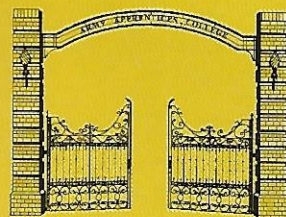


Summer 2007

Issue 39



OBAN



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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Notices

Please note that the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise of either the Editor or of the Arborfield Old Boys Association and therefore no responsibility for these will be accepted. All contributions and articles for inclusion in OBAN are most warmly welcomed although text in Microsoft Word format and photos/images in TIFF format are preferred.

Membership of the Arborfield Old Boys Association is open to all those who served at one of the Army Apprentices' Schools or Colleges at Arborfield between 1939 and 2004. There is a joining fee of £15.00 for life membership plus an annual subscription of £10.00. Application forms are available by post from the Membership Secretary whose name and address is shown above.

Editorial

It has been a case of 'wishing and hoping' these past few weeks, as I have wrestled with the task of producing this issue of OBAN in direct contact with the printers! Sadly, for personal reasons, Ken Anderson found himself unable to continue his previously excellent work in making life very simple for me. Our relationship began with the putting-together of 'The Arborfield Apprentice' history, and then continued when I was asked (or tasked?) to take over as OBAN Editor. This arrangement worked splendidly and I must pass on my personal thanks to Ken for all the hard work and craftsmanship that he brought on board. I can only hope that I can continue in similar vein to what has gone before.

Having said that, of course, I must also add my thanks to all the contributors who have tirelessly continued with their efforts in providing me with 'copy' – without which there wouldn't be a magazine to publish and print at all! Later, somewhere in this issue, I hope to start paying tribute to all those contributors, with a comprehensive list of articles in order of intake. Please keep the articles coming and be patient if they don't surface immediately! Some of them are quite substantial in content and it becomes necessary to 'edit' them into chapters – it's a good job the book gave me plenty of practice! We shall endeavour to publish all contributions in due course, and I apologise if some take a long time to appear.

I had the sad task of attending the funeral of Ray Jenkinson (48B) recently. As I left the Church after the service, I was astonished to spot a well-remembered face in the crowd. I approached the gentleman and asked whether he had been my REME Workshop OC at 94 Locating Regt RA back in 1961? "Ah", came his response, "*that would have been my brother!*" What a coincidence – I'd certainly not forgotten 'the face', but I hadn't known that my old OC, Capt Bendall, had a twin brother!

Pete Gripton 56B

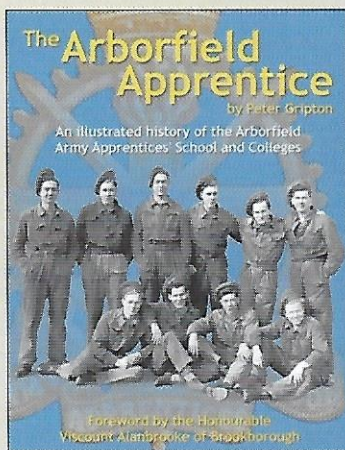
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Cover Pictures

These were kindly donated by Robert Ward and are referred to in his letter.

THE ARBORFIELD APPRENTICE



An illustrated history of the Arborfield Army Apprentices' School and Colleges
By Peter Gripton

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 fact that this 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 meticulous 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.

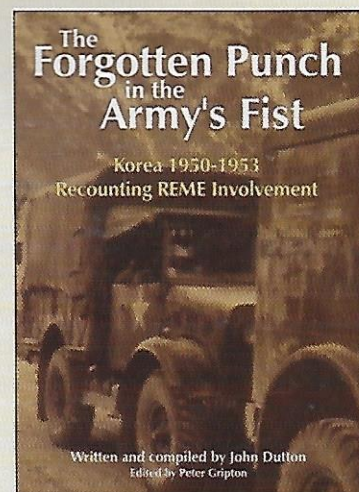
SUPPLEMENT - THE FINAL CHAPTER

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 say £2 or £3 to cover the cost of production and postage.

THE FORGOTTEN PUNCH IN THE ARMY'S FIST

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.

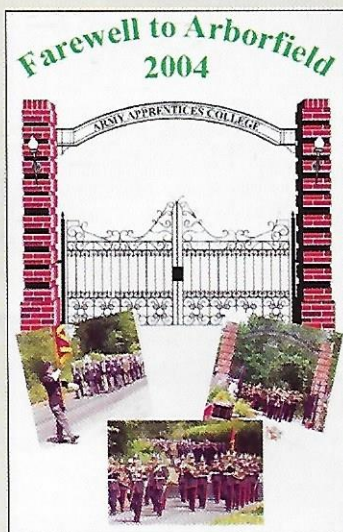


Both of these books are available from the REME Museum Association Shop at Arborfield telephone 0118-976-3223.

'The Arborfield Apprentice' is available for just £18.50 + £7.30 p&p whilst 'The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist' is £12.50 + £3.00 p&p. Cheques should be made payable 'REME Corps Account No2'.

FAREWELL TO ARBORFIELD 2004 VIDEO

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 Roweroft 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 Association Shop at the REME Museum of Technology in Arborfield. The cost of the DVD is £14.00 and the VHS tape is just £10.00. Please telephone for 0118-976-3223 to place an order and to enquire of postage charges.

ASSOCIATION TIES

Available in the four company colours these attractive neck ties cost just £7.50 each.



LAPEL BADGE

Finally we have an attractive enamelled lapel badge at £3.00
Please send cash and a small self addressed padded envelope to the Arborfield Old Boys Association Secretariat at Arborfield.



OFFICERS REPORTS

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

In December of last year, it was my pleasure to represent the Association at the graduation ceremony of the Army Foundation College in Harrogate. It was a cold, but dry and bright, morning as the guests' stands began to fill with the friends and relatives of those who were to be on parade – guests that would number in excess of 1,000. The long frontage of the spectator areas was reserved for the great number of dignitaries, made up by many uniformed brigadiers and colonels, representing every arm of the many regiments and corps into which the young soldiers were about to be badged.

During the parade itself, there was much with which many Old Boys would be familiar. Led by the band, they marched onto the parade square, with bayonets fixed, and formed up under the watchful eyes of the Regimental Sergeant Major – a REME WO1. The inspecting general arrived and, having been received, moved along the ranks of those young soldiers who were about to graduate. The remainder of the parade was very much as we would remember, with only the omission of the march past in slow time. What pleased me greatly was that the 'Advance in Review Order' was still included – but regrettably, there were no gates for the graduating soldiers to march through in slow time, as we did so poignantly. Nevertheless, the marches past and the advance were immaculately performed and, as the young men and women marched off as soldiers, there was a spontaneous eruption of applause from the spectators' gallery. I'm sure that the event will long remain in their memories, as did that of ours so many years ago.

Brian Hutchins, 61B

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

You know how it is, you sit down to write a report and nothing comes to mind – so I will just ramble on for a bit and see what happens. Oh yes, I do need to welcome David Schofield to the Committee and thank him from all of us for coming to the rescue and taking on the AOBA Website. The new site is well worth a look and I am sure will prove to be a huge success in the coming years. I know that you would also want me to thank Ken Anderson for doing such a splendid job over the last few years, not only in developing the site but also for the many hours spent on publishing the OBAN. The presentation and look of the new OBAN, which has been so widely acclaimed by the membership, was very much down to Ken. I had the first meeting of the reunion committee last week and the programme is starting to take shape. I thought we would have 'Beef Wellington' this year, which is always everyone's favourite. I am also looking at having the parade on the original square, if the weeds and cracks allow, and adding something to the Drum Head Service which will make it a bit more meaningful. I am also making a few changes to the layout of the tables at the dinner table and making sure that the speakers work. There will be a new RSM in charge this year and I am sure you will all join me in thanking RSM Hart for his past service to the Association and wishing him well as he takes up a Commission in the Corps.

I had real pleasure in representing the Association at the Harrogate AFC prize giving last November and presenting the AOBA prize to the best Technical Junior Soldier. The lad in question, Ben Jones RE, was 'over the moon' with the prize, particularly as he was the only one able to keep it. All the others had to hand their prizes back. The prize giving was run in conjunction with the annual carol service, which brought back many happy memories of my own time at Arborfield. Hundreds of boys and girls being marched into the Assembly Hall by a Guards Sergeant Major and being told to sing in tune – or else. It was great!

God Bless, Bill

RECRUITING

We have a classic case of 'good news and sad news' from the Membership Desk. Good in that we recruited 51 new members and re-

activated another seven, giving a total increase of 58 up to the end of 2006. Sadly though, the 'Last Post' was played for 29 of our colleagues, which must be the largest total for any single year. For various reasons, eight of our members decided to resign from the Association, so it is imperative that we all continue to assist in recruiting new members. If you know the whereabouts of any of your old pals – or indeed any ex-boy from Arborfield, pass on their details to me and I'll do the rest!

See you all at the Reunion, best regards, Fred Mills, 51B.

MONEY MATTERS

I serve another plea, to members who pay their subscriptions by cheque or cash, to do so as soon as possible. The account has been examined by an independent accountant and found to be satisfactory. The costs of producing our excellent magazine, the OBAN, have almost doubled in the last six months. There is a requirement to cover these costs and I believe the only way it can be achieved, for year 2008, is to raise the annual subscription. Remember, we have not had an increase since 2002 (5 years ago). Food for thought for our AGM in July this year!

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

AOBA WEB SITE UPDATE

After a few hiccups getting started, I am grateful for all the messages of support for the new site. In response to many requests, the principle of today's site remains as when started some 7 years ago – KISS! One unfortunate side effect of the crash was losing so many photographs and stories. As you read this, I confirm I have added all I was able to save. So if your photos haven't made it, or you sent in stories that never made it to the site, please take time to send them, I'll add them as soon as possible. If you prefer to give me your contribution at the reunion, that would be very helpful. But remember my little hamlet in France is not even on the 'to-do' broadband list, so it's dial-up for me I'm afraid – and boy, that's slow!

I am pleased to say that, at the March meeting, your management team authorised purchase of the latest software to run the site. This will be held – along with all required passwords – at HQ, so in the event of another crash we can never lose the web-site content. One benefit of the new software is the ability to sell books etc, directly from the official AOBA web-site. So look out for all your favourite books and stories and make sure you support your AOBA by buying direct! At the Museum, I met up with Charles Elsey (53A), the pictorial archivist, a charming and highly motivated ex-apprentice. He is the custodian of thousands of photographs of all things REME and donated a large number of Arborfield photographs for use on our site. As an aside, if you are searching for a particular photograph of Arborfield – or indeed anything REME – your first port of call should be Charles.

In March, the re-introduction of the AOBA Forum was debated, and it was agreed to run a trial up to the AGM, when its continued presence will be discussed and voted upon. To that end I am pleased to confirm it is now live, and you can access it at www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk/forums.html. If you have yet to register, please may I ask you to use your 'known name', and not any pseudo? At the time of writing we have some 90 old boys engaging in friendly banter and I think I can speak for all, when I say it's great to have a platform for us all to communicate in this manner. So let me encourage everyone to support our Forum by joining those already happily chatting away. Naturally, this is open to all ex-apprentices and PS members whether in the AOBA or not.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity of looking after the web-site again. I value critique, comments and contributions towards its development for the enjoyment of all ex-apprentices and PS members of the Arborfield 'Boys' School'.

God Bless, David (Tich) Schofield, 65A

OBAN Articles

Looking back, over all the OBANs published so far, it is absolutely marvellous to find so many contributions from ex-boys who started their Army careers here at Arborfield as long ago as during the very last years of the 1930s. What is also amazing is that these articles have continued over the years, from as far back as Harry Shaw's effort back in OBAN Issue 2, right up until Bill Dutton's tale in OBAN 37, issued only towards the end of 2006. It is most encouraging to receive these articles, which provide a tribute to the longevity and outstanding memories of these 'truly old' old boys. I list the articles below in alphabetical order and, on behalf of myself and previous editors, I say a big 'Thank You'. *(It is perhaps fitting that this list appears in OBAN 39?)*

<u>Brief title</u>	<u>Contributor</u>	<u>OBAN</u>
The year I grew up	Harry Shaw Jersey '38	2
Personality slot	Frank Bennet Oct '39	6
The Journey	Bill Dutton 39A	37
Memories of early Arborfield	Fred Ford 39A	4
Further memories	Fred Ford 39A	5
Jumbled jottings	Fred Ford 39A	9
1939 and all that Pt1	Joe Griffith 39A	18
1939 and all that Pt2	Joe Griffith 39A	24
Some memories of Arborfield	Maurice Harvey 1939	32
Those early days	Gerald Johnson 39A	16
The Greatcoat	John Loy 39B	32
Jobsworth	John Loy 39B	32
Some reminiscences	Ron Savage 39A	14
Family at war Pt1	Dick Wade 39A	11
Family at war Pt2	Dick Wade 39A	12
REME to civvy street	Dick Wade 39A	14
The Arborfield experience	Dick Wade 39A	17
Life in Korea	Dick Wade 39A	27
Memories of Arborfield	Les Whiffen 39A	24
Wintle's war wanderings	M J Wintle 39C	22
The year I grew up (archive)	Harry Shaw Jersey '38	36

I must also add, of course, that the list above is only of 'main articles' and does not include the many interesting and humorous letters that have passed backwards and forwards through the pages of OBAN during the same years!

Pete Gripton 56B

Photo Competition

Can any of our readers explain the connection between these girls, who 'just wanna have fun' and the earliest members of boys' school?



1939-'45 OLD BOYS' REUNION

Following the very successful reunion in 2006, at the Menzies Mickleover Court Hotel in Derby, the event in 2007 will be held at the same excellent venue but, as requested by members, at the earlier dates of Friday 28th to Sunday 30th September. If you have not yet received details, or know of anyone else who would like to do so, please contact one of us:

Michael Grantham
34 Summerfield Road
Dronfield
Derbyshire S18 2GZ
01246-290-447

Les Scapens
261 Down Road
Portishead
Bristol BS20 8HY
01275-844-978

MY FAMILY and EARLY YEARS – Part 1 of a series

by Trevor O'Callaghan, 42C

Family

I come from a military family background and so was pretty well destined to join the Army. My grandfather joined the British Army at Golden, Tipperary, Ireland, at the age of fifteen years and was in service for thirty years, fighting in the battle of Ulundi, when the Zulus were defeated, and also in the first Boer War. He had a colourful career, being promoted to Sergeant four times and reduced to a Private, but he ended up Quarter Master Sergeant and got his good conduct medal. My father served in the second Boer War. My eldest brother was in the Airborne RE and was at one time Commandant at Chepstow. My other brother was originally in the RTR, before transferring to REME, and was at one time OC of a workshop in Korea and later OC of the Officers Training Unit at Bordon. Most of my extended family, plus my friends' families, were either serving in one of the services or worked for one of the services.

My Early Years

My hometown was Gosport, Hampshire and, as a young boy, where I lived was surrounded by a RAF airfield and military forts that housed Army units, Naval barracks and Naval repair and supply depots. Today, the RAF airfield and several of the Naval establishments are housing estates. No Army units are stationed in Gosport. When I visit Gosport today, I can walk around areas where, as a young boy, I could not go. What is strange is that when I visited Gosport recently, the local newspaper reported that 2,000 REME personnel would possibly be coming to *HMS Sultan* for technical training.

