit, I was automatically a member of the Sergeants' Mess, which in fact is known as 'A British Other Ranks' Mess'. A little daunting for a nineteen years old Craftsman! I was allocated a bedspace (but no bed) and a native batman to look after me. The Mess was in a two-storey house and catered for HQ and one rifle company only, the other companies were spread down the Delta in other villages.

That evening was an experience I shall never forget. First I had to conform to the tradition of 'dressing for dinner', which was quite unexpected under the circumstances, since as soon as we put a shirt on, the shirt became wet with perspiration. Not to mention me having to sit to dinner with all these senior ranks, including the RSM, the Captain QM and the Padre! An unusual ritual here was for the bread to be passed round the table, and for each member to cut his own slice, tap it on the breadboard, and then sweep the crumbs onto the floor. Strange, I thought, until it came closer to me. I then realised that they were sweeping 'live meat' onto the floor i.e. whatever had got into the bread on its way up river! When I passed on my turn there were a few laughs, but two or three days later, Bill had joined in the ritual.

That evening, the RSM came over to me and his opening words were, "*I know you, you have a brother about the same age and your father's name is Alf and he served in the Duke of Cornwall's*". All this information was correct. Then he informed me that he used to be the Picket boat Lance Corporal on Camp Bay beach when we were kids in Gibraltar. His duty, along with

one other, was to row up and down, a safe distance from the beach, to keep the swimmers safe - a lifeguard in fact. This had been sometime between 1931 and 1934. As kids, we knew we had to behave ourselves, because there was a 'short circuit' back to our fathers. But what a small world, eh? He then introduced me to the CSM of HQ Company, who also knew my father. He had worked in his kitchen on fatigues or jankers, and did not speak very highly of him - Dad was a Sgts' Mess cook of 1911 vintage and did not suffer lazy rookies too gladly! However, we had a good laugh and a few beers together, and he agreed I could not be held responsible for my Dad, I'm glad to say.

Three events stand out from my stay in this village, the first being very distressing and frightening at first. There was an outbreak of bubonic plague. Of course, the troops had been inoculated against it and we were all safe, but the scenes were reminiscent of what the plague of London must have been like. There were daily collections of bodies from the houses onto ox-carts, to be taken out of the village and put into large pits, to be covered with lime. The whole thing was quite horrific, since some of us had got to know a few of these people and, in one case, a whole family known to us was taken away one morning. Our Doctor and his team did a great job and we were sure they did save some lives, but of course for many it was too late. The only defence the locals had was to 'drive the devil away' by banging on any tin can or bin available, for four days and nights. It may well have frightened the rats from the village, but it also just about drove us mad! The plague did peter out, but in its own time.

Another incident was rather amusing. One morning, I was walking in the village, when I saw a ship's mast moving through the bush, followed by a funnel and another mast. I ran down to the riverside to see this fair sized ship going up to Bassein. This is the port where I had caught the boat to come here, and to where the sailboats bring the timber from Mandalay. These ships would come up the Delta from the sea, taking about four to six days. It really was strange to see an ocean-going ship picking its way up through the jungle, with what looked like just inches or either side.

Sad news from home

The third event was personal and very distressing for me. My QM sent for me one morning, at about 11.00 hrs. and said he had some bad news for me. He then proceeded to read a telegram to me which read, "*Mum passed away this morning, 4/3/46. Dad*". This was the 8th of March, so it had taken four days for the telegram to reach me - it had been 'circulated to all units in the division'. The QM simply said, "*Sorry, don't go back to work today*". Although Mum had been ill for several years, it still left me very numb, especially being stuck in a remote village with no means of communication other than letters, and not knowing anyone well enough to talk to.

However, within a couple of weeks, the Regiment was on the move by riverboat, heading for Rangoon and then on their way home to the Gold Coast. The orders were that British NCOs, who came out from Africa with them would take them back, and the likes of myself would be posted on to other units in Burma. Within a couple of days, 2nd Btn. Gold Coast Regiment arrived, bringing with it my old pal Bob Nash. It was great to have a

good natter with a friend. We were housed in a tented camp, in a large field, overlooked by the Swadagon Pagoda, a beautiful and impressive gold-roofed building.

Once again we were left in a disorganized transit camp, never a good idea. Very soon we found out that the NAAFI was selling off bottles of drinks that had proved hard to sell to troops. We then developed a taste for Sherry and, by buying a bottle each a day, then selling one in Rangoon and drinking the other (or bartering for other drinks), we were able to keep our financial situation under control and avoid pay parades! This in effect gave us a six weeks Rangoon holiday. Our luck eventually ran out when they 'sold out' and we had to go for our pay. I don't remember our cover story, but it didn't seem to convince anyone and we found ourselves in 5 Advanced Base Workshops before our next pay-day.

I thought this was a rather 'happy go lucky' unit, housed in a college, about 18 miles from Rangoon. Here, I was set the task of range testing all the Bren machine guns repaired by our workshop; these were to be handed over to the Burmese Army and police. My first task was to convert an old Japanese aeroplane bay into a thirty-yard range, with the help of some Japanese POWs. I had to set up the means for testing the Bren, including firing into a sand-pit through a box at an angle of some 70 degrees (though not sure of the angle now!). This range set-up was about two hundred yards from the workshop, and we had to pass an Indian village. The day after completion, I arrived at the range to find all my timber had been removed. So I went back to fetch Bob and a couple of others for support, plus a Sten gun each (with unloaded magazines of course). We went to our Indian friends and explained to them that it would be a good idea for them to put my timber back by this time tomorrow! 'Hey presto', they understood. Bearing in mind that the Japs had not long since left and the locals must have thought that we might use similar methods of persuasion. Anyway, we did obtain a good understanding with them for the future.

My job for the next few months consisted of range testing twelve Brens per day, and I believe the test involved firing about 250 rounds per gun. Needless to say, I became a 'dab hand' with a Bren gun. 5 ABW was a pleasant posting as far as any posting in Burma could be, its general discipline seemed lax, but the work throughput was very high, particularly taking into account the climatic conditions and lack of comfort. While there, we suffered a very bad outbreak of dysentery that killed one of our lads. I believe the figures were something like 250 out of about 450 men affected. I got away with a severe dose of diarrhoea, which reduced my weight to nine stone, a very messy business. As anyone having served in the theatre will say, "That's Burma".

On the move again

Halfway through August, I was on the move again, back in another transit camp, awaiting transport to Singapore. In this camp we were hired out to various units in the area for guard duties. One such guard I landed really had me worried, I was a L/Cpl with just three men and we were to guard two thousand – yes, two thousand – mules! These were all tethered to ropes, strung between stakes driven into the ground. Our fears were, that if the locals felt they needed meat, they may well decide to

stampede the mules. There to stop them were four men in the black of night, with a rifle and ten rounds each, with just one hurricane lamp between us! I don't think the tent would have afforded a great deal of shelter either, to save us from a stampede of two thousand mules. However, our fears were unfounded and we were all very pleased to see the morning sun, even if we did all stay awake all night.

I believe I was there about three weeks, before being notified one evening that I would be flying to Singapore in the morning. At the same time, I was informed of my weight allowance, this would just allow for my Army-issue equipment, therefore some of my personal belongings had to be discarded. The thing that really sickened me was my having to discard some of the tools I had sweated over for hours, to satisfy 'Oily' Bramble (head of the fitting shop), when in the fitting shop as a boy at Arborfield. The plane was a cargo *Dakota*, with some bench seats along the sides. There was a pile of mailbags in the front, with a Lt Col from the Intelligence Corps sat on the bags. He seemed quite old to me, with white hair, and sporting First World War medal ribbons - plus a few others. There were only six British and three Indian Army Service Corps lads on board, so I was even more upset about having had to leave my belongings behind.