It doesn't seem possible that, when I was growing up, we could wander around the airfield whilst planes were taking off and landing. The biplanes of that period were covered in fabric and, when they landed, they often had small holes in the fabric. The holes were covered in patches and dope was sprayed onto the patches, I can still remember the smell today. When the engines were 'revved up', the aircraft tail would lift and normally a couple of airman would hold on to the tail. My elder brothers could hold onto the tail but, being smaller, I was often virtually blown over. I remember the first monoplanes arriving, I believe they were Hurricane fighters. This resulted in the first tarmac runway being laid and we were now banned from the airfield, because the modern planes used much longer take-off and landed at higher speeds. At weekends, model aircraft flying was allowed on the airfield. No doubt many will remember winding up the propeller elastic bands. Powered model aircraft flying was in its infancy and was a great novelty.

We spent much of our summer time on Stokes Bay beach. There was always something to watch - passenger liners, yachting, RAF and Naval aircraft and ships on target practice. The Fleet reviews of King George V Jubilee and the Coronation of King George VI were magnificent sights. Further along the coast was the *Imperial Airways* (forerunner of *British Airways*) flying-boat base. I watched a RAF plane crash into the sea and the RAF rescue boat was a rowing boat, kept in a hut on the beach! By the time the rowing boat was launched, another boat had picked up the pilot.

Before the war, the flying-boat was the major long distance plane. I always hoped that one day I would fly in one, but I never achieved my ambition. I will relate a story about the Mayo composite flying-boat - this carried a seaplane when taking off. The idea was to launch the seaplane once airborne. The seaplane was designed for high speed for mail deliveries. I remember that locally it was big news, but the war stopped all development. I mention this project, because when I visited the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, I was told that the widow of Mayo was still alive. The date of my visit was in the

early days of the development of the American space shuttle. This was developed and flown on top of an aircraft, before being launched to test the aerodynamics of the shuttle. Mrs Mayo had agreed to pass all the details of Mayo's project to the Americans.

The main form of travel then was by liner and the liners of that period had deep draughts and could not sail round the other side of the Isle of Wight through the Needles. The wash from the liners could be several feet high and, sometimes, unsuspecting visitors would get swamped. My brothers and I joined the Cubs and Scouts, then later the local Cadet Force when we were old enough. When we went on camp for one night only, we would have to pull a two-wheel cart with the tents etc. When I look back, we often got wet through, the food was lousy and we were worn out - but we still went next time.

The war changed our lives completely. My sister and I were evacuated to a village, Shedfield, in Hampshire. We worked on getting the harvest in and it was a great novelty. When I was leading the horses, I was always terrified that a horse would step on my foot. What I could not understand at the time was why large pits were dug, cattle then driven into the pits and shot. That was my introduction to 'foot and mouth' disease. We only went to school for half a day for about a year. Looking back, I missed out on schooling and it was only as an Army Apprentice, and later studying in the REME, that I caught up on my schooling.

We were often 'volunteered' from school to work on the farms. At thirteen years, we were considered 'old' school boys, and we left school at fourteen. Many farm labours had been called up and school children and women had to gather in the crops. An amusing incident occurred one day when we arrived at a farm, of which the farmer had lost control, due to bad husbandry. He was threatening to shoot the farm manager and other officials. The local police constable arrived and the farmer finally agreed to work for the farm manager.

In 1940, after the fall of France, war became a reality. I can remember the first air raids. The German fighters would shoot down the barrage balloons and the dive-bombers would often come out of the sun. We were warned that the dive-bombers had sirens fitted, to help terrorise the population. Later, the Luftwaffe stopped using dive-bombers, as they were easy targets for our fighters. Gradually the air raids changed from daylight to night raids. The German planes often missed their target and unloaded their bombs on the countryside. Unfortunately, one of my school friends was killed by a bomb, which also damaged his family home. Occasionally, a bomb would kill a farm animal and this would mean a supply of meat with no questions asked!

I was caught in a box barrage on several occasions. A box barrage is when the Ack-Ack guns fire into an imaginary box in

the sky, and the shrapnel comes down like rain. One night, I had to escort my sister-in-law home and I was caught in a box barrage for about an hour. Along with several other people, I sheltered under a shop front. It had been raining and the shrapnel, being very hot, sizzled when landing in the puddles. When I got home, my mother wanted to know where I had been!

We were told we must not pass on any information to strangers. Also, anyone acting suspiciously had to be reported.

We were told that a German spy, who was dropped by parachute, had been caught because he asked for a drink at a pub during non-drinking hours. One day, a lady stopped in a car to ask directions and we wouldn't tell her, so she called us 'stupid boys'. We reported the incident - and learned that she was the district nurse. All roads, signposts, names of villages and towns had to be erased. There was a large milestone in the village, with distances to different towns and villages, reputed to be several hundred years old. There was a debate of how to cover the stone. This went on for several weeks; the Germans could have invaded in the meantime. It was finally agreed to cover the stone in a layer of cement.

A lasting memory was a number of older men, marching up and down the school playground with all sorts of guns and brooms. These were the Local Defence Volunteers. After France surrendered, Britain was on its own in Europe and the Government appealed to volunteers to aid the Regular army. This was the foundation of the Home Guard. When I watch the 'Dad's Army' programme on television, I am always reminded of the Home Guard of that period and what actually took place.

The character 'Captain Mainwaring' reminds me of the headmaster of the school, who appointed himself as Captain in charge. A Sergeant was a teacher at the school and he often came to school in his uniform and with his rifle. Due to the shortage of teachers, he often taught more than one class. He would leave his rifle in the corner of the classroom, with instruction not to touch the rifle. That was an open invitation to boys and we often marched around with the rifle.

A plane that crashed near us was a *Spifire* that had developed engine trouble. The pilot landed by parachute and was very concerned he did not lose his lifesaver. After the war, when I was stationed in Germany, a German told me that he was in the Luftwaffe and had been shot down over England. When he landed by parachute, he saw several women running towards him, he thought they were going to lynch him. They picked up the parachute and disappeared. Parachute canopies then were made of silk and a lot of clothes could be made from just one parachute. When I returned home, I worked first on bomb-damaged buildings and then trained as a maintenance mechanic in a factory.

Army and Civilian Career

My Army career started when I joined the Army Apprentices School in October 1942 and I left in October 1945. I then served in REME until June 1953. When I was discharged, I went to work at what was then the Fighting Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (FVRDE) at Chobham. Later, the establishment was renamed Military Vehicles Engineering Establishment (MVEE), when amalgamated with the engineering establishment at Christchurch. After my retirement in 1983, the establishment became part of the Defence Evaluation Research Agency. For most of my career in the REME, then later in civilian life, I was involved with armoured fighting vehicles (AFV). I was recalled for the 'Suez emergency' in August 1956 for four months because I was an

expert on amphibious warfare! Needless to say I had little or no knowledge of amphibious warfare.

My hobbies have been military history, vintage vehicles, industrial archaeology and solar astronomy. It may seem strange to be interested in both AFV and the sun! The main part of my career has been engine research for AFV and hence thermodynamics. In 1974 I was awarded a silver medal by the Institution of Incorporated Engineers (formerly the Institution of General Technician Engineers) for my work on heat transfer.

The heat transfer to the outer corona of the sun, where the temperature should drop but actually increases, has always intrigued me. I have studied this phenomenon over many years and all the theories to date have proved incorrect. With satellites orbiting the sun, our knowledge of the sun is increasing at a rate not previously thought possible. Gradually the corona temperature increase is being unravelled and a better understanding of solar physics and thermodynamics will no doubt ensure. My interest has given me contact with many scientists and has taught me that scientific thinking has to change with time.

My civilian career involved the concept, design and development of AFV. I specialised in engine research for AFV and I served on several Ministry of Defence (MoD), government, industrial and university committees. This brought me into contact with many interesting people at home and abroad and involved me with many aspects of engineering, both military and commercial. I have always been intrigued by the ability of past engineers to achieve significant results with limited equipment. I started my career using a slide rule, mechanical calculators and arithmetic. No doubt many people will remember spending hours on calculations, using 'logs' (logarithms) to obtain the accuracy, which is common place today, in a fraction of the time. I have always considered the electronic calculator made the biggest change in my research work, followed closely by the computer. My first electronic calculator cost £184 (£1,000 at today's prices) and I guarded as if it was the Crown Jewels. Within about 18 months the cost was down to £36. To obtain the calculator, I had to do battle with Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which is a story in itself!

In writing about my career, I will try not to be too technical and use jargon where possible. I know the pitfalls of assuming the readers will be knowledgeable on vehicles. I once gave a presentation to leading scientists and engineers on the requirements for future research of petrol and diesel engines. After my presentation, a leading scientist asked me to explain a petrol and diesel engine because he did not have a clue what I was talking about. I had assumed the audience was familiar with petrol and diesel engines, it was a lesson I never forgot.

An area of design I always considered was poorly addressed was 'reliability'. I always argued that, in the initial design stage, reliability should be a high priority. Designing for reliability is more an art than a science and requires experience of operating in the field. I often clashed with other members of design teams over reliability. What annoyed me more than anything was the lack of support over this subject by senior Army officers. Often I heard the quote, "*it will sort itself out once in service*". I will return to the subject of reliability frequently when discussing my career.

(The above is Trevor's overall view of his early life and career and some thinking on the subject. A future article will be in greater detail, starting obviously with his apprenticeship years. Ed.)

Top table at last!

by Pete Gripton (56B)

How many times have you heard it said that time is passing by far too quickly - or *'tempus fugit'* as my old school Latin master would have put it? But, the older one gets, that's just the way it goes - time really does seem to accelerate through the years, even more so when one has retired! Thus, it hardly seems five minutes ago that John Houghton and I decided to start organising a 56B get-together to celebrate the almost forty years that had then passed by since we'd walked through those big forbidding gates at Arborfield. And now, this year, we have reached the 'golden age' - a huge fifty years since that very same event.

John and I had been fairly frequent in attending Old Boys' reunions, since they were re-established back in 1977, and firstly taking place at the original Rowcroft wooden spiders. There were several others of 'our Div' that also came back to Arborfield in the years that followed that inaugural event, but certainly not on a regular basis and not that many in total. Names that come to mind are Dave Howlett, George Fleetwood, Pete Langridge and Roger Nickson. With that in mind, John and I decided it was 'time for action' and we started searching around for as many ex-56B boys that we could find, culminating in a splendid function that we held in the Rowcroft Sergeants' Mess back in 1996. That was certainly the largest number of 56B boys to assemble in one place in many a long year!

We did have another function at the same Mess in 1999 - forty years since leaving boys' school - and followed that up with others around the country, based upon the different places that guys have settled in since leaving the Army. Regular readers of OBAN will have read about those other mini-reunions. I must admit that, following the sad deaths of Norman Dewdney and Pete Johnson in 2000, I thought our get-togethers would quietly fade away. But, instead, it galvanised me into follow-up action and I am only too happy that I persevered in keeping things 'on the boil'.

With the 2006 Reunion always going to be such a landmark, I did quite a bit of nagging and arm-twisting to cajole quite a few of 56B not only to stay in touch as usual, but to think about re-joining as participating members of the OBA. This meant that they then received the OBAN, with invitations to attend the Arborfield reunion over the weekend of 21-23 July - and I am delighted to say that we had our largest contingent ever at that 'official' reunion. Being our 50th anniversary year, we had the honour of sitting at 'the top table' at long last - it had been a long wait, but well worth it! Special thanks must go to Ken Dawe and Pete Wilson, who made the journey across from Germany to be with us on that auspicious occasion - but also thanks from me to all who turned up, some for the very first time back at Arborfield.

During my prior efforts to 'recruit' fellow 56Bers to that reunion, it was quite sad that, having been able to contact a couple of lads for the very first time since leaving boys' school, time caught up with them in the most unfortunate of ways. Dave Roberts and Ralph Wright had been quite surprised when I got in touch with them, and both had said that they would certainly attend the reunion if possible. Sadly, that wasn't to be the case, as they passed on from ill health. At least I'd had the personal pleasure of speaking to them after so many years. Tributes to both of them have been paid in recent OBANs.

Just after the 1999 function, which was very much as well attended as 1996, I had a phone call from Rodney Smith, also ex-56B and now living in California and heading-up his own computer company. Rodney then went on to host a special get-

together for 56B boys and their ladies at a hotel on the River Thames at Sonning. I know for a fact that everyone who attended that evening, for dinner, bed and breakfast, had the time of their lives, and we are all grateful to Rodney for his kindness and generosity on that occasion. Since then, our UK membership has blossomed in most cases - and sadly wilted in a few others. But, since 1999, 56B has been able to provide reunions on an annual basis, at such places as Diss, Reading, Redditch, York and Oakham, all of which have been very 'user friendly'!

Well, the good news is that Rodney always promised that he may 'do it again' some day and, as I tap this into the keyboard, that day is fast approaching. We shall be back at Sonning on September 7th and it promises to be another great event, on which I shall report in due course!

25th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict

It hardly seems possible that those last twenty-five years have gone by so quickly! But between the 14th-17th of June this year, the anniversary will be commemorated across 8,000 miles and four time zones, in London, Pangbourne (Berks) and the Falklands themselves. Official events begin on Liberation Day, 14th June, at the Memorial Chapel in the grounds of Pangbourne 'nautical' College. This annual event is normally held on behalf of the Falkland Families Association, but this year's will be attended by senior members of the Royal Family and screened 'live' on BBC Television.

Later that day the focus will be upon the Falkland Islands, in a series of live link ups. An Act of Commemoration at the War Memorial will follow a service at Christchurch Cathedral in Stanley. British troops currently serving in the South Atlantic will parade through Stanley, exercising the 'Freedom of the City' honour bestowed upon them in 2002.

The main UK event will be a commemoration on Horse Guards Parade in London, followed by a march past of veterans and their modern-day counterparts. This will head up The Mall to Buckingham Palace to witness a fly-past of aircraft from the Falklands era, as well as some of those flown by the same squadrons today.

Perhaps there are some of our readers who have their own memories of that conflict in 2002 and may wish to share their tales with us older members?

Jersey Boys - it was a long time ago!

During November 2006, Bill Cleasby received a letter from Stan Bates, 43A, containing the article that you will find reproduced below. It appeared in the latest edition of the Channel Islands Newsletter and had been passed on to Stan by Mrs Norma Rodman, a friend and neighbour, who was, to use her own terms, 'Jersey born and bred'. As the article dealt with some of the earliest known facts about the introduction of apprentice soldiers, Stan rightly thought that it "might make good reading in a future issue of OBAN". He went on to explain that the article contained a similar theme to when the ATS (Arborfield) had to pack up and be dispersed for D-Day.

PERMANENT STAFF: Capt Ferrey; MSM Simmonds; MSS Palmer; MSS Barry; MSS Gilman; MSS Marshal; MSS Stewart; MSS Yates; Sgt Churcher; Sgt Fuller; RQMS Cox; Sgt Deacon;

Sgt Doherty; Sgt Hughes; Cpl Barry; Dvr Coleman; Tpr Dologan; WO2 Weaver; PTI Lever; WO2 Partridge; Sgt Phillips; Maj Graham; Matron L/Cpl Bailey; Pte Keymer.