This being my first flight, the *Dakota* was not the best plane to instil confidence. As soon as the engines started, rivets holding the sheets of metal together on the wings vibrated like mad, it was not a great confidence booster for the future. We were about to land at Butterworth airport, near Penang in Malaya, when one of the crew came through to tell us that we had to search an area of sea, for a life-raft with an aircrew, adrift off the coast. He then asked us to look out and report anything we could spot. We were only about a thousand feet, when someone spotted something on the water and said so. The next thing we saw was the mast of a small sailing boat passing our window - and we were at sea level. The only trouble we had with this was that our stomachs were still up at one thousand feet! Also, it was the first time I realized that a very dark skinned Indian could turn white (well, maybe grey-ish) - our Indian friends were not happy chappies. We took several more dives but never found the raft, and landed after about two hours. We had a late lunch and went on to Singapore. Our Lt Col passenger had never taken his eyes out of the book he was reading, nor did he acknowledge anybody, or anything happening, throughout the flight

Once more I found myself in a transit camp for a couple of weeks, on this occasion a really massive one, I believe it was called Neesoon. To give an indication of its size at that time, there would be four queues going into the dining hall from its four comers, for two hours every mealtime.

I had a reunion with a few of the lads who had come out on the same draft as Bob and myself to Burma. We really were being shuffled around the Far East at that time. There was another ex-Arborfield Armourer of my vintage, but I'm very sorry to say I can not remember his name (I believe it could have been 'Oliver' and he was ex-'B' Company). However, we had to toss up for one to go up to Bangkok and the other to be attached to 1st Btn The Royal Scots (the First of Foot), nicknamed 'Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard'. They were in a barracks just north of Jahore Baharu, over the causeway from Singapore. No prizes for

guessing who won the toss!

'First of Foot'

The next day, I was duly dispatched to Jahore Baharu and was soon introduced to the HQ CSM, a real 'East End Cockney' (quite a surprise), but the real shock was to be told that he 'doubled' for the Pipe Major. The next surprise was to meet the Drum Major, who was a Paddy. What a mixed up bunch! Three weeks after my arrival, the CO sent for me and informed me that he could not hold a Lance Corporal responsible for the state of his Regiment's arms; therefore I was to be promoted to 'acting Sergeant' with immediate effect. I managed to refrain from arguing with him and thought it a damn good idea! That was 23rd September 1946 and, fortunately for me, I never came below Sergeant again. It really was a boost to my morale (and pocket), even if a little daunting. Obviously the Mess was full of war veterans - and me a mere twenty-year-old lad from another unit. Although my Cockney Pipe Major-cum-CSM did look after me and was a great help. (I met him again in Blackdown, a couple of years later.) It was while I was here, that word got to me that Bob Nash had been close on my heels and was now just 'up the road' as Armourer Sergeant to a Battalion of the Devonshire Regt. We managed to meet in Singapore a couple of times before I left.

The Royal Scots were involved in various guard duties, both in Singapore and Malaya, with the commitments of a full strength Regiment, but were under considerable strain, due to having been reduced to about 260 men because of many being demobilized. It was decided to withdraw the Regiment from these duties for a rest, so we were sent to guard the infamous Changi Gaol. On our arrival at Changi, I got to know the QM (my boss). He sent for me and told me I was to be his 'technical expert' in the barrack takeover. The jobs that us Armourers get! I don't know what made him think that a newly-promoted Armourer Sergeant could also be a Clerk of Works. Worse was to come! To make sure I couldn't get away, I was introduced to my own bugle call. I claim that to be unique for a REME tradesman attached to a Regiment.

Our duties at Changi were to guard the worst of the Japanese prisoners found guilty of atrocities. One of the Prison Standing Orders was that the prison clock would not strike for twenty-four hours prior to a hanging - we British must be humane. Anyway, the clock was stopped for a nine-day period part way through our month there. I believe there were fifty-two hangings during that month. This may seem rather gruesome now, but one has to bear in mind the terrible, and utterly inhumane, atrocities perpetrated by these creatures against men, women and children, often for no reason other than their own gratification. These stories were unfolding daily in the Singapore Courts of Law. At least, these murderers did have a trial in a properly authorised court, which is something that the thousands of decent people they murdered did not have.

Off to India

Just before Christmas 1946, our orders came to pack for a move back to India but, at that stage, 'we know not where'. I believe it was the 22nd of December when we climbed up the gangplank onto the 'Troopship Devonshire'. It was His Majesty the King's

Christmas Day speech that caused the greatest laugh, on the five days journey from Singapore to Madras. We were in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, half-way between the two ports, and the famous line was, "I am pleased to be able to announce that for the first time in many years, there are none of my Forces on the high seas this Christmas Day". Which just goes to prove that it's not just us squaddies, but even His Majesty who gets 'the mushroom treatment' (kept in the dark and fed a diet of bullshit!).

Another laugh was when I stood next to one of our Sergeants leaning on the rail looking out to sea. I spotted his tattoo, which had a pith helmet over a pair of boots in a pool of sweat, with the caption 'India, never again'. We duly arrived in Madras, a city with some rather magnificent buildings. Our Indian contractor with whom the Regiment's advance party had agreed a contract to look after its requirements, met us. Our own NAAFI was never accepted in India. Instead, a unit would agree to take on a contractor, who would provide all the unit's requirements. These would be: bearers to clean our kit, dhobi wallas (to do the washing), tailors, cobblers, ice cream-, fruit- and the famous char-wallas. There was also the barber, who would give us a shave (with cut-throat razor) before waking in the morning. Service in India was a rough life, but someone had to do it!

And so, once more into a tented transit camp, but this time it wasn't so bad, as we were there as a Regiment. The first morning, we heard the soon to be familiar melody, "Char walla char walla", so we all put our mugs out with two annas in, and dozed off again. Then, a little later on, we got a repeat of the same melody, the poor char walla was going mad, shouting "Everybody says I have been for the mugs, I not come untill now". We later found a large pile of mugs by a hole in the perimeter fence; some enterprising chap had made a killing! We celebrated the New Year in this camp and, being a Sassenach, I found myself as Orderly Sergeant, not a position to be envied.

While here, we were kitted out with a suit of battle-dress and an extra blanket. Within a few days we were loaded onto a troop train heading for Karachi, with no idea how long our compartment would be our home. There were six men to a compartment, which had slatted seats on each side, with a slatted backrest and a slatted shelf above to stow our kit. The sleeping arrangement was to stow our kit on the floor, lift the backrest and there we had six bunks. I believe it was the second day when we realized why we needed the extra blanket and battle dress. The train was climbing up and going through Hyderabad (a former state in south central India), with snow along the track, quite a temperature shock. In fact, that journey took eight and a half days, with some rather interesting sights to see and unusual experiences along the way. I cannot remember things in sequence now, but shall list a few things that happened *en route*. Troop trains in India had a habit of being side-tracked, so we would end up parked in a siding for some considerable time.