THE ARMY TECHNICAL SCHOOL,
JERSEY 1938-1940

ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS – JERSEY BOYS

In 1937, the War Office, as it then was, was considering the expansion of service for enlisted boy soldiers in the role of apprentice tradesmen. At that time, the Army had one main trade school, which was located at Chepstow. It was decided that, in expanding the scheme, two of the major corps – Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) and Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) – should have their own schools. As a result, 100 RAOC tradesmen were posted to St Peter's Barracks, Jersey – an old Militia camp, located alongside Jersey Airport. It needed considerable modernisation but offered excellent facilities. Lt Col WN McFeely was selected as the first Commandant; he had served in World War I in the Munster Fusiliers. The school was organised like a public school, on house lines, with a specially selected Warrant Officer as sports organiser.

The basic trades taught were fitter, turner and electrician; together with this came a full education, regimental training and sport. Discipline was strict, with the Provost Sergeant, Jock Dallas, believing that 'the punishment should fit the crime'. A former Gordon Highlander and first-class deerstalker, he used his stalking skills to detect those boys going to the local tobacconist! With the imminent arrival of WW II, some staff left – namely Lt Col McFeely, Capt Ferrey and Capt Phillips. The new Commandant was Capt Campbell and he was put in charge of the defence of Jersey Airport. This initially comprised two Lewis guns, with a platoon of Jersey Militia on call with 0.300 Boer War rifles. Later, 80 RNVR sailors were sent to train in basic drill, shooting and airfield defence.

After the fall of Dunquerque and then St Vallery, a huge pall of smoke could be seen and gunfire heard. The War Office ordered the evacuation of the school. Everything had to be dismantled and all stores and workshop machinery had to be shipped out in three days. The boys and permanent staff left by normal mail-boat steamer. Three staff left two days later, with the last of the equipment, in a small 800-ton freighter, the 'River Sheldt'. The school went to Blackdown, near Aldershot, as part of the RASC Training Centre, while its ultimate fate was decided by the War Office. Maj Campbell was posted to 6th Armoured Division RASC.

This was taken from a brief history of the school, written by Brig AP Campbell OBE, which can be found at St Peter's Church, Jersey, along with the list of names. (Sue Payn)

Commandant:	Lt Col WN Craig McFeely
Adjutant:	Capt AP Campbell
Officer Commanding	
Boys' Wing:	Capt AP McDonald

Now where was I?

by Ron Callaghan (42A)

Now where do I start on this little missive? It comes mainly in response to recent OBAN correspondence concerning the MEDLOC transportation system. I suppose I should make a start at Otley Training Camp, Yorkshire, in 1946. It was put to me and others that we qualified for 'Special end of War leave for Officers and Men' – or 'SEWLROM' to use the terminology of the day. Instead, we chose to take a posting to Sudan – but then took SEWLROM later, in 1947. Our route back to Blighty was

a convoluted one, to say the least! We first had a train journey from Khartoum, via Atbara, to Wadi Halfa. There then followed a trip on two paddle steamers, lashed together, along the River Nile to El Shallah in Egypt, near the Aswan Dam (nowadays known as Lake Nasser). Then it was off on the train to Port Said to board a ship across the Med to Toulon.

Here, we (that's my fellow passengers and me) took the MEDLOC route to Calais and then across the Channel to Dover. After the leave, our return trip was somewhat simpler – by troopship to Egypt, then on to the Sudan. One 'recovery job' took me well into the Sudanese 'bush', to a place called En Nahud, this to retrieve a Sudanese police vehicle. In the distance, I spotted the sky turning quite black. Could it be a sandstorm – or some welcome rain? Not on your Nelly! Driving along with all windows down, the cab soon filled up with the old Biblical plague – of locusts! Hard as nails they were, and it took me quite some time to empty them all out of the cab.

Later, having completed 23 Arm Art course, I was first posted to the Central Inspectorate, at Chislehurst, Kent, before moving on to Sudbury Ordnance Depot, between Derby and Utttoxeter. One of my tasks was dealing with 'cannibalised' Caterpillar tractors, which had been returned from the ill-fated 'groundnut' scheme. (*Did any of our readers ever have any involvement in this scheme? Ed.*) Being extremely bored, with both the posting and the amount of 'bullshine' encountered in England, I volunteered for another overseas posting. Guess where I ended up? Egypt, of course – well, at least I'd be able to brush up on my Arabic again!

This time, the journey was different to those previously undertaken. Starting from Arborfield, it was first down to Harwich to catch the ferry across to the Hook of Holland. Then I took the MEDLOC train across Holland, Germany and Austria to Trieste. Stopping at Cologne, we received a poor reception from the locals and it was difficult to prevent the troops from retaliation. It was freezing at Villach, but ablutions still had to be taken with ice-cold water. At Trieste, we were swiftly transported to the troopship for Egypt. Here, I ended up at No.26 shed, 2 Base Workshop in Tel-el-Kebir (my second home!)

After a couple of days there, I was posted to British Admin Workshops in Eritrea, run by civilian 'empire builders'. My instructions were to improve the standard of work emanating from the workshop. To get there, I boarded a corvette at Port Suez, to travel down the Red Sea to Massawa. Unfortunately, the ship broke down and we drifted for a day. It was nice to see the flying fish, but quite unbearable to endure the sweltering heat. Also on board was a troop of South Wales Borderers (SWB). One of them was under close arrest, but he managed to evade his escort. Sadly, for him, he managed to fall overboard and drowned in Massawa harbour.

From Massawa, we were told to board a diesel-powered train/coach (termed 'Littorina' - see picture) for a four-hour trip to Asmara. Starting at sea level, we climbed eventually to almost 7,000 feet. On board each coach was a section of infantry, either SWB or the Royal Berks. They were armed with rifles, Bren guns and 2" mortars, for use against any of the 'Shifta' – local bandits. With the job done, I headed back to Egypt – arriving on the day that Neguib/Nasser abrogated the Canal Zone treaty. Thus began my long sojourn in the Canal Zone at Shandur.

Returning to more present events! In Lofty Baldwin's contribution (OBAN 38), it was very nice to be re-united with my faithful 1946-vintage AEC Matador. The last time I saw

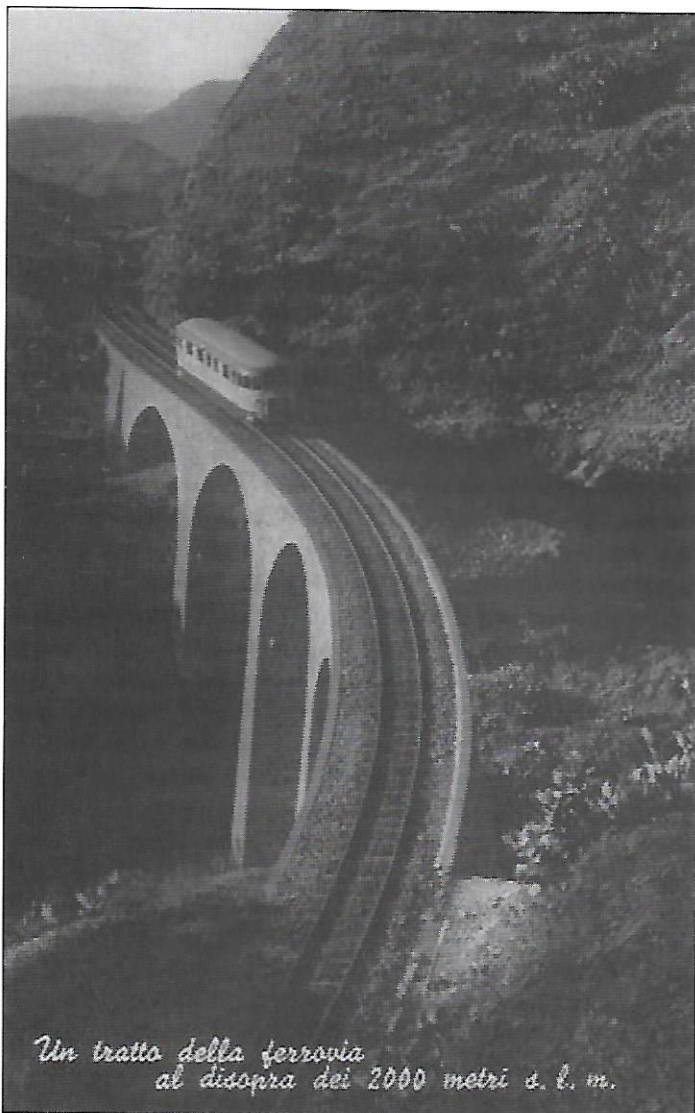
'Bimbashi' Hindmarsh must have been when I was on a course back at Arborfield and we stood together watching a basketball match. Next, John Burch's roll-call of 'J6' in the same OBAN certainly stirred my memory. When I was recalled, for the Suez fiasco of '56, I had to collect six workshop lorries and equipment, with the aid of eleven Scottish chaps, from Irvine, Scotland. We were 'staged' back, stopping off at Carlisle, Bury and Bicester, eventual destination Aldershot. We arrived at Bicester on a cold and sopping wet night. It was while I was arranging some hot food and accommodation for the lads that I bumped into 'Nick' Nickerson once more.

Lofty's comment concerning the state of the present-day Sudan, compared to that of 1946, was a telling one. This was confirmed to me recently by a female Sudanese doctor, when I spoke to her in Arabic. She told me that her parents were far happier when we (the British Army) were out there! Such is life – oh happy days! (Any errors in the above can only be down to the dreaded 'tempus fugit' – I'm eighty years old this month!

(Ron, despite the years, you still pack a good tale! It gives me a lot of pleasure to read these tales from lads of your era, and even earlier – a pleasure I'm sure our readers share through the pages of this magazine. Ed.)

Ron sent an interesting postcard to accompany his tale, showing what looks like an old-fashioned charabanc on tracks! Written on the back, sometime in 1951:

"This is the train you'll travel on from Massawa to Asmara. It is like this for about three-quarters of the journey. Time of journey is roughly four hours."



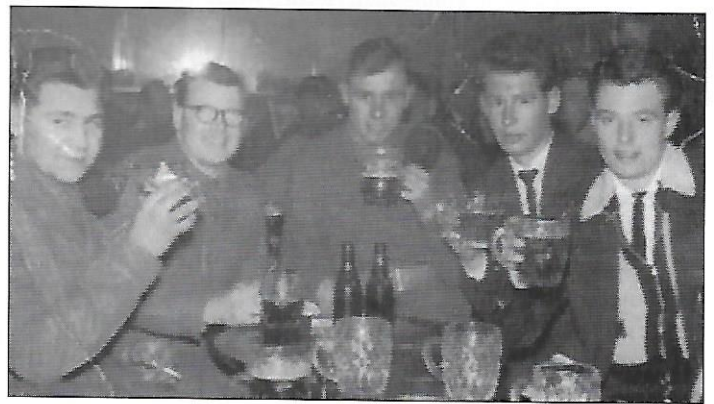
*Un tratto della ferrovia
al disopra dei 2000 metri s. l. m.*

The Suez Crisis, as I remember it!

By Mike Jackson, 53A

Fifty years ago, on August 7th 1956, my kit was all packed and I was on my way. Thanks to an 'emergency posting', I was to join a unit that was to move to Suez in the very near future. I had only been at 21 Command Workshop, in Burscough, Lancashire, for six months. That was my first posting after leaving boys' service at Arborfield, and I had already decided that, if this was the Regular Army, I had made the right decision. As long as you were tidy and your huts were kept clean, you were pretty much left alone to ply your trade, just as I hoped I would be at a unit in peacetime. The Instrument Shop was quite big and mostly staffed by civvies, who seemed willing to help us in any way they could. In fact, I could probably still sharpen by hand the pivot on the first project they gave us (a Compass Prismatic Liquid Mk 3).

A night out at Southport Labour Club



*Mike Jackson far left Ron Wakefield far right
(A ciggie in one hand, a beer in the other; beret and belt over shoulders - typical of the times).*

The local area was good and had most of the things you could want - good 'fish and chips' is a must for any soldier! If you couldn't find the other things you wanted in the local town, there were always trains to Blackpool, Wigan, 'the Pool' and - my favorite – seaside Southport. There, you could get into the Labour Club when you flashed your pay-book and the beer was cheap, as I remember well! They had 'turns' at the weekend - when some of the old sweats in the unit taught me, a mere child, the evils of serious drinking. I must admit that I was a willing student. Poor man's 'Black Velvet' – especially if it was made with rough cider - was the drink of choice and it definitely delivered the desired results. The main problem occurred when taking the train back to Burscough. There were no corridors on the trains and sometimes there were 'accidents' in the compartments. When the train ended up at Burscough Station, some of my colleagues would take out one of the double-poled light bulbs, put a three-penny bit across the bulb contacts – and re-install. This would cause the fuse to blow, putting the lights out in many of the compartments. When I questioned this practice, I was told it was to give the electricians on the nightshift something to do!

One bad thing happened while I was at 21 Cmd. I can't remember if it was on Grand National or FA Cup Final night, but someone murdered a shopkeeper in the area. I was at home on my first ever 48-hour pass and it was one of the first things that greeted me when we got back to work on the Monday morning. At the time, I was doing my turn on camp duties, as an RP (Regimental Police), so I was one of the first people the local Constabulary met when they arrived at the camp. Where else would they go, knowing there was an Army camp in the area? We were all questioned at length and made our statements. When eventually they had no suspects, every

male in the surrounding area was finger printed, but I never did find out if they detained the culprit.

I was not in good shape that Monday morning, as travelling back to Burscough from my '48' wasn't very easy by train. The first train, to Birkenhead, was okay – it was getting to the next train in Liverpool that was the problem. The bus service through the Mersey Tunnel stopped at midnight, so the only option was the 'ferry across the Mersey'. That was a little scary, as the ferry was full of drunken Scouse 'Teddy Boys', who had spent the evening re-arranging New Brighton! Even scarier was the walk from the Pier Head to the 'leckie station', where the police would let you sleep if you had a ticket. *(That would probably be Central Station, at the bottom of Bold Street, where the electric – or leckie in Scouse - train started its journey. Ed.)* The only problem was that they were around every fifteen minutes or so to check your ticket. They advised you to keep the ticket well out of sight or, the next time they woke you, your ticket would be gone.

I had to give all this up on the August 7th, when someone decided that the easy life at 21 Cmd was over for me. I was wanted at 7 Infantry Workshops, in Gillingham (Kent), when 'Suez' crossed my path. Me and two or three National Servicemen were on the move. I was deemed the 'senior soldier' and put in charge of the party. We were all kitted out in our FSMO, but this time we also carried rifles. I had all our records for 'safe keeping' - and I was so paranoid about something happening to one of our rifles, that I left all the documents on the train! The Underground was hairier than usual because of the rifles, but we finally got there. The first couple of days were spent getting our medicals, while the orderlies squeezed any liquid they could find into syringes, to squirt into our arms. After that, our days were spent changing the colour of every piece of equipment the unit owned, from 'Olive Drab' to 'Buff'. Everything that needed masking was covered with grease and my job was to remove the grease after painting. Cotton waste and paraffin didn't make much of a job, but nobody seemed to care. Our evenings were spent changing the colour of our webbing, as a matter of priority.

It took them about ten days to find out that they didn't have establishment for an Inst Mech, nor did they want one! And so, on August 31st 1956, I was on my way again, this time to 24 Corps Troop Workshop at Sutton Veny in Wiltshire. This was a whole new game for me. The unit was 'ready to go' and I was one of about a dozen regulars; the rest, including the CO, were reservists. Our days were spent getting fit and carrying out military training. While silhouettes of Egyptian aircraft were big on the list of things to learn, we also spent lots of time practicing our attacks up hedgerows - I often wondered how that would work in the desert?

After a month or so, it was evident that we were not going anywhere, and the reservists were all getting restless – they wanted to be civvies again. It was thus decided that our time would be better spent with technical training, so we Inst Mechs were sent off to Bordon to learn how to repair typewriters. I guess they knew we were on the way, as there were instructions at the guardroom that we were not to move until the Provost Sgt had seen us. He made it clear that he wanted us there as much as we wanted to be there, but he would stay out of our hair (which by now was quite long) as long as we stayed out of his! We were all put into separate barrack rooms. I was in a room where the L/Cpl in the bunk was a semi-pro football player doing his National Service, and who spent all his time training. The CO recruited all the players he could find. Meanwhile, I was given the room job of 'fire buckets' - we all remember that job. All one had to do was bury the cigarette butts deeper under the sand!

We all passed the course and went back to Sutton Veny, to do nothing - until one day all the reservists went home and a new home was found for me. So it was that, on December 12th 1956, I was on the move again, this time to the School of Artillery at Larkhill - and

my fourth unit since August. They had a nice Instrument Shop and the work was interesting, but I soon found out the old Gunners didn't like the REME - they were still sulking because they lost their Gun Fitters and independence in 1942. But that's another story!

(It was John Moss 55A who persuaded Mike to post this story on the web-site that John runs from his home in Nova Scotia. Mike himself now resides in British Columbia. I was most grateful when the two of them allowed me to use this little tale in OBAN – well done guys! Ed.)

Memories of early Arborfield

by Fred Ford (39A)

It was on 3rd May 1939 when three little fourteen-year old lads from Hull and district were transported from Wokingham Station in the back of a very clean Army truck, along with others, to the nearly completed Army Technical School (Boys) at Arborfield. There was Eddie (Roger) Moore, Lionel Milner Raynor and myself and we were marshalled into a queue at the Guardroom, to eventually arrive at two tables, covered with hairy blankets, behind which sat various NCOs and clerks who asked us many questions. They gave us each a regimental number, which we were instructed to remember – or else! Raynor was given 759007, Moore allocated 759008 and myself 759009. Pity about our positions in the queue, otherwise Roger Moore would have been '007', like his famous namesake!

We soon discovered that the purpose-built camp we were to spend the next three years in was very new and fairly austere. The buildings smelled strongly of fresh joinery and creosote, while workmen were still laying tarmac at the top end of the Square, where a road-roller was chugging to and fro in the late afternoon heat. Having experienced a fairly deprived childhood (in common with many others of the same intake), I did enjoy very much the varied and wholesome meals provided at the Cookhouse. I soon began to look forward to the bugler sounding "*Come to the Cookhouse door, boys*".

I do not wish to bore the reader with details of spartan accommodation, beds, drills, discipline and training, which we have all experienced in turn, but would prefer to write about some of the School 'personalities' of that era. First of all, the Commandant, Colonel Hilborn, who was very impressive with his deep booming voice. His mode of dress comprised the usual senior officer's dress of the day, but always with cavalry-type breeches and shiny, highly polished brown leather leggings and boots. He quickly gained our admiration and respect and is remembered with great affection. It didn't go without notice, however, that he had a very charming daughter!

Next I must make mention of C of E padre, Captain the Rev Victor Pike of the Army Chaplains Department, who made a very deep and lasting impression on all who met him. We listened with great interest to his sermons and religious instruction. He was truly a perfect 'Man of God' and, after fifty-four years, I can honestly say I have never met his like again. A big, rugby playing Irishman, with such a personality that you could hear a pin drop each Sunday, as he preached to some five or six hundred lads.

Volunteers for confirmation classes were always plentiful and I remember being confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford, at the beautiful parish church of Frimley, such was the persuasive power of our padre. I understand that Victor left Arborfield early in the war, to serve with distinction with the Parachute Regiment, and it came as no surprise to me when I later learned that he had eventually become Chaplain General to the Forces and, later on, a Bishop somewhere in the West Country. Ver recently, the Chaplain of Leconfield, on being asked of news of Victor, informed me that he had sadly passed on during 1991.

Much has been related and written about RSM Ben Cook, Grenadier Guards, who very quickly made himself known to us in those first few weeks. He was a very smart man, of fine physique, and a credit to the Brigade of Guards – although he scared most of us to death until we got to know him better! Even today, when I see an RSM in person or on TV, I always do a mental comparison with our beloved Ben. Although he had a gruff exterior, he was really a great big ‘softie’ with a great sense of humour. He was often heard ordering miscreant lads to *“Go and lock yourself in the Guardroom and bring me back the key”!*

I remember one occasion when he shouted to one of the drill sergeants, *“Sergeant Oldfield, what sort of tree is that at the top of the square?”* The sergeant pondered for a second and then replied, *“It’s a wooden tree Sir”*, whereupon Ben stomped off in disgust, muttering *“Wooden tree, wooden tree”*, much to the merriment of the lads being drilled. Then there was an incident when Ben ordered one hapless boy to wipe his runny nose. The lad replied that he had no handkerchief and couldn’t afford to buy any. Ben ordered the boy to report to his married quarter that evening and it transpired that the lad duly returned from Ben’s house with six crisp white hankies in one hand - and a bright shiny half-crown clutched in the other! Now, in those days, that was more than a week’s pocket money. Good for Ben, what a great character he was.

The very first Provost Sergeant in the School was a chap by the name of Hotchkiss, who arrived as a Lance Corporal and achieved his sergeant’s stripes very quickly. He was soon nicknamed ‘Grockle’, as he resembled a cartoon character. He soon made a name for himself, giving the ‘janker wallahs’ a hard time, such as press-ups on the tarmac whilst wearing respirators (gas masks) – mind bending, believe me! He was also renowned for removing hundreds of hacksaw blade pieces from the SD caps of apprentices booking out at the Guardroom. These pieces were used to make the front of the cap stand up smartly – and I never understood why the manufacturers of those caps couldn’t have built such a simple improvement into the caps from the start! I think it is fair to say that much of the kit issued at the time was diabolical in design, when compared to the standard issue kit just a few years later.

Furtherance of our general education was the responsibility of the Army Educational Corps, and I well remember the two sergeants who taught us map reading, military history and English etc. Sgt Pettit was a man of normal build, whilst his colleague (whose name I can’t recall) literally towered above him at almost seven feet. Not surprisingly, he was known as ‘Lofty the Schoolie’. Both these gentlemen were very patient, excellent teachers, and a credit to their calling. Two others who come readily to mind are Armament Artificer Staff Sergeants MacFarlane and ‘Nobby’ Hall, RAOC, who taught us in the trade classrooms. We told ourselves that, if we really tried hard enough, we might one day emulate these handsome, clean-cut, intelligent and very smart chaps, who taught us engineering drawing, science, electrical theory etc so very efficiently. I believe that both these instructors from 1939 achieved senior officer status, either towards the end of the war or shortly afterwards. Not surprising at all.

Now for something different! It was a fine sunny morning and, along with many other lads, I was crossing the parade-square, carrying Mug, Knife, fork and spoon, after a splendid breakfast in the dining hall. I was deep in thought, going over what I still had to do to be ready for the C of E church parade, next on the agenda. Suddenly, the drone of powerful aircraft engines became louder and louder and then – there it was, flying low, with black crosses on the fuselage and wings clearly visible, as were some of the crew members. It was a Luftwaffe Heinkel bomber, almost skimming the tops of our huts, diagonally right across the square, before disappearing from view just as quickly. Most of us just stood there petrified, not believing what we had seen. But by this stage of the war, either 1940 or 1941 I can’t be sure, we

were not overawed for long. However, when Victor Pike stood at his pulpit later that morning, holding up a piece of the bomb that had been jettisoned onto our playing fields, the seriousness of the situation became clear – and we joined our padre in thanking God. It was rumoured amongst the lads that the plane had eventually gone down in the sea off the south coast.

An epidemic of German measles hit the School and one of the spiders was set aside, designated as an isolation unit. Those who contracted the dreaded infection were put in there, fed on the ‘fat of the land’ for a week, then dispatched home on twenty-eight days sick leave. Needless to say, the bed-sheets of those infected lads were much in demand by the remainder, who also hoped to enjoy such preferential treatment! (And yes, I did enjoy my extended leave!) While on the subject, I wonder how many old boys remember the School Hospital at the far end of the playing fields? In particular, the very lovely QARANC Sister, who most of us boys had a schoolboy crush on at the time! A real vision of loveliness, with officer status and a red cape, much admired at a respectable distance, with due deference to the lady’s rank – but a real angel when ministering to the sick.

And what about the concert parties put on by the boys? I remember one such concert, put on by ‘C’ Company in those early days. Five lads, one being Lofty Tattersall – all six feet of him – dressed up as chorus girls in scanty costumes for a ‘Tiller Girls’ routine that brought the house down. One of the songs we sang, to the tune of ‘Hi ho, hi ho’ from Snow White, went:

*We live in barracks F and G,
We go to workshops every day.
We learn the way the game to play,
We do our job for a couple of bob
And quickly pass the time away.*

So many memories of Arborfield, where we went in as boys and passed out as men, after three years of character building, which I feel sure was so beneficial to most of us in later life. Although some of us did not achieve officer rank in the Services, very many became ‘captains of industry’ in our second careers in civilian life. The Arborfield grounding helped us overcome the pressures and stress of modern-day management. I conclude with a little poetic advice worth thinking about:

*From quiet homes and first beginnings,
Out to the undiscovered ends.
There’s nothing worth the wear of winning,
Save laughter and the love of friends.*

(Fred’s memories of those first Arborfield days were first published in OBAN4, Autumn 1993. They are re-published here as a tribute to those boys who first established the traditions here at Arborfield – especially for new members and apprentices of later years who may not have read this article previously. Ed.)

Fifty years in the planning!

by Pete Gipton (56B)

After half a century in which to ‘get it right’, I still had butterflies in my stomach when I woke up early on the morning of September 7th 2006. Of course, I hadn’t spent the full fifty years on planning this reunion – but at that moment, it certainly felt as though I had! Fortunately, the sky was full of late summer sunshine, with the promise of a pleasant warm day ahead. Yes, this was to be the 50th anniversary reunion for 56B, and the past few months had been a hectic round of e-mails, letters and phone calls, as I attempted to have as many of my old Div together once again for this special occasion. It was very sad that, even during the ‘invitation’ stage, a couple of lads who I’d only just been able to contact for the very

first time since boys' school, decided to head off to that 'great bedspace in the sky'. Tributes to Dave Roberts and Ralph Wright have already been written for the OBAN, it's such a shame that we weren't able to see them again.

The day certainly did continue warming up and, on the way up to the reunion venue, Joyce and I dropped in at the REME Museum. I knew there would be a couple of lads at the party who still didn't have a copy of *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*, the school history, and hoped they would appreciate having it in their possession by close of play that night! I managed to find Bill Cleasby in his office and he told me that he had already had Pete Simpson visit the Museum to pick up his own copy, being over here all the way from Queensland, Australia, for the reunion party. Another long-distance traveller was to be Johnny Johnson from his home in South Africa. Both of these guys have made previous excellent contributions to the pages of the Old Boys' Newsletter.

It's not too far from Arborfield to Sonning, and we enjoyed the drive across there on a beautiful afternoon. It certainly brought back a few memories too! Back in the Sixties, I had lived for a while at Woodley, at the edge of Reading, and used to 'commute' between home and SEE on a 'funky moped'! Mind you, that *Sainsbury* store I passed – I'm sure that used to be *'Crimpy Crisps'*? We finally made our way through Hurst and Twyford, across the A4 and down the hill into Sonning. The *Great House* hotel is situated right on the River Thames, with the only drawback being that the bridge across the river is 'one way' and thus controlled by traffic lights. This means a constant build-up of traffic on either side of the bridge, which seems to continue hour after hour!

Our arrival at the hotel coincided with that of a few others, so we all joined the party that was already congregating in the bar. A few of us then got together to stretch our legs, by taking a quiet walk along the river bank, away from that annoying traffic! The late afternoon sunshine, along with good company, made that most enjoyable. Then it was off to our rooms for a 'spit and polish', prior to the evening's function. Around 6 o'clock, Rodney Smith and his wife Mary arrived to 'officially' open the bar and welcome the rest of 'the clan' as their guests. This was a most generous effort on Rodney's behalf, as he and Mary live so far away from the rest of us, over in California. Let me say a big 'thank you' from all of us Rodney, for hosting this momentous occasion.

I don't think I have to tell the readers of this magazine that the rest of the evening was a splendid success! Sufficient to say that we all thoroughly enjoyed each other's company once again, especially for those who hadn't previously been to one of our 56B get-togethers in recent years. We raised our glasses to 'absent friends', particularly Allan Dagless and Klaus Pennington, both of whom are 'going thorough the mill' of ill health at this time. On a happier note, it was particularly good to welcome back John Bilcliff, who had been – incorrectly, he reckons! – reported as 'missing in action' in an OBAN about ten years ago! Lazarus couldn't have done it better John! We also had apologies from a few who couldn't make it this year due to pressing commitments elsewhere, such as Roger Clarkson, Tony Domoney (read his letter!), Alan Fowler (was Makin) and Len Keetley.

As the dinner came to a close, as a token of our appreciation to Mary and Rodney, we presented them with a *Staffordshire Crystal* cut-glass whisky jug and set of tumblers. The jug was decorated with the boys' school badge and the motif '56B', while the tumblers each had a smaller version (collar-dog style!) of the badge only – hopefully a unique present that will remind the couple that they will always remain fondly in our thoughts.

The following morning was a time for 'farewell' over what was, for most, a 'full English' breakfast, and the inevitable drive home and to start thinking, "Wonder if we'll make it to our 60th?" For Joyce and I,

it was only a ten-minute drive, as we headed over to Caversham to meet up with her sister and husband for a few hours. In the event, we enjoyed another riverside walk, up at the 'peaceful' little market town of Wallingford. It was quite amazing, just a few days later, to hear television reports of a full-scale riot in the town's market square, with police having to be called in from Berkshire and Oxfordshire to sort things out

Just for the record, the 56B boys who were able to make it to the 50th anniversary party were: John Bilcliff, Ian Bradley, Dave Braithwaite, Ron Daykin, Russell Dodds, John Dunn, Brian Fortune, Ian Griffiths (was Walker), George Gash, Pete Gripton, John Houghton, Gerry Hincks, Dave Howlett, Bob Hudson, Larry Jarvis, Johnny Johnson, Pete Langridge, Brian Mockford, Dick Morris, Derek Newman, Jim Scurr, Pete Simpson, Keith Smith, Rodney Smith, John Stewart, Tony Strong, Pete Swanston, John Teasdale and Sid Urwin.