It was at times like that when we took photos and looked in on the local life. One such time certainly amused us (under our circumstances we were easily amused). There was a work-gang at the side of the track, with the complete answer to childcare. The woman would place the child on the ground, then fill a few baskets with soil, for another to take away and dump. While she

was away, mama would pick up her baby and breast-feed it until her mate returned. She then dumped the poor little thing back on the ground again. This went on for about an hour while we were there. There was another time we stopped and a much-too-inquisitive pack of baboons came out of the bush to see what was happening. The procedure was to mount guards on all entrances to the train, whenever it stopped. A pack of baboons can be very intimidating and I must say we all began to feel rather uncomfortable. However, we eventually did get the order to withdraw into the train and be ready to close doors and windows, but fortunately the train moved on - much to our relief

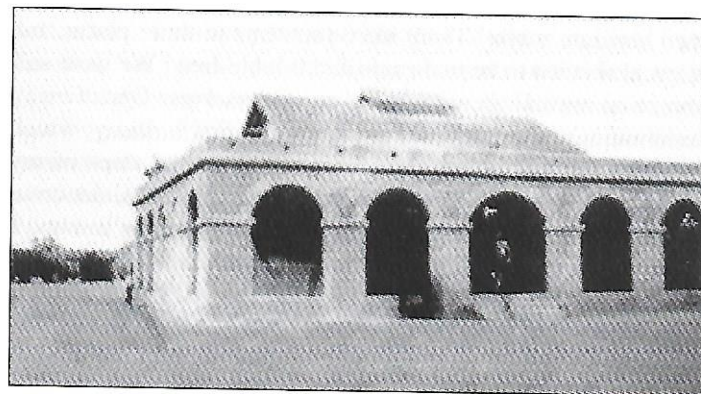
We stopped at Agra station on our way, but were unable to see the famous Taj Mahal from the train. Unfortunately, the Army didn't consider giving us a conducted tour, we just had to see what we could from the train. The next stop was Delhi, then we headed east into what is now Pakistan, stopping at Jodhpur and Hyderabad (the capital city of the province of Sind). This entailed two days crossing a burning desert, in what felt like a mobile oven. Things weren't too bad while on the move, but stifling hot when stationary. The day temperatures were about 140 degrees Fahrenheit or 60 degrees in new money. The two Hydrabads seem ironical, the Province being the coldest and the city being the hottest places that we went through - both bearing the same name.

We eventually arrived in Karachi, having been attended to all the way by our char walla, fruit and ice cream wallas. There was another service available, but too costly for us to indulge too often, this was the railway restaurant service. The system was for a smartly dressed waiter to take your order at one station; then another would serve you a lovely meal at the next station along the line (and take the payment). The tray would finally be collected at the third station; it was a first class service with good food. On arrival in Karachi, we were taken to a garrison camp about 20 miles out from the city, on the edge of the Sind desert. They were single-storey brick buildings, which seemed to be spread for miles, and there were quite a variety of units. One such unit was an Indian Parachute Regiment, with Jack Meredith their Armourer. (He had been a 'Dukie' with me, and we joined Arborfield together, at both places we were in 'D' Company). We both lived in London and met there a few times during the war, so needless to say we also met a few times while in Karachi.

Unwelcome afflictions

Two outcomes of our eight-and-a-half days train journey became obvious on the following day's sick parade. It seemed as if half the Regiment had 'jippy tummy', while the rest had crabs (sorry, but it can happen to anyone!). The only cure at that time was a quick shave and a wash with surgical spirits, crikey that makes you jump! Some unfortunates had both complaints and we soon learned that Indian troop trains do not really need an engine.

It was during our stay here that the Regiment decided to catch up on the infantryman's skills. The ranges were only a few miles into the desert, but boy was it hot! The temperature was a constant 140 degrees all day, so they decided to take a Company out to the range for just half a day at a time, with five Companies, they each had one morning and one afternoon session per



Bill's Workshop at Napier Barracks in Karachi 1947

week. It was one afternoon after three weeks that one Company Commander said to me, *"It's a good job we only come out for half a day at a time, Tiffy"*. I forget what my answer was, but it was something like, *"Goodness gracious me, yes Sir"*. It then registered with him that not only had I been there whenever he was, but also that I had been spending twelve hours a day out there and was as black as a local lad. He then piled me into his Jeep and took me in to see the training Major, suggesting that I had an apology. It was then decided that all zeroing would be carried out on the thirty-yard range in camp, before seven o'clock in the morning. A little more experience and I'm sure I would have said something sooner (still too keen to please).

One good thing happened just prior to the move from Singapore, in that my 'nightmare' QM returned to the UK. But I must say I had not noticed the change, until my life returned to something resembling normal again. The mode of transport, for moving anything within the Garrison limits, was by camel cart - petrol was still in very short supply in this area just after the war. We were only in this camp for two or three months, when we were on the move again. It transpires that, although we were under-strength for full Battalion duties in Malaya, they had brought us right across India with the intention of sending us up to the North West Frontier. However, these duties would require a full-strength Battalion, so the Black Watch (with a full Battalion of regulars) had to go back up, after only having been back in Karachi six months since their last tour up there. They were none too pleased!

We then took over their barracks in Karachi; I believe they were called Napier Barracks. It was an open barracks, with a public road running through. I'm not sure now, but think that it consisted of two- or three-story barrack blocks, but my workshop was a single-storey block, with my bunk off to one side and an enclosed veranda right round. This clever planning positioned my Armourers' workshop about fifty yards out from the rest of the barracks, nearest to the town. A situation just prior to the 'partition' of India, I did not consider to be classified as healthy living! If Pete Langley thought he had a rude awakening on his first morning at Arborfield, he should try serving with a Scottish Regiment! They have a piper sound *Reveille* by marching through the camp, every morning except Monday, when the whole Pipe and Drum Band would march through the camp - it's just not civilized.

Being right on the edge of town is never a bad position for a camp, although that was the year that Pakistan and India went

their separate ways. There were problems in other places, but Karachi seemed to be quite safe and trouble-free. We were still able to go out and about town and enjoy ourselves. One of many 'celebrations' we enjoyed was my twenty-first birthday, which fell on a Sunday. I can remember sitting on the steps of my workshop that evening, stony broke (not an unusual situation in those days), but I can't really complain, as a few of us had had a great night out in a night-club the night before. We were there till the early hours, so I suppose it's fair to say I had celebrated on my birthday.

I guess barrack life is never very exciting and life became a routine. Due to the terrific heat, our routine started with *Reveille* at five thirty and we finished work at one o'clock. The afternoons were spent 'blanket pressing', or rather pressing a bath towel for greater comfort. There was a five-day period when the winds blew in from the desert (I've forgotten the name for it), but it was like opening an oven door and trying to breathe, there just seemed to be no oxygen in the air. All training was stopped and we just mounted triple guards, so they were doing one hour on with five off. The worst thing about it was the terrific death rate among the locals, including the poor old cab horses. Many of the less fortunate would sleep on the pavements in the town, where the early morning ritual was to hose down the streets. This seemed to be the method of separating the dead from the living! They didn't seem to bother too much about a doctor's declaration, the dead bodies were simply placed on a wagon and taken away - and I must admit I never asked where they were taken.

As soon as the Regiment settled into what looked like being a post-war situation, they started negotiations with their insurance company, to allow their Regimental silver to be shipped out. The first step was to send a Corporal and one other to London on a silversmith course, for them to be able to care for it. Then the insurers would only allow twenty-five per-cent of the silver to be sent out. When it did arrive, I was amazed at the amount of silver there was. They displayed it in the gymnasium, tiered up about five or six rows for the full width of the building. The thing that struck me most was the tremendous quality of the older pieces, some dating back to the mid-seventeenth century, and how the designs and skills had deteriorated as time went by. Some of the more modern silver, coming up to the outbreak of war, looked quite tatty by comparison.

The 'leave lottery'

While in Karachi, a scheme was started to send a small percentage of lads home on leave for a month. It took the form of a 'lottery' and, 'wonders never cease', my name came up and I was on my way home in August 1947. Thinking back to the time I was first notified for draft, and then realizing I was heading for India, I did expect to be away for about five years, as it used to be in pre-war days. So it was quite something to be coming home after just two years. My next discovery was that there was a place called Deolali, and it was not just the state of our minds from time to time. I was in charge of a small contingent from the Regiment on our way home, some finishing their time and a few going on leave. Deolali is a small village, not far from Bombay, with a large tented transit camp attached for troops leaving India. I often wondered if troops leaving India for home were regarded to be a little 'deolali'.