Many a 'new' tune?

Almost-near neighbour Tony Guy (43A) posted a newspaper cutting to me recently, with this message attached: *"Hallo Peter, You may find the following words of interest, as I did, concerning the Arborfield song - does it ring a bell?"*

The words in question read as follows: *The battle hymn of Goodison Park, the one about Everton being 'A grand old team to play for', contains the chorus 'If you know your history'.*

Now, being a long-exiled Evertonian, and having not seen a game for something like twenty years, apart from television ones, I was immediately puzzled. I certainly hadn't heard the words in an Everton context before – but certainly they rang an old Arborfield bell with me! Picking up the old 'dog and bone' (see, I'm almost a Cockney these days!), I gave Everton FC a call, descending into the vernacular to make myself understood - *'Orl rite Wack?'*

I was passed onto a young press officer, who was able to confirm that 'Yes', the song in question had been around at Goodison Park for some ten years now, apparently having been adopted from Celtic! I told the young man about the song's history as far as boys' school was concerned and he was then able to put the following words down the line to me:

*"It's a grand old team to play for.
It's a grand old team to support.
And if you know your history,
It's enough to make your heart go woh-oh-oh-oh.
We don't care what the red side (*) say,
What the 'eck do we care?
For we only know that there's gonna be a show,
When the Everton boys are there."*

(*) 'Side' is the politically correct version of what the fans actually sing, in reference to their neighbours from Anfield!

I made mention of the opening line that we'd always sung, to the effect of *'Cheers, cheers, the Reds (or should it now be Blues?) are here'*. I was then told that the refrain used to open along those lines, but had been whittled down by the fans over the years to the version printed above. Even then, the words don't scan as well as our old school song, but it's nice to know that the gist of it still lives on among the most discerning football supporters in the country, at the Goodison 'School of Science'!

Thanks for the cutting, Tony, it brought back many happy memories!

Pete 'True Blue' Gripton, 56B.

My World Cup Final, 1966

by Bill Pusey 46A

At that special time (is it forty years ago already?), I was one of the Army Football Association's 'First Class' select referees. As such, I was honoured to be on a list of names, put forward to the Football Association (FA), to act as stewards during the nine matches that were to be played at Wembley Stadium as the World Cup Finals reached their final stages. Having attended all of the group matches, plus the quarterfinal and semifinal games, I then took my son Ian, aged just nine, to watch the 'third place play-off' match between Portugal and the Soviet Union. He enjoyed the whole day so much that I decided to take him to see the ultimate match, between England and West Germany, to see which team would win the coveted *Jules Rimet* trophy. We travelled up to London, to the Empire Pool, where we were given instructions about our required duties for that famous match. We were also issued with a lunch-box, the contents of which we consumed immediately, to ensure that we carried the minimum baggage. I already knew that, during the match itself, there would be no storage facilities inside the Stadium for stewards' belongings.

As soon as the turnstiles opened, I handed over my entrance ticket but, at first, the operator refused to let Ian enter. I demanded that he return my ticket – and also asked his name, to enable me to explain to the FA the reason for my absence to the allocated spectators' pen. At that point, I also intended to return to Wokingham and watch the game on TV. Somewhat reluctantly, the operator then allowed us both to enter the Stadium. It was still early, so I took Ian down towards 'the tunnel', which would allow him to run out onto the hallowed turf – just as would the two teams in around another three hours time. Another official stopped us in our tracks but, fortunately, a gentleman from the FA was on hand. When I explained my innocent intentions to him, he led us both away and into the very dressing room that would be later used by the English side.

When I looked around, I was disappointed not to see the plaque, showing the place where the famous Billy Wright, former England stalwart and captain, had hung his kit whilst amassing his 100 International caps. The story I had heard was obviously untrue! But, thanking our kindly guide, we then made our way up the tunnel and out into that magnificent arena, which was bathed in brilliant sunshine. Ian asked me if he could put his toe-cap over the goal-line near to the goal-posts – to which I naturally replied, "Go ahead". But just as he did that, a booming voice came over the Public Address system, telling him to "Get off that pitch!" This was followed by hearty laughter from the same quarter, as Ian jumped so high in the air that I often later imagined that he could have cleared the crossbar! The Stadium would later fill with 96,924 spectators, plus all the uncounted match officials and stewards. But, just then, Ian and I were the only visible presence at pitch-side, and to hear that stentorian command echoing around the empty terraces and grandstands was certainly electrifying!

My son then proudly had a little run around the penalty box, scoring a few imaginary goals, before we returned down the tunnel and made our way to Pen No.9. Early spectators started to arrive and I became busy packing them all in. Just before kick-off time, I noticed that there were several areas of green-coloured sand scattered across the pitch, where the turf had



**JULES RIMET CUP
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
ENGLAND 1966 JULY 11-30**

WEMBLEY - EVERTON - SHEFFIELD - SUNDERLAND - ASTON VILLA - MANCHESTER - MIDDLESBROUGH - WHITE CITY



been damaged during a hectic schedule of previous games. Normal brown sand would no doubt have been highly visible – especially on TV sets all around the world!

The game itself turned into an epic Final. The Germans took an early lead, but Haller's goal was nullified when England drew level in the eighteenth minute through Geoff Hurst. At half-time, the two sides were still level at 1 – 1. England must have thought they had the game sewn up when Martin Peters scored a second in the seventy-eighth minute, only for West Germany to equalize once again through Weber, with virtually the last kick of the full ninety minutes. This followed the award of a free kick against Jack Charlton that was dubious to say the least. And so extra-time was to be played – another thirty heart stopping and lung bursting minutes. It was then that England manager, Alf Ramsey, joined his tired players out on the pitch and goaded them up with some stirring words, to the effect that 'You have beaten them once – now go and beat them again'.

It had been a very exciting match to watch; the tension in the crowd was incredible. I found it hard to believe that a full hour had passed between England's two goals. Then, in extra-time, came probably the most hotly debated goal in football history, when Geoff Hurst's shot cannoned off the underside of the bar – and then back out into play. Had 'the whole of the ball crossed the goal-line'? Well, my referee's eyes certainly didn't think so – and I had a pretty good view of the action! But the Swiss referee, Gottfried Dienst, also in some doubt, immediately went across to consult his Russian linesman, Tofik Bakmarov, who was in no such doubt – he gave it as a goal! To this very day, any German football fan will tell you it was never a goal – but, in the event, it mattered little. Bobby Moore swept a long pass upfield, Geoff Hurst latched onto the ball and broke

Ex-boy Heaven

Two old ex-Arborfield boys from the early Forties, Joe and Mike, have been friends all of their lives, ever since joining up. When it's clear that Joe is about to hang up his boots, Mike visits him every day. One day he says,

"Joe, we both loved football all our lives, and we played in the school team together for a couple of years. Please do me one favour if you get to Heaven - let me know if there's football there".

Joe looks up at Mike from his deathbed.

"Mike, you've been my best mate for many years. If it's at all possible, I'll do this favour for you".

Shortly after that, Joe passes on.

At midnight a couple of nights later, Mike is awakened from a sound sleep by a blinding flash of white light and a voice calling out to him,

"Mike, hey Mike".

"Who is it?" asks Mike, sitting up suddenly.

"Mike, it's me, Joe".

"You can't be Joe, he just died".

"I'm telling you, it's me, Joe", insists the voice. *"Joe! Where are you?"*

"In Heaven", replies Joe. *"I have some really good news and a little bad news".*

"Tell me the good news first", says Mike.

"The good news", says Joe, *"is that there's football in Heaven. Better yet, all of our boys' schoolmates who died before us are here too. Even better, we're all young again, it's always springtime and it never rains or snows. And, best of all, we can play football all we want and we never get tired".*

"That's fantastic", says Mike, *"it's beyond my wildest dreams! So what's the bad news?"*

"You're playing Tuesday!"

OBAN 38 - Photo Competition

We received some good replies to our last photo competition – thanks for the efforts below! The clue was in the paragraph at the end of page 41.

My guess would be the business end of a tin of compo sausages!
Al White 61A

Who could forget an opened tin of compo sausages?

Bev John 66A

Looks to me like a tin of sausages (end view) probably compo?

Larry Jarvis 56B

I reckon it is an opened tin of compo sausages.

Laurie Blakley 61B

Was that a deliberate mistake about the 'sauce' of compo sausages? If so, all clever stuff! By the way, we referred to them as 'slingers'.

Ron Ward 42C

ENGLAND

22 Selected Players

1 Gordon Banks LEICESTER	12 Ronald Springett SHEFFIELD WED.
2 George Cohen FULHAM	13 Peter Bonetti CHELSEA
3 Ramon Wilson SWANSEA	14 James Armfield BLACKPOOL
4 Norbert Stiles MAN. UNITED	15 Gerald Byrne LIVERPOOL
5 John Charlton LEEDS	16 Martin Peters WEST HAM (1)
6 Robert Moore WEST HAM	17 Ronald Flowers WOLVES
7 Alan Ball BLACKPOOL	18 Norman Hunter LEEDS
8 James Greaves SPURS	19 Terence Paine SOOTHAMPTON
(3)9 Robert Charlton MAN. UNITED	20 Ian Callaghan LIVERPOOL
(2)10 Geoffrey Hurst WEST HAM	21 Roger Hunt LIVERPOOL (3)
11 John Connelly MAN. UNITED	22 George Eastham ARSENAL

The names and numbers of the players taking part in each match will be announced over the public address system prior to the kick-off. This information should be inserted in the space provided on the relevant page for each game, covered between pages 44 and 55.

Les noms et les numéros des joueurs sélectionnés seront annoncés par moyen du haut-parleur avant le coup d'envoi de chaque match. Ces renseignements sont à ajouter à la page qui convient, c'est-à-dire entre la page 44 et la page 55.

Die Namen und Nummern der Spieler welche an jedem Spiel teilnehmen, werden vor Lautsprecher vor dem Anstoß bekannt gegeben. Diese Angaben können an der hierfür für jeden Spiel vorgesehenen Stelle – Seiten 44 bis 55 – eingetragen werden.

Los nombres y números de los jugadores que toman parte en cada partido serán anunciados por los altavoces antes del comienzo del partido. Esta información debe ser incluida en la casilla correspondiente en la página relativa a cada partido, incluida entre las páginas 44 y 55.

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away, in the dying seconds, to hit a sweet shot past the German keeper to settle the game for once and all.

In more recent times, computer analysis has been carried out to try and decide 'was it a goal or not' - with the major conclusion that it wasn't. But, as the Law sates - "On points of fact, the referee's decision is final". And so it was that history recorded a famous 4 - 2 victory for England - the one and only occasion when England won the World Cup. Geoff Hurst had scored three goals - a hat-trick - as far as memory serves me, the only player to ever have achieved that feat in a World Cup final tie. After the game, along with a worldwide audience, we savoured the sight of skipper Bobby Moore receiving the golden trophy from Her Majesty the Queen and joined in the seemingly endless cheering and applause that echoed around the famous old Stadium.

It was a very happy and weary pair of travellers who travelled back to Wokingham later that evening, of that you can be sure! I still retain my steward's badge and the nine ticket-stubs issued during those unforgettable three weeks in July 1966. My wife still treasures the souvenir known as 'World Cup Willy', bought outside the Stadium, showing a little lion wearing a Union flag. To this day, it has pride of place in our home as a constant reminder of the day 'we won the World Cup'.

(Thanks for that tale Bill. I guess anyone interested in football and who was able to watch that game, either live or on TV, will recall that famous victory. The team is still indelibly printed in my brain - Gordon Banks, George Cohen, Ray Wilson, Nobby Stiles, Jack Charlton, Bobby Moore, Alan Ball, Bobby Charlton, Geoff Hurst, Martin Peters and Roger Hunt. My view was from the seat of an armchair in married quarters at Bordon and - that goal? Never any doubt in my mind! Ed.)

RECOLLECTIONS OF A GUN FITTER – Part 1

by Barry Baxter (57A)

The Arborfield years

I've often said, when telling people about the odd and funny things that I'd seen and heard during my time in the Army and since, that I ought to write it all down. Well now I have, so here, with apologies to Rifleman Harris, are my recollections. I can't say why I wanted to join the Army, but I was only fifteen, so I suppose that's my excuse. But why a Gun Fitter? Lord knows, but I passed the exam, took the Queen's shilling (well, slightly more if I remember right, but that's inflation for you) and there I was, on my way to Arborfield, five days before my sixteenth birthday - what had I done?

Waiting at Reading railway station with a few other bewildered boys, we were approached by a well turned-out Sergeant. "*Are you for Arborfield?*" he asked. As we were standing by a blackboard that said '*New apprentices wait here*', it seemed a fair bet! But, being a shy young lad, I sensibly said nothing, thank goodness. He took us outside onto the station forecourt. "*See that bus? Get on and ask for the Arborfield Apprentices' School*". What? Pay our own fare, no 3-tonner? But we did as we were told, good practice, and ended up outside those famous gates on a dull damp evening on February 7th 1957.

We were collected and taken by what they now (I believe) call a 'walking bus', down the main road, in through a door and along what seemed like miles of wooden-clad corridors to a room in 'F' spider. I found out later that we could have walked straight down the main road, through a door, and been in the very same place. Of course that wouldn't have been as much fun - for somebody anyway! Does anyone remember the early 50s film, '*Reluctant Heroes*'? If so, you'll recognise the next bit. "*Take this kitbag, hold it open and move down the line. You look about this size*". Wallop! The kitbag got steadily heavier, like a giant Christmas stocking, but full of goodies that we didn't recognise. An innocent question, "*Whatever are those?*" A scathing answer, "*Drawers Dracula, move on.*" And then to one of the huts and find a bed. Was the bedding already there or did we have to collect it, it's all a bit hazy now.

Then on to the Cookhouse, to rousing cheers from what was probably 2 Div, deliriously happy that they were no longer the lowliest of 'Jeeps'. That first meal was 'Bangers and Mash'. I can remember seeing this big aluminium tub of mashed spuds (or was it the dreaded 'pom?'), which was serrated around the edge. For a moment I wondered why, then soon found out! "*Hold your plate under the edge*". Bang! The glutinous mixture flew off the big spoon and stuck, literally, to my plate. Two turd-like bangers followed, then two slices of bread and a cube of margarine - remember them, floating in that big tub of water? And a spoonful of jam and don't turn your back on it. We learned that one fast!

The next day we were sized into four squads. I'm six foot tall, so it's 'A' squad for me and we were all moved into different rooms. We actually started talking to each other, the first one I remember talking to was Tom Webber, then Keith Brown, a big lad, they had trouble getting an SD cap for him, and Eric Granthem, was he also in 'A' squad? Then there was Jim Cliff, the 'camera man'. It was so easy to make friends, after all we had a common enemy to help the process - known to the world as 'Room NCOs'!

That's when it really started. 'Boxing' denims, 'beezing' boots, a word peculiar to the School it seems, brasses and blanco. Shining parades, sitting on your bed cleaning kit, no talking allowed. Standing on your bedside locker in bare feet for foot inspection. Brown plimsolls, to be polished black of course - and those white belts. First they made us scrub them, then it took two bottles of '*Probert's White Renovator*' to get a decent surface on it. Was the next inspection an 1198 (kit check) or a parade? If the former, clean it flat, and if the latter, do it round the bucket, as long as the Room NCOs are not around.

I remember us all trying learn our regimental numbers, bits of paper in our pockets, don't let the NCOs know. I remember hearing one NCO asking someone, "*Whose Army are you in?*" and getting the reply, "*Arborfield's Army*". I don't think he was too impressed! Then it's drill. The squad drill sergeants seemed to be sized to the squads - well, 'A' squad got a big one anyway! He was in the Durham Light Infantry, sadly I can't remember his name. I didn't mind drill. I felt a lot safer with the adult (permanent staff) NCOs than with the boy NCOs! I've no doubt we made some hilarious cock-ups learning drill, those Sergeants must have gained an enormous collection. One I remember involved a boy called Adams. He was having trouble keeping in step this particular day - been there, done that. We were marching down the square, when the drill Sergeant shouted, "*Everybody except Adams, change step. Oh no, he did it that time!*" Funny how we don't remember our own mistakes quite so well.

Evenings were the worst, when left to the tender mercies of our boy NCOs. Bed drills, pinching the edges of the bed block blanket with the backs of your boot brushes to get a square corner. Dress calls - five minutes to parade in the corridor in PT kit and greatcoats. Oh how we laughed, but later, not at the time! My worst moment was when we had to brasso our steel lockers, inside and out. I'd just finished, when the boy NCO walked by and sneered, "*Not very good, do it again*". If they'd have said 'you can go now laddie', I'd have been sorely tempted, but they didn't, so I stayed.

Then it's our drill competition at the end of our square bashing. 'A' squad came in second, which seemed to please our squad Sergeant, maybe he thought we'd do worse. 'And now for something completely different' - in the shape of trade training. For most of us, it was a case of "*This is a file and this is a scaly piece of mild steel. Bring the two together thus, and push*". You did, and the file slid over the steel and your knuckles met the vice, if you were lucky. Eventually we began to get the hang of it. My problem was that my '*eventually*' got steadily longer than everyone else's! It was a problem I was going to find with filing throughout my training.

A Jeep no more!

At last we were no longer the lowest of the low, when we moved up to 2 Div and I went into 'A' Coy. And for trade training? More filing, what else? As light relief though, we got to play on machines. Mainly lathes, but also millers, shapers and grinders. The only fly in the ointment on lathes was thread-cutting. Not the machining but that gear train. Having to work out the driver, intermediate, and driven gears. We also learned blacksmithing, tin-smithing and welding. I can remember one of the old blacksmiths raking the forge over with his bare hands, not a trick I was about to try! I can also remember gas welding thin plates, more like lace making actually! I have a feeling that the machining came in 3 Div. Surely my memory can't be going, can it? After all, it was only 49 years ago!

I remember doing a First Aid course with St John's Ambulance, based in Wokingham. Several of us went, not so much from a desire to learn First Aid, but because it got us out of the camp on a weekday evening, something not normally allowed. Was that in 2 Div? I can't remember. But I do remember that there was time to visit a pub before we had to go back to camp. It was in 2 or 3 Div that I was 'put on a charge' for missing an early morning cookhouse fatigue, myself and two of the West African boys, but I can't remember which ones. We always used to think they didn't get as much punishment as us and, as we all got charged together, after they'd given their excuses, I just said, "I forgot". As we'd been charged together, we had to have the same punishment, so we all had to do the fatigue the next morning. I don't know if I gained on that or not.

One of the 'fun things' I remember was Saturday afternoon Rodeo – which was extra drill for minor defaulters, taken by the duty Sergeant Major, who was never too happy about it. I remember the little extra touches, like '140 to the minute' and 'don't swing your arms'. That's hard enough in a straight line, but when he threw in an 'about turn', there were bodies all over the place. No health and safety in those days! Another time I remember a 'best dress' parade when it rained and we were marched off prior to being inspected, only to be marched back on again when the rain stopped. All of us were frantically trying to remove the white renovator, which had been transferred from our belts onto the insides of our sleeves and the skirts of our tunics.

I'm sure a lot of people must remember 'Dinger' Bell's little *tete-a-tete* with RCM Sallis? It went along the lines of, "*Have you shaved this morning?*" "*No*" "*No what?*" "*No razor!*" Dinger would have been in Senior Div, while we were only 2 or 3 Div, and so too far away to hear it first hand, but I do remember seeing Dinger and escort doubling off the square!

At the end of 3 Div, or maybe at the beginning of 4 Div, we did a 'cadre course'. What sticks in my mind was the communication drill. Two lines on either side of the square, facing in, and shouting orders at each other. It was fine marching towards your oppo but, when you about turned, it was anybody's guess as to who was shouting at whom! Tom Basare, a West African boy, with his higher pitched voice was great for that, everybody wanted to get with him. Anyway, 4 Div, halfway through and we started guns at last, I really enjoyed

that, it was what I'd joined for. We also started rifle drill, still No.4, 0.303s. For the first lesson, the whole Div was in the Camp Hall, with the drill Sergeant on the stage. It was his fault really. He announced, "*I don't mind if you drop your rifles at first*". Whatever he was going to say next was drowned out by the mighty crash of many rifles hitting the wooden floor, followed by him shouting, "*Pick 'em up you bastards*". They didn't swear very often, reserving it for special occasions, but that was too good an opportunity to miss.

It must have been around this time that we had the 'high speed parade'. Bob Luck, one of 57A's supplementary intake, had joined the military band and was being tried out on the bass drum. Alas, his internal metronome had broken. By the time RCM Sallis stopped us, we were up around 140 or more. If he hadn't stopped us, it would have been a disaster, we'd never have made the turn at the bottom of the square, and no doubt have gone on to dismantle the Cookhouse!

Were we 6 Div – or 9?

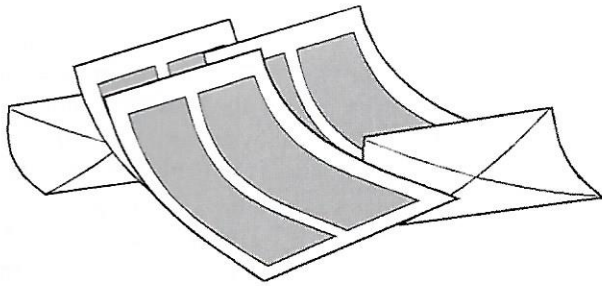
During a drill competition, it must now have been 5 Div because we had rifles, we were waiting to march on when Roger Clapcott reminded me that I'd forgotten to blanco the other side of my rifle sling. Thanks Roger, I really needed to know that just then. And finally, we achieved 6 Div. Actually, with all the recent changes, I think we were actually 9 Div - but what's in a name, as the Bard said, we were **Senior Div**! And for us Gun Fitters that meant, what else - more filing! I did all right in the final tests, apart from writing twice as much as I needed to on the action of the 40/70 - *READ THE QUESTION*! Alas my filing let me down again, too slow, so I ended up NFQ – Not Fully Qualified.

And then, military training. Live firing with SLRs and LMGs, but 'playing soldiers' (sorry, tactical training) with DP 303s. All shout '*BANG*' loudly! My brother once told me that, when he was with a workshop, a man was court martialled for failing to shout 'bang' in the face of the enemy! Yes, well, it was a REME unit after all. And at last came our Passing-out Parade. Nobody tripped up, dropped their rifle or fainted, same thing we were always taught. I don't imagine anyone forgets marching out through those gates to '*Auld Lang Syne*'. Followed by the mad rush to change into the BD jacket with the REME flashes and the carefully shaped beret with the REME badge. An experience denied to the later generations, once they'd changed to No.2 dress. As for us, well we'd only gone and done it, we were real soldiers!

Afterwards, like everybody else I expect, I found out what I used to tell the next generation. When you've passed the exam, that's when you start learning! My first posting was to 1 Command Workshop in Catterick. My mother, bless her, said it was a long way from Salisbury, my home town. I said it wasn't so bad, some people were going to Germany. If only I'd known!

(Like the rest of us, Barry then went off into the big wide world. We hope to continue his story in a future edition – watch this space! Ed.)

OBAN LETTERS



✉ Alan Morton (51B) e-mails:

Remember me? 'Old Algy', membership number 37, 'B' Coy and 'HQ' Coy A/CSM? Imagine my surprise to receive OBAN 38 this week and, looking at the contents page, to see my dear old Dad's name on page 21, i.e. Major 'Jim' Morton! It brought quite a lump to my throat to see his retirement photo (wearing his retirement rank of Lt Col), and then to read the article which, as you say, first appeared in the *Craftsman*, October 1962. There was a previous article, circa 1960 I think, also in *Craftsman*, entitled 'Like Father, Like Son', which featured a picture of Dad and me with our various shooting trophies, followed by his history and mine at that time. I had just finished my Art Tels Tiffy Course and 'SSgt Morton' was based in Ty Croes, Anglesey at the TEGWRA unit. Senior Company was one of Dad's most enjoyable postings, as he loved ploughing back his wealth of experience to A/Ts just about to depart into REME on their future careers. He was the one and only Senior Company Commander, because when he was posted out in 1965, it was closed down - 8 and 9 Divisions no longer to exist. That upset him quite a bit, but he did take consolation in the fact that maybe no other officer in REME at that time could continue the excellent work he started (you'd expect me to say that, wouldn't you?). Dad died in 1977, aged 64, far too early for a man of his background and service - but he did let himself go health-wise and it took its toll. He did live long enough to see me get commissioned from WO1(ASM) and I would have loved him to have been around when I retired in 1990 as a Lt Col MBE - Hey! Ho! Not to be!

Keep up the good work with the OBAN, Peter. With the death and departure of REME from Arborfield in the not too distant future, us ex-brats need everything we can get to keep us all together. Cheers mate and thank you!

✉ Ann Hughes makes a telling point:

May the wife of an ex-boy (Tony Hughes, 50A) respond to the points raised by Pete Gripton in OBAN 38? I don't know if any other ex-boys collect for the British Legion poppy appeal, but here's one wife who does! And yes, I can assure him that it is very rewarding, having myself done 'door-to-door' in the village for over twenty years. The last point also raised the risk of mugging. Considering that thousands of collectors are out there annually, this is an extremely rare occurrence. Far greater risks are faced by our servicemen and women, past and present, on a daily basis. Many collectors are well into their eighties now, and won't be able to continue forever. The need for funds will never abate - need I say more?

(Well put Ann - and say hello to Tony! We both served at the same time with the Royal Scots Greys at Fallingbowl around 1966 - and ended up together again as instructors at SEME. Ed.)

✉ Brian Conway (42A) writes from Cyprus:

How delighted I was to find Roy Durston (54B) amongst the names on the 2006 Reunion roll-call of OBAN37. I was an instructor at boys' school during the time that Roy was an apprentice, with both of us landing up at the Vehicle Park Workshop, 624 Ordnance Depot RAOC, Benghazi, Libya, between 1957-60. Roy arrived with his lovely young wife Audrey, a former Wokingham Beauty Queen (lucky Roy!) and I have often wondered what happened to them thereafter. Was that really forty-seven years ago? I would be most grateful if you could put me in contact with Roy again, either through the pages of OBAN or other means.

(I myself followed Roy at AAS, where I'm sure we used to refer to him as 'Jeff Chandler', due to his prematurely grey hair? I was also pleased to bump into him at that Reunion - and to recall the last time our paths had crossed. Don't remember the year, but it took place on the Barmouth-Fairborne railway bridge in North Wales. I was walking across the River Mawdach with family and there was Roy, fishing from the bridge! Ed.)

✉ Chas Pepper (43A)

adds to his collection of strange tales!

This particular tale came to mind when I read that, in good old-fashioned British fashion, *Land-Rovers* in Iraq were to be 'up armoured' with 'Kevlar' sheeting. The scene is set at HQ 51 Lorried Infantry Brigade, based at Famagusta, Northern Cyprus. The Suez landings were underway and the French element was using the facilities of Famagusta harbour. French vehicle convoys would call into their HQ, before progressing to a camp in the centre of the island. Their attitude towards the EOKA terrorists appeared to be 'let them try it and they will get a real beating'. I must admit that their equipment put ours to shame, it was all brand new, although their vehicles were mainly of German origin.

The French officer controlling these movements was accommodated in the HQ and, in the late evening, returned in a small convoy, using Continental yellow lights. Being a frequent guard commander, I soon noticed that the barrier was being opened earlier and earlier, once these yellow lights were seen approaching. That destroyer of security - 'routine' - had set in! On one occasion, the barrier was raised when the lights were at least 200 yards distant. I ordered that it should be kept down until the vehicle occupants could be seen and identified. The sentries' riposte was that they "knew who it was - what's the problem?" Thankfully, EOKA had not yet noticed this breach of security - and the 'car bomb' had still to come into fashion. Famagusta's EOKA section mainly used 'pipe bombs', thrown at vehicles, a quite effective fragmentation device in its own right.

RMP patrol *Land-Rovers* were often attacked by such devices, so a form of 'up armoured' was added, with the use of woven nylon sheeting that lined the interior of the open vehicle. This was usually effective, but on one occasion it failed. I was billeted with the RMP and, one day, this patrol came home minus one Sergeant. Enquiries produced only sardonic remarks and it was several hours later that the missing NCO appeared, to the amusement of others, hobbling on crutches. A bomb had been thrown, which exploded near the vehicle, causing that one casualty. Apparently, there had been a small gap in the protective lining, through which a splinter of shrapnel had entered the vehicle, piercing the unfortunate man's buttock. There was substantial physical pain, of course, but not as hurtful as the jokes made at his expense, whenever he hobbled into view! The poor chap had to endure this for some time, before he was able to go back on active duty.

🐉 Chas Pepper (43A) is at it again!

1961, Malaya – LAD 34 Company, Gurkha Army Service Corps.

When attached to this unit, British lads were allowed to wear Gurkha uniform, which included a very smart shirt. This was a relief from the uncomfortable British custom of tucking one's jacket into one's shorts – to merely give the impression of a shirt. The shorts were rather unusual, having legs that were sort of 'bell bottomed', allowing, one presumes, more ventilation. But, all in all, it was a pretty smart rig-out. The dress when working out in the open was shorts only, bare-buff above. Vests were not allowed, in order to prevent 'prickly heat' – or worse – brought about by sweaty clothing. However, the following occurrence taught me that underpants were also essential!

One hot day, near to 90 degs F, one of the lads had been given a job that required him to squat outside of the shed. We heard his vibrant shriek as he struggled to get to his feet. Unwisely, he had worn no underpants, and his scrotum had 'touched down' on the hot tarmac! Due to its heat, the tarmac was also 'sticking' to its task! The victim suffered no serious damage – but was advised to wear underpants as a security measure in future. Those Gurkha shorts were definitely unable to hold back the force of gravity!

🐉 Colin 'Danny' Long (49B) writes:

I was saddened to read of the passing of Pete Curnow, in the Spring 2007 issue of OBAN. I served with Pete in Gibraltar in the early Fifties, when he was in charge of the Radar and Radio Workshop and I was running the Instrument Section. He always had a smile on his face and nothing seemed to upset him.