We were only there for a couple of days, but had to be on guard against the locals, trying to thief our gear before we left. And of course it was the last chance for them to sell us the usual rubbish. We were soon on our way to Bombay, to board a ten-thousand-ton converted cargo ship called the *'Empire Pride'*. I must say I thought to myself, "*If that's the Empire Pride, then God help us!*" I remember standing on the deck, watching Bombay gradually disappear over the horizon. There was a slight swell but I hadn't thought much about it until I decided to nip to the toilet (which was right up in the bow of the ship). Unfortunately, there were no vacancies, the place was full of seasick soldiers. There were about fifteen hundred troops on board and it really seemed to be an overcrowded ship. Indeed, I believe this to be the worst ship I ever had to travel on. The overcrowding seemed far worse than the ship I came out on, but this may have been so because it was such a small ship. The food wasn't only in short supply, but what was served up wasn't very palatable, to put it politely. However, it's amazing what soldiers will put up with when going home!

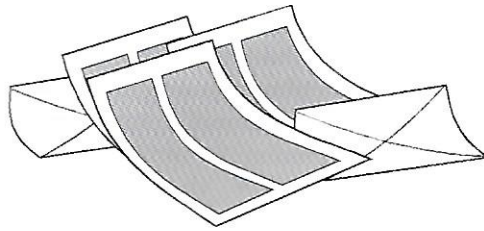
It took us three weeks to reach the port of Liverpool and then, after the journey south, it was home on the first train out of Waterloo to Lewisham the next morning. Only to be met by my Dad in reference to my stature (or lack of), "*Crikey, they sent Bill out to India and they've sent me back Ghandi!*" Oh but it's great to be back home, "*When are you going back?*" (As everyone used to ask.) I must say, we seemed to have spent more time in transit than carrying out useful work. Due to the partition of India, I did not return, but was posted to the 6th Royal Tank Regiment for the next six-and-a-half rather happy years. During that time, I met my wife and we were married just before Christmas 1950, I'm pleased to say. We had a daughter, born in Munster, Germany, in 1954, followed by our son, born in Hong Kong, 1956.

Afterthought

I've no doubt some of you are thinking, "*Here's an article with no mention of our institution, Ben Cook*". But you're wrong! While on ADME inspections at Aldershot, as previously mentioned, I had occasion to inspect the School. I was in the old Fitting Shop, with the weapons being brought over to me, when the door opened and in he came, as large as life. With that voice no-one can forget, he boomed, "*Hello boy, how yah getting on?*" Boy he says. There's me at 39, a WO2 with 21 years service, yet I felt sure he recognised me. Boy indeed! My memory flashed back to the first day he became Lieutenant QM. I was marching a few lads past the QM stores and he was out on the veranda. He gave the required "*Eyes right*" and there he was, green wellies, boots, belly hanging over his belt, shirt-sleeved with no hat, and we got the one finger salute! What a contrast from the previous time I had seen him, absolutely the perfectly turned out RSM, cane-stick tucked under his arm, with a barrel chest and ruddy face. That chest had certainly slipped down a bit!

(Bill's excellent tale actually started in OBAN 27, but some of his documents were inadvertently 'lost' during changes in editorship. I am pleased to say that we got it right in the end, and felt that it was correct to now issue Bill's article in all its completeness - I am sure readers will agree on that! Ed.)

OBAN LETTERS



Tony 'Digger' Head (46A) writes

At the 2005 Reunion dinner, we were served by a very attractive and most charming Yorkshire lass, who did a superb job in bantering with us 'old codgers' and keeping our glasses full. In fact we were so smitten by her that the only sober one amongst us (who shall remain nameless!) suggested that we had a 'whip round' to give her a tip. He suggested two pounds each and duly took charge of 'the kitty'. Then our crafty ex-apprentice training clicked into place and one of us suggested that, instead of giving the tip at the end of the dinner, we should give it halfway through, in the hopeful expectation of an enhanced flow of wine into our glasses. We did - and it worked!

Our waitress looked at the sixteen pounds in her hand as if it was the most money she had seen in her lifetime. She jumped up and down with excitement, thanked us all profusely, and then spontaneously proceeded to hug and kiss each one of us in turn. I should now mention that I am seventy-five years old and, these days, am seldom kissed by pretty young ladies. In fact to be honest, I'm *never* kissed by pretty young ladies, so the whole experience was quite enchanting.

I would therefore respectfully suggest that our overworked but ever resourceful Bill Cleasby contact the caterers, with a view to introducing 'kissing wenches' at future Reunion dinners. It could even become a tradition, much like singing 'The Reds' - only much more fun! Finally, upon reflection, I wonder if we crafty ex-apprentices might not have been as crafty as we thought we were, and missed out on even more excitement. Because I fantasize over what might have happened if instead of a mere *two* pounds, we had each chipped in a fiver?

Charlie Ayre (50B) emails

Once again, the AOBA News issue 33 has lifted my spirits. The letters and photographs with the accounts of some of the 'old boys' has reminded me of times spent at Arborfield, even though my memory has now developed forgetfulness at a rush. It is nice to read about the antics of the ones who can still remember what they did! Thank you for a lovely magazine and fond memories. I would like to offer my caption for the picture on page 14, as "*You will always get someone to hold up a wall*". (Hope you get this ok, as this is my first attempt - I am trying to learn the computer.)

Bob Petts (54B) emails

Regarding your article 'Civvies I have known' in the OBAN 33, I still have a copy of 'Radio Reference Riddiford' - a bit battered, but it was no cartoon-style book. It contained some info that still holds good today - like Kirchhoff's Laws etc. Fred Hall, Gerry Muldowney, Bernie Cardrick and Bill were all Tels

Instructors. I always remember the urns of cocoa and cold fried bread at 'tea break' and the 30-secs haircuts in the Tels shop! (*I certainly meant no disrespect to Bill's book, it was a great teaching aid. It's just that a lot of the illustrations of electrons, transistors etc were in a simplified cartoon-style manner, probably to enable even mere apprentices to understand them better! I'm amazed that Bob still has the book - I just wish I'd kept mine! Ed.*)

Maurice 'Mo' Hope (59B & a VM) writes

In the hectic life we live today, everything has to be 'done yesterday' and you can never get hold of a tradesman for love nor money. So it is possibly refreshing to know that there are some Vehicle Mechanics who charge nothing to carry out a complete rebuild, still available out there in the big wide world.

When we were doing our apprenticeship, our instructors drilled it in to us to pay attention so that, in later life if our skills were called upon, we could put them to good use. This situation arose recently, when I found this young lady in distress and in floods of tears, because her new car happened to be delivered without its wheels fitted. Now I could remember building up one or two wheel-stations on *Antars* and *Bedfords*, but this was a wholly different challenge, one that would test me to the full. With no more ado, and without my trusty little green painted toolbox or my 'Tiffy' toolbox for backup, I set about in earnest to put a smile back on this little face.

Without even an ISPL (*illustrated spare parts list - when did you last hear that term? Ed.*) or EMER in sight, but using all those basic skills I had learnt some forty odd years ago, I soon had it back together. There it sat proudly on all four wheels, ready for the over-excited female driver to carry out her first ever road test! With a distant fanfare of trumpets and applause from gathered neighbours, the trusty right size-six boot was applied with vigour to the accelerator. And 'pop', the fuse had blown, without it moving an inch! This was rapidly followed by an almighty wailing sound, which I could still hear from 'Toys-R-Us', as I demanded and received a replacement (also made in China!).



'Tiffy' at work - but under supervision!

John Houghton (56B) emails

Many thanks for sending me your personal report on the 2005 reunion, it's nice to keep up-to-date. Unfortunately I didn't make it this year - having arrived home just a few days beforehand from our holiday in Canada, I didn't feel up to it. But I'm obviously looking forward to next year! I was glad to see Sid (Urwin) and Tex (Bradley) were there again this year, but I assume that Charlie Brown has now left these shores for a new life down under? By the way, I'm starting to put pen to paper for that promised article for a future OBAN.

John Moss (55A) emails

Memories of Paddy Clayton - or was that Claydon?