I was 'shutting up shop' one Friday, when I got a phone call to report to Pete and to take a small toolkit with me. Pete was armed with an AVO 8 and soldering gear. We then set off in an Austin 'Tilly' to the Naval Dockyard, where we were taken to the dockside and told that a ship, on which 'Tubby' Clayton, the founder of 'Toc H' was a passenger, was calling in. He was coming ashore to meet the Governor. He had with him on the ship a portable reel-to-reel wire recorder that wasn't working properly, so it was to be our job to sort it out. A motor boat left the ship and pulled up alongside us. Tubby himself got off and we shook hands with him.

We were then taken out to the ship, luckily it was a beautiful calm sea that day. Given the recorder, we quickly affirmed that it wasn't working! After a few moments of head scratching, Pete checked the power supply and diagnosed the problem. The recorder required a standard 240-volt AC, while the ship



provided only 110-volt – probably DC! There was nothing we could do about that. The ship's own technicians should have spotted it, of course, but it had provided us with a nice little 'jolly'!

In the early 1990s, on a day-trip to Belgium, I did manage to get to Talbot House (*Toc H*) and would liked to have seen inside it. But it was closed for the lunch hour – a great disappointment. Pete and Tubby were two nice men who were a pleasure to meet, so at least I can bring back fond memories.

Pete's replacement was an attractive blonde female officer, who would also be my 'boss'. However, CRÈME Gib decided that she would be of more use on his staff, in the town centre, because she soon disappeared from the Workshop area, never to be seen again by we mere workers!

Enclosed is a photo of 'yours truly', taken on Gib, outside the Governor's Cottage Camp Sgts' Mess, circa 1954, where I'm trying to 'flog some gash' to supplement my meagre Sergeant's pay! It shows the mindset of the authorities of the time that, whilst Gib was considered an overseas tour, we didn't get an overseas allowance. I understand the reason given was that we were still 'on British soil' – no doubt to upset France!

🐉 Doug Kew (45A) writes:

I was quite amazed, when reading through the Autumn edition of OBAN, to come across a picture of Field Marshall Montgomery casting an eye over the lads of 'C' Coy, and to see myself in best bib and tucker amongst the throng. It was very good of John Smithson to give this sixty-year old photo an airing. Looking at the rear rank of the Company, I had forgotten that A/Ts came in such small sizes! As I recall, the day of the parade was pretty cold and 'Monty' arrived wearing his *British Warm*. But when he saw us lot in our SD, he passed his coat to an aide. "Nice one", I thought. But then, when you are standing on the parade ground and not doing very much – one tends to notice these little things. I must say that the 2006 Reunion was excellent, with a great improvement in the overnight accommodation. There was a serving REME Senior rank sat at the dinner table, and I found it quite interesting to hear snippets of information about the present-day service. Far different to my own experience, but then it would be! Anyway, I enjoyed my service – it was pretty good fun most of the time.

(Happily, between John Smithson and myself, we were able to supply a pretty good copy of that photo to Doug, as he didn't have it himself. Ed.)

🐉 George Fleetwood (56B) e-mails:

Thanks for the e-mail about Allan Dagless, so sorry that it was about his final departure. The 'Grim Reaper' seems to be becoming more interested in 56B, not a thought that would have entered our heads all those years ago! I remember Allan, or 'Spider' as I think he was called then, as a tall, thin, chap with a connection to South Africa, very laid back and friendly.

After a visit to South Africa, I remember him bringing back with him a range of carved wooden figures and animals – also some strips of dried meat, 'Jerky' I think he called it. I bought a small wooden wildebeest from him, which I gave to my mother, and had in my possession until just a few years ago. For buying the carving, I was treated to a strip of 'Jerky', which was tasteless and difficult to chew. It could have been an old bootlace, and probably was!

George Fleetwood (56B) has his taste buds reactivated!



I was wending my way through the last OBAN, when I arrived at the 'Mystery Photo Competition' page. One glance and my stomach took me back some forty-six years, to a time when the sight of these little beauties would have had me reaching for our standard issue, twin-burner petrol stove and a frying pan! These are of course one of the jewels in a compo pack, the much sought after 'Soya sausages'. A bout of

scheme blues could immediately be dispersed by the consumption of a Soya sausage butty, particularly when its virgin white bread casing was garnished with black hand prints, preferably mine, the un-cleaned residue from a *Centurion* or *Conqueror* engine change.

(I think the axle-grease they issued as tinned margarine helped too. Ed.)

Soya sausages were tasty and easy to fry, as they were triangular in cross-section, they browned one flat at a time. Arriving in a tin, complete with their own supply of cooking fat, they slid easily into a pan and didn't take long to cook. They could even be cooked, in their tin, on the exhaust manifold of a vehicle. Done it many times! Very few cases of compo rations arrived to us 'Forward Repair' guys unopened, and if one did find a virgin pack, it was always the cause for a celebration. No doubt various people, along the line of supply, found it necessary to check the contents of the packs and remove the items they considered to be a health hazard to us! Such as the tins of chocolate, rich fruit cake, rice pudding, fruit, jam roly-poly – and, of course, the Soya sausages.

To prevent the packs from then emitting that 'I've been violated' rattling sound, the empty spaces were filled with tins of 'Mutton, Scotch Style', or 'Mutton Jock', as we called it. Or maybe that awful 'Tinned Bacon', complete with its greased paper separator that got between your teeth, when not completely removed. If we were lucky, the not-so-bad 'Irish Stew' could also make a stand-in appearance. 'Mutton Jock' was Scotland's revenge on the English, for centuries of perceived wrongs. It was a terrible concoction of unspecific and unrecognisable meat, all fat and gristly bits, interspersed with circular rings, reminiscent of a mass circumcising, which obviously came from some obnoxious part of some poor beast. We referred to these as 'foreskins', never ate them, just flicked them onto the ground, at people we disliked, or back into the pot for the Staff Sergeant to sort through when he came in for his meal!

When I stopped being at the 'sharp end' of my service career, and returned to Blighty for a four-year wind-down as an instructor at SEME Bordon, I often searched the local shops and supermarkets for something similar to the good old compo Soya sausages. But I never found anything that came anywhere near them. I never found anything like 'Mutton Jock' either, thank God! I thus identify the picture in OBAN 38 as an opened tin of Soya sausages, just waiting to be slid into a frying pan, 'Yum! Yum!' I shall tell you no more, what with you being a security risk!

(Thanks for that last bit Fleet – I can only take that from a 56B lad! Ed.)

George Wooley (April 43) responds to the MEDLOC saga:

May I toss in my fourpenn'orth along with John Burch, Jim Macdonald, Walter

Jobber and Peter 'Lofty' Baldwin re the MEDLOC? The full title is confirmed as 'Mediterranean Lines of Communication'. There were originally three routes – MEDLOC A, B and C.

MEDLOC A: Departed from Toulon – destination Dieppe. This was the wholly French route, starting from the port on the Mediterranean where the troopships from Egypt (Alexandria?) and Malta unloaded their uniformed human cargoes.

MEDLOC B: Originated in Italy. Milan was the actual start of the route to Calais, but 'feeder' trains crawled up and down that long leg, laden with personnel from the CMF (Central Mediterranean Forces) who had invaded Italy in 1944, or who were flown in from Greece and other destinations from the south and east.

MEDLOC C: This was kept running the longest. It originated in southern Austria (Villach) and ended at Calais for the early part of its existence, or the Hook of Holland for the major part of its life. It closed in 1955, with the withdrawal of British and other troops from Austria when the Austrian Peace Treaty was signed.

The overnight journey was about 20 hours with ablution halts at Krefeld (Dutch/German border) and Traunstein (German/Austrian border). Whether one dined on the train or at meal halts, I'm afraid my memory escapes me. The accommodation was quite good – four to a compartment, the two seats becoming bunks at night and there being two upper bunks, where there would normally have been luggage racks.

Between 1948 and 1951, I served in BTA (British Troops Austria), as a young Sapper in the Workshop Troop of 980 Engineer Squadron. This also comprised two field troops, a plant troop, 373 Works Section RE, 1249 Stores Section RE and 1154 Railway Operating Troop RE, which was responsible for maintenance and repairs to the rolling stock. The locomotives were operated and maintained by either the German or Austrian authorities. After about a year, I transferred to 291 Works Section RE at Klagenfurt, where I was the only BOR in the E&M section. Even my boss was a civvy – an ex-naval engineer commander of the Yugoslav Navy! Oh happy days!

Remembered, not for the best of reasons, are the three troopships that ferried us between Parqueston Quay, Harwich and the Hook of Holland for periodic UK leave – 'Empire Wansbeck', 'Empire Parqueston' and the 'Vienna'. We had some terrible crossings, the troop-decks were awash and not with water! Those tubs did everything but turn turtle and that wasn't for want of trying. A few years later I trooped out to the Far East, where even the monsoon seas didn't compare with the Channel crossings.

My knowledge of the MEDLOC, apart from personal experience, is gleaned from a book I bought about twenty years ago, probably from the Museum of Military Transport at Beverley, East Yorkshire. Details: 'Show Me The Way To Go Home' (The Story of Medloc 1945-1955). Softback, 100 pp, price not known. Background info by the authors; most of the content anecdotal. A very good read. Authors: Maggie Hurst and Chris Elliot. Published in 1995 by *Medloc Enterprises Ltd*, Encantada, Winterbourne Houghton, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 0PF. ISBN 0 9525963 0 X, printed by *Creeads the Printers*, Broadoak, Bridport, DT6 5NL. (Tel: 01308-423411). I hope that this clears up any remaining doubts about what was a truly remarkable transport system. Unlike some of our present rail networks, the Medloc C did run to schedule

(Thanks for the information George – you appear to have also put my mind to rest regarding the name 'Parqueston', which I always recalled as 'Parkston' or something similar. Ed.)

📧 Gordon Bonner, Sept49'er, e-mails:

I have just spent a happy hour reading the latest issue of OBAN. Apart from the emotional involvement in that it is 'our' Journal, I must compliment you upon the very high standard of journalism produced on your watch. Each and every article is well written, very easy and interesting to read - as always, a nostalgic stroll down memory lane.

Your account of service in BAOR, and in particular the accident with your ring and finger, triggered a recall of a similar incident I witnessed in 1956. I was at that time a Sgt on the PS at 4(Armt) Trg Btn Bordon. I was detailed, among others, to form a reception party for 'Z' Reservists, called up for the Suez crisis. My job was to marshal new arrivals into small bundles of ten, as they dismounted from the old *Bedford TCs*. It was almost inevitable, as one young man dismounted, that he caught his ring on the tailboard. Unfortunately, in this case, the victim lost his finger. I remember being quite shocked at time and have never, since then, worn rings at all.

Next, I draw your attention to the photo of the Fire Picket on P9. No2 on the hose is none other than me! I used to enjoy this duty, particularly at weekends, as it used to get me off jankers, which of course was my leisure pastime. (322 days in three years! Pity overtime was not paid in those days.) If memory serves me correctly, Wally Perry, RAC, was the Provost Sgt and Director of Fire Drills. When the order 'Knock Off, Make Up' came, if you didn't move like greased lighting, the drill would be repeated until you moved so fast, that at bedtime, the light would still be shining as you dived into bed after snapping off the light switch!

📧 Graham Howland (70C) writes:

I have just received my copy of OBAN 38, the contents of which I am enjoying as usual. The front cover photo brought back a few memories and the one on the back cover was rather melancholy to say the least. I believe the spider closest to the camera is 'J' block and was 'C' Coy accommodation during my time at the College (1970-72). I was in J4 on the other side of the block and I assume the picture was taken from the 'J' Coy block at the top of the square.

With regards to the OBAN 37 puzzle, the vehicle in question is definitely an AEC 6x6 recovery. These were replacements for the Scammell 'Explorer' 6x6 and were in service throughout the seventies, along with the Leyland 'Martian' 6x6. As to the badges, which were of cast aluminium and came in several sizes, they were regular adornments on REME vehicles, 'wreckers' in particular. I recently saw one for sale at £65 - upon reflection, perhaps I should have bought it! They are much sought after by military vehicle collectors and there are several superbly restored Scammells that wear out badge with pride. It is a shame that our modern Army seems to take a dim view of vehicles carrying regimental or corps insignia these days. At my first unit, 27 Med Regt RA, the Fitter Section vehicles had the Corps badge above the individual Batter insignia on the cab doors.

The mystery photo on page 16? Good old compo sausages, a subtle blend of soya and sawdust! Well that's what they tasted like to me - but it never stopped me from eating them.

📧 Ian Griffiths (56B) e-mails:

I read your article in the OBAN magazine with interest, as I was at 7 Armoured Wksp when 21 Heavy Regt arrived and you were there as well. I also visited some friends who lived in 'the

caravans'. Memories of Fally are too few to mention, some good, some not so good - but it was the bitter cold that I remember the most!

📧 Jim Macdonald (43A) writes:

May I thank you for a 'job well done'! (See OBAN 38. Ed.) Just a day after receiving my copy, a couple of phone calls from old pals expressed satisfaction and pleasure at my article's content. Just as well that my phone number isn't known by all readers! It was great to see my memories in real print - the information was of great interest to my family and there were inevitable questions to follow. One small item omitted was my observation of girlfriends at Bury. One must remember that this was before the decline in morals that we see today. It was possibly many months before we got around to that first kiss - 'a unique experience', *a la* the photo shown on page 51 of *The Arborfield Apprentice*.

I also enjoyed the 'archive' tale from Tom Pearce. There have been many varied thanks and compliments for OBAN - to which I wish to add mine. If you are still willing to edit my scribbles, I'll see what I can do!

(When I last spoke with Jim, he was recovering from a fall. Get well soon and keep the scribbling arm free from injury! Ed.)

📧 Jim Maskell (47A) writes (as promised) from Australia:

While I was stationed in Singapore, between 1951 and 1954, I read an item in Army Council Instructions (ACIs). It stated that, "If a soldier is still single and domiciled outside the UK, and has not seen his parents for over five years, then he is entitled to 61 days leave, plus travelling time at public expense, if his parents are still resident in the country of his birth".

Well, I applied for this special leave, but was refused on the grounds that my parents were not in the same country of my birth. I felt bad, having been turned down, but got on with my everyday life and soon forgot about it.

In 1954, at the end of my overseas service, I returned to the UK, on posting via the Depot REME at Arborfield to the Guards' Training Battalion LAD at Pirbright. It was while stationed there that one of the SNCOs in the Irish Guards found that I had parents living in Australia. He informed me that he specialised in sending soldiers to various countries where their parents lived. Furthermore, he had direct contact with the War Office (WO) and was able to grant special leave upon WO approval. I advised him that I had already tried to get such leave from Singapore, and he replied, "Leave it to me".

About six weeks later he contacted me and asked whether or not I'd be prepared to pay the return fare between India and Australia - as he'd been able to get WO to put up the return fare between UK and India! The only condition was that I'd also have to pay the full fare in advance, due to the fact that other soldiers had previously been given their tickets, then sold them off to outsiders and been caught out. Anyway, the leave was eventually granted and my passage was booked on the 'SS Iberia', which was a migrant ship taking to a new life in Australia.