Does anyone else remember Paddy Clayton? My memories are of a tall dark-haired Irishman, blessed with a silver tongue. He would tell stories beyond belief and always be 'on the cage'. Paddy went AWOL from AAS and eventually joined the RAF. I remember that he later deserted from there and came back to Arborfield. He came into our block one night, dressed in denims, and wearing a Lance Jack's tape. What a character! He told us that a bloke had committed suicide and that the boys who took him down got a week's compassionate leave. So he went to the Commanding Officer and asked, in his Irish brogue, "Sir, I took the rope down, can I have a weekend pass?"

He was always asking us for a 'tanner' or a 'bob'. (*Most of us recall that there wasn't much chance of refusing his request, he was backed up by his toughest cronies! Ed.*) One evening at 'lights out', he was caught going out through the fire doors. "Stop right there", shouted the Duty Sergeant, "who are you then?" Paddy replied, in a perfect Cockney accent, "L/Cpl Smith, Sarge, from 'A' Company, good night!" But he was eventually caught out. Taken down by the flu epidemic, he was found sleeping on someone's bed. I believe he got two dishonorable discharges!

Apprentice training at Arborfield

I have taken time to reflect and consider the effects it had on my life. Previously, like many young lads, I had been only an average student. I did not overly excel at sports, but would generally try anything. I was then given the choice of either joining the Army or ending up in trouble with the local police.

After three years of the Apprentice School, I had a very different outlook on life. For me it was survival of the fittest. Some made it to the top and others even went as far as contemplating suicide. In my case, I even shared a room with a murderer - the infamous George Riley! In HQ Coy, he made me 'run the gauntlet' and hit me on the head with a boot, wrapped in a towel. He fractured my skull and then threatened to kill me if I told anyone what really happened. Like many others, I was scared to death of him. Here is a copy of a news item that reported on his demise:

'The Hangman', Harry Allen from Manchester, 1911-1992; period in office, 1941-1964.

Allen hanged George Riley on the 9th of February 1961 at Shrewsbury Prison, for the murder of his neighbour, Adeline Mary Smith. Allen's last job was the hanging of Gwynne Owen

Evans at Strangeways Prison (Manchester) at 8 a.m. on 13th of August 1964, whilst his accomplice, Peter Anthony Allen - there's a coincidence - was suffering the same fate at Walton Jail (Liverpool). Allen and Evans were the last men to be hanged in Britain.

Needless to say, it made my day to hear that Riley had got his got his just desserts! I remember seeing his ugly face looking out at me from the pages of *Bild Zeitung*, while serving with REME in Germany - what a shock! I can still remember George jumping into the static water tank, as his uniform and kit had not been cleaned for Sunday church parade. He thought that he wouldn't get into trouble if he said that he just fell in. I stood next to him when the CSM told him that he still had to march to church, soaking wet. He couldn't skive off and, when he got back to the spider block, his skin had been rubbed raw from the wet SD uniform.

Although life as an Apprentice was hard, those that did make the grade seem to have been successful. I for one can look back at the good times and of the many friends I made. It taught me to cope with worse situations later on in life. Now retired, after a career with the Canadian Coast Guard as a Marine Engineering Officer, I am thankful for all that tough training. Although I don't think I would like to go through it again! But 'Good Luck' to those embarking on a new Army career, and don't forget to remember us old lags.

(*John - I remember Paddy Claydon well, as I'm sure do lots of others. I do know that, during his quite prolonged (six weeks?) hideaway session at boys' school, he stayed for a while in the bunk in our room in 'A' block - home to Cpl Mick Cullen. I think I'm right in saying that Mick attended his first ever reunion in 2004. When I told him about the Claydon episode - and his part in it - he was flabbergasted that I recognised him and knew his dark secret! Ed.*)

Tony Domoney (56B) emails

After an eventful four months here in Bahrain, it is time to pack up and go back home to Perth. My good lady Heather and the great Aussie lifestyle calleth! As Quality Assurance project manager, I have been tasked with auditing and assessing all of the DHL 'wet' leased aircraft operating into Iraq. It's certainly been an eye-opener after so many years under the umbrella of international aviation organisations. Countries such as the USA, Turkey, Thailand, Sharjah and the UK, have put up with me, as I have inspected *Boeing 727s*, *DC8s*, *Lockheed 1011s*, *Airbus 300s*, *Antonov 12s* and *Ilyushin 76s* - all of these 'cargo' aircraft and great fun.

Heather spent six weeks here with me, exploring the Island, all so different to Saudi Arabia and its petty restrictions against the ladies. My sister also visited for a week, to get away from the winter climate of the UK Midlands. It's all-day sunshine here except for the odd storm, which helps to keep the dust down and the desert green. So, on the 23rd December, I fly 'Emirates' back to Perth, arriving home on Christmas Eve. I understand that Christmas day will be a BIG BBQ plus copious quantities of the finest Australian bubbly - can't wait!

Already, another year's contract awaits me for early 2005. This time it will with an airline in the UK south east. They need help in their QA department, which is straight up my alley. They operate B747s and DC8s. Also in the pipeline is a 'maybe' for Kenya for a couple of years. This could be a regulatory airworthiness post for 'on the job' training of locals. Whoever talked about retirement? I haven't committed myself to anything as yet and, on the serious side, I am thinking seriously of retiring. I think all this is sending Heather into a tizz, as she tries to keep our home in Perth from decaying through lack of use. Never mind, I could always become a piano tuner! We shall see. Heather is doing a great job with the garden and we have the first frangipani blooms, since planting cuttings six months ago. The secret is to coat the cut stem end with lots of honey and then just plant in a good sand mix. I am told that my favourite plant, the African 'Sabi star' is growing nicely, while the mango's also taken, so all is well.

Music keeps me out of mischief, as I continue to practice the trumpet in my apartment, with 'mute' fitted to keep the natives friendly! I haven't been thrown out yet! Heather promises me a piano when I return, perhaps as an incentive not to go overseas again. By the way, I have just finished reading 'The piano tuner', a novel based on historical Burma during the Empire days. Excellent reading for those with some imaginative abilities left after this TV brain-washing era. God, I hate the garbage shown these days.

Met some colleagues of old from Jeddah days and they tell me horrific stories of activities affecting that area. Despite the restrictions, we actually enjoyed our time there and are saddened by the way the country is going. Seems to me an insurgency is just around the corner there. What a mess this world is in, I despair at times.

(Tony - thanks for keeping in touch with AOBA and telling us of your activities. Personally, I find it hard to believe that you'll ever retire! Ed.)

Pete Drake (57A) emails

Delighted to hear that the reunion went well, sorry I could not be there to enjoy it with you. Tony Domoney and I had planned to have one of our own, but he had to go out of town and I ended up with the flu, so although I had a good few whiskies, it was for medicinal purposes only! We still plan to hold a belated reunion in the weeks to come. I have made contact with Fred Ordynsky and he knows of a few more 'Old Boys' in Perth, so I have to catch up with him, his home is not too far from my place.

Tony Domoney (56B) emails again

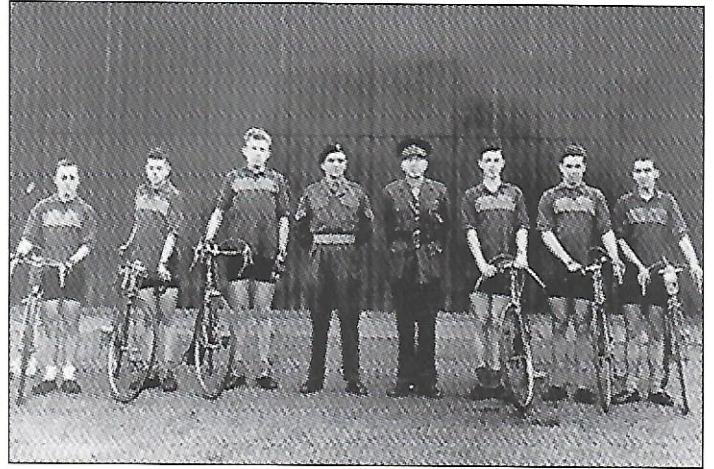
Thanks for your e-mail and the write-up on the 2005 Reunion. I keep saying that I wish I had been there, but of course 'twas not possible, therefore I really appreciate receiving details of such events, thanks again. I also congratulate you on the recent OBAN 33 - excellent reading and an improvement on previous issues. I had occasion to crack open a good bottle of Aussie red on Saturday (as if I ever need a reason). I raised my glass and wished all old boys best wishes. I had planned to meet Pete Drake for the occasion, but unfortunately he had business commitments so I drank alone. We intend meeting later this

week to catch up on news etc.

All's well here in Perth. The Kenya project did not happen and I may decide NOT to go to Fiji, where they wanted me to run their Airworthiness Department. Lots of work in the house and garden, including building a large shade house for Heather and her plants. I intend, God willing, to be at the reunion in 2006.

Andy Rackstraw (55A) emails

(Andrew 'Andy' Rackstraw (55A) e-mailed a photograph of the School Cycling Team in his era, just as I was about to set out for the 2005 Reunion. I mailed him and told him that I would almost certainly be bumping into John Lee and David Naylor from his intake. I also asked if he could supply more details regarding the photograph and he responded as follows: Ed.)



1957-58 Army Apprentice School Cycling Team
Giles, Aston, Rackstraw, Hackett, Arnott & Moloney
SSgt Rose and Col Cole

My regards to John and David and also to any others from 50 years ago! I will try to get the cycle picture scanned for you later and give some more details. I have seen your book and you have just reminded me that I must get a copy for myself - my wife Edith will be in England in mid-October and she will be able to bring the book back with her. Could you perhaps give me a bank number or do you have a credit card facility? And will you be able to post the book to Cornwall - my sister and her gang live down there. Bloody awful business with all the terrorism in London - my Dad went through absolute hell in WW2 as a City of London Policeman during the Blitz. He probably saw more action than most of those who went overseas - and all this stuff brings back memories of all that. Have a grand reunion and I will raise a cheer from here to you all.

Mick Oulds (57B) emailed the Editor

I hope all is well with you and that the 2005 Reunion was a success. I would like to inquire if you are interested in including a review of my recently published book, "A Norfolk Connection", in the next AOB newsletter (to help boost sales of course!). The contents obviously relate to England and, in particular, to Norfolk. These stories convey the individual life and times of a large country family, consisting of ten children, mostly portrayed during and after the Second World War. Home is the small village of Lecton, situated somewhere in the South

Norfolk vicinity of Swaffham, Watton and Thetford. This is an unusual group of stories, ranging somewhere between the 'short story' and essay, with an autobiographical flavour. Readers may recognise some bits from 'Doin' a Bunk' (OBAN 31) - the interlink is very close, but the narrative is not. In each case, an atmosphere is created, the story builds while creating character and situation, and then, inevitably, leads to an unusual ending. Although these stories are atmospheric, they are not narrative driven. There is a strong Norfolk and, indeed, Ashcroft connection, but these are relatively far ranging - including Germany and even California. (Sorry this is some blurb from the publisher etc.) These stories have been drawn upon my own experiences, as well as those of family and friends, spanning the last fifty or so years. The book also incorporates elements of fantasy and make-believe, to add texture and depth to the stories. I can provide a sample book and PF photos etc on a CD, if this is of interest. I have also nearly finished a sequel to 'Doin' a Bunk' if this is also of interest - please let me know as soon as you can the last acceptance date for printing.

(Mick - on a personal basis, I'd certainly be interested in your book. I hope that by publishing your letter in OBAN, other readers may feel interested enough too - I have Mick's e-mail address if anyone wants it! As for the sequel to 'Doin' a Bunk', well we await that with anticipation! Ed.)

Reg Pragnell (46B) sent this anecdote

Morning Cocoa Picture the scene during 1948, as RSM McNally strides into the Fitters' Shop one cold and frosty morning. Standing ram-rod stiff before us, he announces, "When I arrive each morning with the Commandant, I shall ask if there are any complaints. The response will be nil - IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?"

And so, on the following morning, our worthy Commandant, Col Greville-Grey, enters the workshop with the forbidding RSM hardly a stride behind. "ANY COMPLAINTS?" roars McNally - and even the civilian instructors tremble in their shoes. "Yes Sir", pipes one young and innocent hero, "this morning's cocoa doesn't taste very nice, Sir".

The RSM takes the cup from the lad's trembling hand and passes it on to the Colonel. Now, I have to say that this gentleman should have been awarded a medal, as he slowly drank the whole mug full of noxious liquid, whilst giving the impression that he wasn't even the slightest bit sick! With the last dregs drained, "Delicious!" he snapped, and then almost ran out of the shop, bravely holding down the slimy beverage.

Never has a name been written down so fast in the RSM's book. "Frivolous complaint", he snarled, as he hurried to catch up with the brave officer, who had never been so keen to demonstrate that time was at a premium!

Bob Castell (64A) pens these few words

Just a note to publish in the next OBAN. I'd like to thank all those concerned in the organisation of the reunion for all their hard work and effort, it was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend. And, dare I say it, the accommodation (in the Sgts' Mess in my

case) was an improvement, as was the Dinner, in less cramped conditions, over previous years. On another note, you published (in the last OBAN) a couple of photos of myself and Geoff Hatt. The later photo was taken by Jeff Bendall, who whinged incessantly at the reunion because he didn't get a mention! Well Jeff, here it is!

Dave Perrot (49B) writes

I am responding to your offering in OBAN 33. I am 49B - the tops! I well remember dear Fred Hall & Bill Riddiford with great affection. Fred had his own Amateur Radio Station, besides running the Arborfield Club - someone has given you the call sign of that G3HOS. I was a member, but did not remember the call sign, though it was formed during our apprenticeship. However, you might be interested in the following:

*Fred Hall is legalised at last,
No skull and crossbones top his mast.
He now transmits without a fear,
He's paid his thirty-bob this year.
His call sign 'G3HBU'
Blasts through the ether calm and blue.*

This was based on an incident when he hadn't paid his licence-fee and people who transmitted without a licence were known as 'pirates', but you are probably aware of this. The instructor, whose name I would like to know, took us for, as he would have said it, 'Walve and Wacuum tube theory'. He was a very diminutive grey-haired instructor of foreign descent, but I cannot remember his name. The senior instructor of the Telecoms Hanger, as I remember it, was a character by the name of Woodhouse. He would stand in for any missing instructor and we took great delight in getting him onto any other subject. As he was a wealth of anecdotes, it was no problem. We eventually had a list of books, based on the famous 'Biggles' - such as 'Woodhouse', 'Woodhouse Again' and 'Woodhouse in the Orient'. You get the message, it was an unending list. He actually put, on Drum Major Royston Peter Slade's report, 'inclined to lay red herrings on the trail'. Isn't it crazy what you remember? Even crazier, is what you forget! Not a civilian, but someone I would definitely like to name, is my Squad instructor of HQ Company - it was 'C' Squad and he was a Sergeant of the Gloucestershire Regiment. Unbelievably, I remember the names of A, B and D Squad instructors, but not my own.

Hope all of this makes a bit of sense and is of some use!

(We publish this verbatim and hope that someone out there has his memory rattled and is able to name Dave's missing persons! Ed.)

Kevin 'Mitch' Mitchell (43A) writes again

Without doubt, e-mails have been buzzing - if that's what they do - regarding congratulations to the hard working 'Chief and Indians' for our recent Reunion. Probably there were some adverse comments, as ever, but I'm sure very few. We, the stalwart band of 43ers, a dirty dozen this time, would like to add our thanks for a most enjoyable and entertaining weekend. The Mess staff, especially the cheerful efficient manageress, worked extremely hard to cope with the influx of 'slightly' older

than usual guests! The following versification sums things up, maybe?

Once More

*Arborfield, Arborfield, where changing times do flow;
Retain we must our memories of reunion's glow.
Refreshed again this year now passed,
So many tales – have the ghosts been laid at last?*

*Arrangements, organising and wheedling as needs be,
All praise to the team under Bill Cleasby'
But billets afar – some quite a long hop,
With some bedside lockers like a chemists' shop!*

*The Parade was just great, wasn't the RSM fun?
But whose voice was that, calling for his Mum?
The 'old Square' beckoned, but went unheeded,
Where our marching feet its surface could have weeded.*

*The AGM, no scribbling sticks with nibs on,
Able and amusingly led by Chairman Peter Gibson;
The webmaster's display was really trail blazing,
With musak, photographs and info quite amazing.*

*Our dinner was excellent, a tasty repast,
Albeit the veggies – weren't they meant to last?
Speeches and records of service so thankfully short,
But never mind lads, there was plenty of Port!*

 Gerry Berrigan (48A) emailed the Editor

I have been meaning to send this e-mail for some time. I much enjoyed reading the latest issue (Spring 2005), but must mention this small point about the cricket team photograph on page 10. It was taken at Charterhouse in 1949, not 1951. In fact, by 1950, only myself (fourth in from the right on the rear row) and Smith (extreme left of the rear row – and later CSM 'D' Coy) were still in the team, all the rest had left.

 Colin 'Danny' Long (49B) writes as follows

I'm afraid that the operating system of my Brother electronic typewriter isn't compatible with Microsoft, so I am unable to produce this letter on a floppy disk, but hopefully it may scan okay? (*I don't mind typing in the short ones Danny! Ed.*)

I'm a bit worried about the date of the Cricket XI photo on page 10 of the Spring 2005 OBAN. I was actively involved in School Cricket at that time, either as an umpire or a scorer and, apart from knowing Gerry Berrigan, I can only recognise three other faces – none of which I can put a name to! One public school that I remember visiting was Marlborough. Indeed, members of the AAS Cricket team can claim to have 'attended' more public schools than many public schoolboys. I expect that I have given Gerry 'out' on more than one occasion and hope that he will forgive me for doing so – yes, I'm still a creep! (*Please read the note above from Gerry Ed.*)

Another sporting 'field' in which I was active was football refereeing and I passed the Army FA's referees' exam in 1950,

becoming a qualified 3rd-class ref. At that time, I may have been the youngest qualified football referee in the world. But at the time, nobody took much notice of such things – the *Guinness Book of Records* was still sprouting as a very small tree indeed.

That qualification did have its uses though! I'd picked up a 'rodeo' for some misdemeanour and, at the same time, was scheduled to referee a football match at the REME Depot. I was firmly informed that the rodeo took preference and thus turned out on the Saturday afternoon, fully prepared for a session of sweat and toil. Luckily however, the Orderly Sergeant that day was my 'C' Company football team manager (as we knew them at the time). When he saw my name on his list he said, "What are you doing here? You should be refereeing that game at the Depot". I claim the record for the fastest time by anyone getting off the Square and, within five minutes, I was out through the gates and making my way to the Depot.

Being critical again, I've been a proof (please don't misspell that!) reader and just can't switch off! The photo on p22 is definitely NOT the September 44 Intake after passing-off, there seem far too many Jeeps parked at the front! It's just got to be a Company photograph. Apart from those two minor points mentioned, I would like to offer my appreciation of a very competently produced magazine. It is better than many created by so-called professionals. (Oh God, he's creeping again!)

(*Can't argue with you over that last point, Colin – you'll have to pick on someone your own age! Anyone from 1944 like to comment? Ed.*)

 Bob Bradley (April 42) writes

Taking your advice, I contacted Bill Cleasby and he sent me a copy of OBAN Issue 33, a splendid publication as usual. I particularly admired the report on Lenham Cemetery and am grateful to those old boys who filled in the historical details. I never expected such an enthusiastic response. Next time I'm in the area, I'll certainly visit the cemetery again.

Talking of responses, Mike Allcock did contact me regarding Greenford and sent me that section of his memoirs. I haven't read his full article yet, but did have a good talk with him at the Reunion. Harry Price's letter also confirmed some of my own memories of Greenford – I escaped the food poisoning! He was right about my father being a Regular Officer – he was a Major in the RA.

If Jim Cliff – or anybody else – wants to revive nostalgic memories of the radar 3Mk7, one used to be on display, along with a 3B, outside the RA Museum in the Rotunda at Woolwich – I have a photograph somewhere, if I can dig it out! Another 3Mk7 is exhibited in the Flieger (Aircraft) Museum in Zurich. Jim should visit the Museum when next he holidays in Davos or St Moritz!

I noticed the letter from 'Bill' Wells and wondered whether this is our own 'Geordie' Wells? Anyway, keep up the good work.

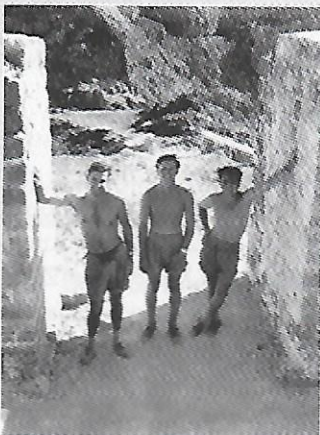
Deaths

It is with deep regret that the Association reports that since the publication of OBAN 28 the following members have died. When a member contacts the Membership Secretary of the death of a members they are requested to make such a contact in writing and to provide as much detail as possible. The Association would like to send a wreath or other tribute to the funeral of a member if they are notified with sufficient time to do.

Intake	Name	Date	Intake	Name	Date
39A	Phil Rayner	Oct 2004	43A	John Copley	Aug 2005
39A	George Scurr	Nov 2004	44A	Bob Jackson	2003
39B	John Hamilton	Jul 2003	44A	Mike Knight BEM	Oct 2003
39B	Ron Le Rendu	Sept 2003	44B	Bill Baker	2003
39B	Ray Maughan	Sep 2004	45A	John Gostling	Mar 2004
39B	Spanky Roberst	Aug 2005	45B	David Tilt	2003
39B	Fred Stockey	2003	46B	Bob McGrillen	Mar 2005
39B	Keith Worboys	Jan 2004	47B	Malcolm Moreton	Jun 2003
39C	Mervyn Bowen	Dec 2002	48A	Ernie Tozer	May 2004
41A	Peter Langley	Sep 2003	50B	Peter Harrison	Jan 2003
42A	Arthur Beadle	May 2004	54A	Colin Scragg	Sep 2003
42A	Paul Wilson	Jul 2003	54A	Brian Stevens	June 2003
42B	Norman Bane	Nov 2002	54B	Sam Weller	2003
42B	Len Cowles	Jun 2004	55A	G W Murray	Feb 2003
42B	Peter Parsons	Sep 2003	PS	John Russell	2003
42C	Frank Frazer	Jan 2004			

Resignations

Intake	Name	Date	Intake	Name	Date
39A	Dick Wade	01/06/2004	49B	Dave Searle	21/10/2004
39A	Pat Hardy	20/06/2003	50B	Brian Clements	05/06/2003
39B	Gerry Cross	02/05/2003	52A	Michael Eden	24/06/2003
39B	Reginald Warmington	09/03/2004	52B	Peter Mullis	21/06/2003
39X	Gerald Dear	20/11/2003	55A	Colin Baker	06/07/2003
42A	Roy Gunby	07/05/2004	62B	Alex Burnett	06/07/2003
43A	Bob Lambert	08/11/2004	62C	Peter Selley	15/01/2005
46A	Dick Colquhoun	28/03/2005	63B	Alan Yates	05/11/2003
46B	Charlie Vaughan	08/08/2003	68B	Barry Chitty	15/06/2003
47B	Clifford Charlesworth	01/07/2003	78C	Colin Gribble	13/06/2003
48A	Les Withers	14/03/2004	80C	Badger Brock	25/10/2003
48B	Bill Espin	23/10/2004	PS	Curly Hunt	07/06/2003
48B	Ron Withers	14/03/2004			



Results of the OBAN 33 Caption Competition

Ron Janes 42C sent this:

"My nipples are missing, I'm hanging on to the rest!"

From Charlie Ayre 50B:

"You will always get someone to hold up a wall".

Colin 'Danny' Long 49B submitted these:

"We warned you Corp, that all our bulling would wear the hut away!"

"Honest, Tiffy, we didn't know it was the Great Pyramid when those Chepstow types came asking for some hardcore."

Frank Fendick 45A sent this one:

"Now that we're over the border, we can just laugh at them!"

Now have a look at the competition in this issue on Page 7.

New Members

Intake	Name	Living In	Intake	Name	Living In
43A	John Copley	Bodmin	63C	Ian Borland	Ibstock
43A	George Wooley	Leeds	64A	Peter Howes	Wotton-under-Edge
45A	Edward Grant	Victor Harbor	64C	Peter Chetwynd	Eye
45B	Barney O'Shea	Frankston South	64C	Jim Kavanagh	Wokingham
46B	Roy Jones	Caerphilly	64C	Jim Newnham	Bath
47B	Peter Maddams	Northwich	64C	Ray Stevens	Southampton
47B	Jim Maskell	Morley	65B	Chris Patton	Market Harborough
49B	Dave Searle	Bingley	65C	Jeff Baker	Grantham
50A	Brian Bailey	Toormina	65C	Dave Bornstein	Harrogate
51B	John Dennett	Tywyn	65C	George Henderson	Westbury
51B	Geoff Horne	Stafford	65C	Pete Marsh	Bockhorn
51B	Keith Tilly	Worcester Park	65C	Barrie Parker	Bristol
52A	Brian Paton	Morecambe	66B	Trevor Gayton	Barnstaple
52A	Chris Powell	Selby	66C	Jim Bacon	Hollywood
53A	Robert Beckett	Egham	66C	Frank McKenna	Anstruther
53B	Brian Barron	Wisbech	67B	John Sales	Rotherham
54B	Mick Owen	Lehrte	67C	Richard Crane	Witney
56A	Alan Sharman	Chester	67C	Douglas Knapp	Hitchin
56B	Fred Wilson	Newcastle upon Tyne	67X	Dave Gallichan	Pewsey
56B	Tony Wilson	Wellington	69B	Dave Currie	Salisbury
57A	Jim Hamilton	Birkirkara	69B	Frank Stringer	Andover
57A	Adrian Webber	Didcot	69C	Keith Hood	Seaham
59B	Maurice Hope	Stoke on Trent	69C	Mark Plimmer	Market Rasen
59C	Jim Slaven	Collie	71C	Phil Graham	Slough
60B	Jim Bogg	Holmbrook	73A	Tinny Dorling	Farnborough
60B	Bob Robson	Taunton	74C	David Lyon	Wokingham
60C	Hugh Collins	Wareham	74C	Dave Matthews	Worcester
61C	David Mills	Southend on Sea	74C	Mal McLean	Bradford
62A	Roger Newman	Harefield	74X	Peter Smith	Auckland
62C	Bob Nesbit	Malmesbury	76C	Dave Ward	Grimsby
63A	John Cox	Launceston	77C	Gary Kinsey	Salisbury
63A	Terry Crampton	Newport Pagnell	87C	Steve Slack	Whitchurch
63A	Ron Sylvester	Bligh Park			

STOP PRESS

A 'Final Chapter' has been written as a supplement to 'The Arborfield Apprentice' that covers the period of time encompassing the last few years of Army Apprentice training at Arborfield. This supplement is available free of charge to those who have already purchased the book but we would ask for a small donation of £2.00 to cover the cost of production and postage.

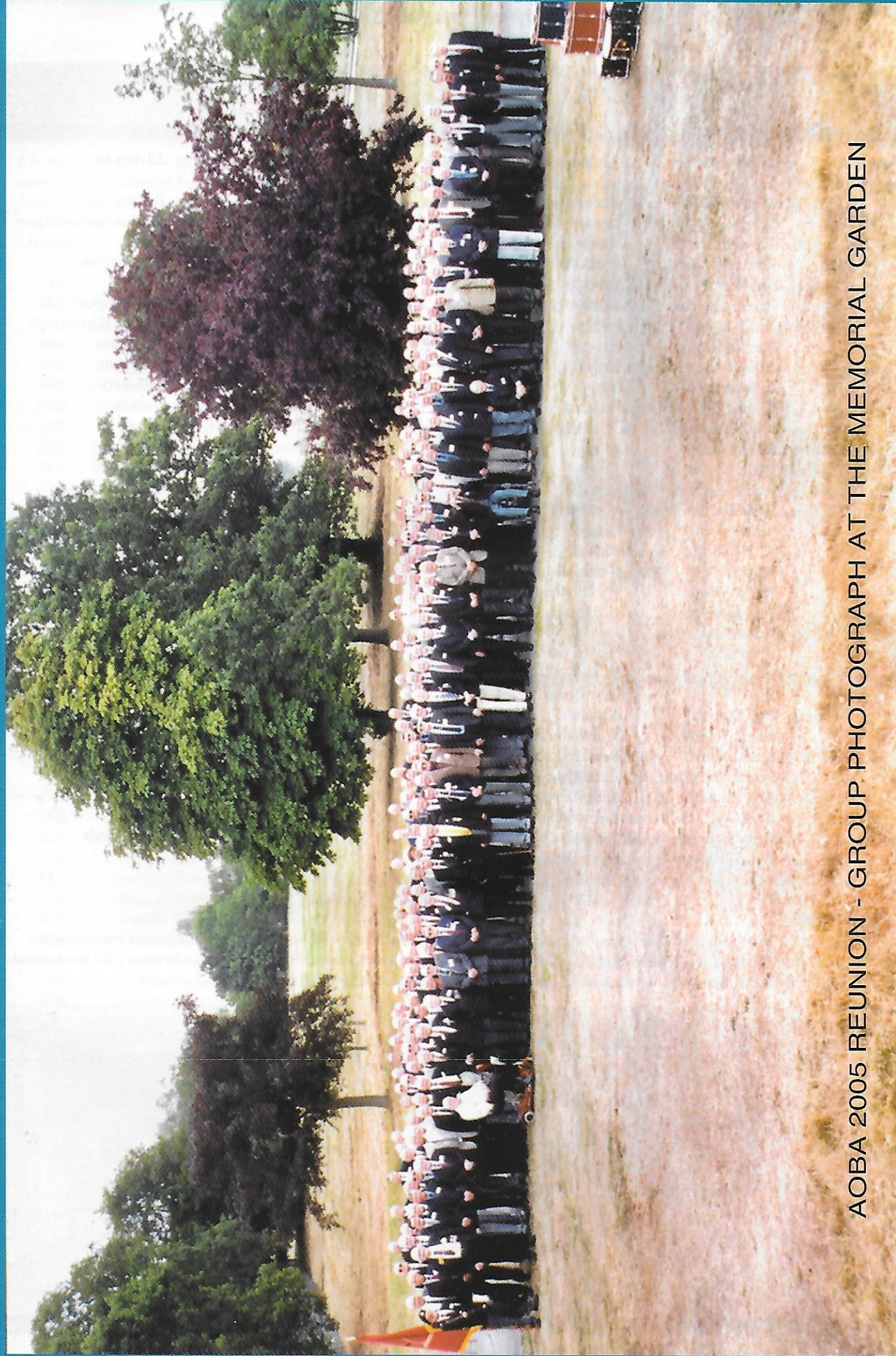
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AOBA 2005 REUNION - GROUP PHOTOGRAPH AT THE MEMORIAL GARDEN