It was just at that time that trouble was brewing in the Middle East, between Britain and Egypt, and in late November 1955 President Nasser of Egypt closed the Suez Canal to all shipping. This caused me to doubt whether I'd sail or not, firstly due to the Canal's closure and secondly because troops were being called

up to deal with the crisis. I was left in limbo for a while, until I heard that the called up troops were going to be infantrymen and not trades personnel. In the event, our ship went 'the long way around' the southern tip of Africa via Cape Town, adding an extra week to the journey, but this didn't seem to bother any of the passengers. The 1956 Olympic Games were due to be held in Melbourne and about two to three dozen people on the ship were heading there to be workers on the site.

So my trip down to Perth, Western Australia (WA), had quite a buzz to it, what with the possibility of war in the Middle East and the excitement of the forthcoming Olympics. I spent Christmas 1955 in Perth and liked what I saw. On return to the UK, quite a lot of people who had spent a working holiday in WA were on board the same ship, allowing me to renew many old friendships. Back at Pirbright I had my fare money refunded and, around ten months later, received notice from the Army that I was being posted – to Australia! This was to be to Woomera, in what capacity I wasn't sure, but knowing that I'd be back in Aussie land made me think seriously about getting demobbed and staying out there. But when I informed the powers-that-be about my intentions, my posting was cancelled and I never did find out what job I'd been supposed to do!

In August 1957 I was demobbed anyway and, within a month I'd got married and applied for migrant papers to Australia. It wasn't too long before we were both accepted and stated on the long round of doctor's appointments and visits to Australia House.

When asked what notice we required, we both said "*the sooner the better*" and were given a two-week deadline. Having only been recently married, the 'worldly goods' side hardly came into it and it was a very lightly loaded couple who boarded the 'SS Arcadia' at Tilbury Docks. Twenty-eight days later we arrived in Perth and went to stay with my parents, who had been living there for the previous three years.

We applied for accommodation through the State Housing Commission and it was two years to the day when we obtained our house. By then, I was already working as a mechanic with the Metropolitan Transport Trust, so it took us no time at all to 'settle in' and we have been out 'down under' ever since. Of course, we have returned many times to UK to see family and friends, and always been given a warm welcome. I have worked in the Perth area for some 48 years and enjoyed every minute of it. The first few years were the hardest but, once we'd got our first home and started to raise a family, things were on the up after that.

While in UK last September (2006), I returned to Arborfield for the last time, to have a final look at the old gates, as I expect they will be pulled down and placed elsewhere when REME is moved out. I bought the DVD of the last official reunion in 2004, 'Farewell to Arborfield', and I am glad I did, as I hope to show it to Brian (Atkins) and Mike (Addison) when we eventually get together.

Just before closing, I'd like to ask readers for help in tracking down an old mate, Michael M Manders. After passing out he joined the RE but, when I bumped into him a few years ago, he had transferred to REME. The last known address I have is in Sidcup, Kent.

(Jim contacted me whilst in the UK and we published a letter and photo from him in OBAN38. He promised to write again when he arrived back in WA and I was able to provide him with the contacts for Brian and Mike – hope you meet up! Ed.)

📧 John Dutton (43A) e-mails:

Regarding the badge query in OBAN37, I would tend to go

along with the response and put the vehicle down as the 10-ton Matador Artillery Tractor. Now the badge - firstly it is post-Feb 1952, because of the crown. Versions of that badge were made, but larger, at Woolwich Arsenal (when it was still in existence), but with the King's crown, as they had the foundry equipment. I would not argue with anyone, but they were in existence in the late 40s. I was stationed at 10 Cmd Wksp, Mill Hill, NW7 in 1946 and they existed then. I doubt if I can find the photograph now, but we used one on the first REME recruiting drive in Eastern Command, 1947, firstly for the Cadet force, followed by a full recruiting drive for the whole Army. Two columns of vehicles, the heavies travelled overnight because of their speed, the lighter 3-Tonners travelled with police outriders; some 250 vehicles starting from Three Mile Camp, just outside Guildford. This does not totally solve the question - but here is a bit of history as well!

📧 John Holman (59C) replies:

In response to Jim Slaven's letter in OBAN 38, just may I say that he is not alone out there – or should that be out here? As I recall, Jim was in 'A' Coy, while I myself was in 'C' Coy, where our Div CSM was John Taylor. Our paths crossed at Tiffy selection and Commissioning Boards. I retired in 1998 and have spent the last nine years working in Arborfield as an RO. I occasionally attend reunions – and fully intend to be at the 50th anniversary in 2009. Like Jim, I have often wondered why such a large intake as ours seems to have so few 'survivors'.

(What John bashfully omits to mention is that his job as an RO is none other than editing that splendid monthly REME magazine 'Craftsman'. Perhaps our readership can dig out a few more 59C ex-boys – where are they all? Ed.)

📧 Johnny Johnson (56B) e-mails:

Pete, you're just the man! I have only today dropped a line to your 'Chapel House' address, because my PC crashed and I lost my address book. I searched BT white pages for your number, but they suggested you were ex-directory. The only contact address I could find was one torn from an old letter you sent to me a long while ago. So I crossed my fingers and wrote to you at that address. You can ignore it now, for the most part! Amazing that the very day I dropped a letter to you in the post, you should send me an e-mail. I was frantic at the loss of the addresses, more so at losing all the photos I had been sent by Doc, yourself and others. I have read through your book and shared it with my wife, but she has yet to read my own story of the AAS. I see several others have made contributions to the AOBA web-site, regarding the AAS at Arborfield. Speaking of which, I searched that site for a hint as to your e-mail address or that of Doc Houghton. The Armourers' Association was mentioned on the site, but no contact address.

Unfortunately I won't be able to make it to the 56B '07 reunion. I used too many funds last year, but it was worth every penny. I saw many old friends and acquaintances. I need to renew them again and perhaps keep in touch more often, still regretting not having been able to speak to old pal Ralph before his untimely death.

📧 Lawrence Nixon (42A) e-mails:

How very kind of you to give my old story another airing (see OBAN 38), with an extremely nice tribute to boot. As a matter of

accuracy, I have only missed one reunion in the last ten years - and that due to unavoidable circumstances. Last year, I attended the 'Wartime Boy Soldiers Reunion' at Derby, and have already booked for this year - well worth attending! It strikes me that I did not do justice to the title of 'The Third Age', now perhaps I can? Not content with fifty years in the Army and Civvy Street, I found considerable challenge and satisfaction in helping my youngest son float an advertising company. Starting with just him and his wife, I became its Chairman and steered it over a period of ten years to a turnover of £15M! Sadly, since I retired (at long last), the market has collapsed through the vast growth of the Internet, and the Company has been taken over by Venture Capitalists. Well, you cannot win them all - and surely 60 years is enough?

📌 Remembrance Day at Berowra by Les Whiffen (39A)



Back on November 11th 2005, I attended the Remembrance Day service in the small town of Berowra, just at the northern edge of Sydney, New South Wales, where I was spending some time with my son. After the service had ended, a Naval Officer took a photograph, which I honestly thought must have been for the local weekly newspaper, 'The Bush Telegraph', or something like that. Anyway, we didn't hear anything more and it was soon time for me to return to my home in Otago, New Zealand. Then, just before Christmas, my son called from Berowra to inform me that, much to my surprise, the aforesaid photograph was being published as part of a calendar for 2006. It was to appear as 'April', which of course in both Australia and New Zealand, is more highly celebrated for 'ANZAC Day' on April 25th. In the picture, I am amongst ten Australian War Veterans and appear third from the right. I have just received my copy of OBAN37 and, as usual, was delighted with it. Congratulations to all who are involved in producing such a great magazine and who work so hard on behalf of the AOBA.

📌 Pete Gripton (56B) has his memory jogged:

It was May 12th 2006, and a newspaper article, entitled 'In Brief', caught my eye. It announced that former world heavyweight boxing champion, Floyd Patterson, had died, aged 71, at his home in New York. Floyd became the youngest champion, when he beat the ageing Archie Moore in 1956. He then successfully defended his title four times, before losing it to Swedish boxer Ingemar Johansson in 1959. Now, just after that title fight took place, I recall seeing the newspaper headlines whilst sat in a cafe in Guildford, having tea and toast!

I'd always assumed that took place during 1957, until I saw the above article, when 'A' Company 56B were all sent out to 'camp' under canvas at what I now know as Hankley Common, alongside the A3 near Godalming, in Surrey. I remember pitching a two-man bivouac with Bob Lennon the first afternoon, some way down a bit of a slope. That night - inevitably - it rained, and we had water running through our tent, which didn't make for a comfortable experience, but taught us the art of baling!

The purpose of the camp period was 'confidence building and initiative tests', in which we were sent out to accomplish various tasks. Bob and I were dispatched to gather information regarding Guildford Cathedral, which I remember we were able to get from the verger, who had obviously been primed to expect such visits! We then went into the town centre for some breakfast and it was there, in a café near the rail station, that we learned the news about that boxing match. I think we picked up a lift back to the camp area, and I recall the driver pointing out the spot where Mike Hawthorne, a British world champion racing-driver, had been killed, when he drove his car into a tree on the Guildford Bypass.

The next morning, Bob and I set off again - I think we had a 'free' day just to ourselves. Again, we were lucky in getting a lift, and ended up down at the far end of the A3, on the coast at Southsea. I remember that it was a very warm day and that we were dressed in denim trousers and 'woolly pulleys', which must have looked a bit incongruous to say the least! Anyway, we walked all along the promenade, eyeing up the girls on the beach - or what passed for a beach, as it was (and still is) all shingle! We hitched a lift back too, being picked up by a Naval gentleman in uniform, who treated us to a pint on the way back, at a pub on the hill going north out of Petersfield, now long since vanished - the pub that is, not the town!

'In Brief' also told me that Floyd Patterson had been Olympic champion in 1952. He later avenged that defeat by Johansson, but lost his title to Sonny Liston in 1962. He also lost a re-match against the brutal new champion, but battled back to challenge new-kid-on-the-block, Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), losing in the 12th round. Floyd fought on for a few years, winning against our own 'Enery Cooper, but eventually retired in 1972. Well, I now know what happened to Floyd - but I never did find out what happened to my companion from 1959, young Bob Lennon, who I think came from Middlesbrough, though I never held that against him! I did hear that he'd gone into the Air Corps, but sadly we never did meet up again. Anyone out there with any news of Bob?

(The accompanying photograph shows Roger Clarkson, Derek 'Pompey' Coates, Bob Lennon, myself and Dave Harris, all of 'A' Coy, circa 1958. Ed.)



📌 Robert 'Bob' Ward (44B?) e-mails:

The two photographs of Passing-Out Parades, published in OBAN 38, raised a couple of points with me. I am sure that the first one is of the September 1944 Intake (I can't get used to this 44B method of naming intakes). The reason for my identifying it as my intake is that the A/T RSM - by the name of Olley and

leading the parade, is wearing service dress; this is because he was a member of March 1945 Intake. No-one in my lot ever rose to the dizzy heights of Apprentice RSM! The right marker looks as if he could be Colin Salter, who was 'B' Company A/T CSM. (If you are care to download me a better copy of the photograph, I might be able to identify a few more ex-Apprentices.) I have attached a copy of the photograph of my intake, taken after we passed off the square, with a list of those I have been able to identify.

September 1944 Intake (back cover)

Back row l-r: 1.Bennet 2.Smart 3.Brown 4.Birch 5.Harris 7.Bucket 8.Jones 10.Pete Humphreys 11. Bill Tate 12.Kirkpatrick 13. 'Fishy' Salmon 14.Rix

Fourth row l-r: 2.Winter 5.Redknap 14.Colin Salter

Third row l-r: 3. Dave Higgs 4. George Brown 12.Bennet 14.Vango 21.Cliff Berragan 22.Freeman

Second row l-r: 2.Dyer 11.RSM McNally 12.Colonel White

Front row l-r: 2.H G Smith 3.Bob Ward 4. B J Pearce 6. 'Inky' Darrell 16.Johnny Smalldon 17.Tony Williamson

The other attached photograph (Cover) is of the eight 'reluctant volunteer' VMs who found themselves posted to the RASC. Their names were: back row - Freeman, ?? (ex-Chepstow), Sturrock, Ward; front row - Winter, Vango, Laws, Jenkins?

In your second Passing-Out Parade photograph, I notice that everyone is wearing a trade badge. I recall that, when REME Dress Regulations came out in the early 1950s, third class tradesmen were not allowed to wear trade badges. When did this change and can anyone explain why the only rank not allowed to wear a trade badge was that of Sergeant?

(Over to the readership on those queries from Bob - I'm too much of a jeep to answer those! Ed.)

Colonel Sam Roberts e-mails:

Congratulations on yet further improvements to the quality of OBAN. As always, a fascinating read, which brought back memories of my time as Commandant, Princess Marina College (1983-85). One day, I hope to see apprentice contributions from that era. This last issue of OBAN, Spring 2007, contained photographs of three sets of gates. On the cover were the 'Carlisle Gates', with, behind them, against the end of the building, the 'Carlisle Memorial Gates'. On Page 27 appeared the original Army Technical School (Boys) gates. All are photographed at the entrance to Rowcroft Barracks.

In your book, 'The Arborfield Apprentice', on pages 398/9 you reproduce two articles, written during my tenure as Commandant, on the 'REME Bell Tower' and 'The College Gates'. We had great fun recreating the old gates and the Bell Tower - and re-commissioning them. However, the very ornate Carlisle Memorial Gates went absent from the rear of the guardroom in 1985. These were the gates made by Maj (ret'd) Percy Chivers at Carlisle, on the amalgamation of the Army Apprentices' Colleges, Carlisle and Arborfield. Originally, on each wrought iron junction on the gates, was mounted a regimental greatcoat button from every member of staff at Carlisle. As stated in your book, many of the buttons were removed by souvenir hunters.

The design of the memorial gates is unique and can be clearly seen on the cover of OBAN. Has anyone seen them in their travels?

An old boy, known only as 'Spud', writes as follows:

"I remember once, when I was with 4 Armd Wksp FRG, we had been out on Hohne ranges for about six weeks, living on the dreaded 'compo'. We tied up one night next to a field full of potatoes. We dug up several kilos and then cooked a stack of crispy chips in tinned margarine - bliss! I often wonder what the farmer thought when he later harvested, as we had put quite a number of tins of 'pom' in the empty gully and put the green leafs back on top!"

Stan Horne (47B) e-mails:

I'm writing to you about John Dutton's letter on page 41 in the latest OBAN, about my brother Ernie Horne. I'm sorry to say he must have followed the wrong trail, as he's wrong in some of his findings. He is right in that Ernie died on 9 Aug 03, but then things start to go wrong, so I hope to clear up some of the details for the records. Ernie left the Army after 25 years service and worked for the MoD at Tidworth as a civilian Armourer, following a spell as 'mine host' at a pub called 'The Crown' somewhere close by. His home was a council house in the village of Ludgershall, where he lived with his wife Frankie who sadly died of breast cancer on 23 May 1994. Ernie stayed in the house following her death, till his own death and they are buried together in the Catholic Churchyard at Ludgershall. Ernie always refused to join the Old Boys, as he actually joined at Chepstow and was claimed to Arborfield by our older brother Frederick John Horne, who I think joined the school in 1941. Ernie always considered himself to be a Chepstow OB, not an Arborfield one. I joined in Sept '47, so all we three brothers served our time at Arborfield - but that is another story, as they say. Unfortunately, both of my brothers have passed on, so I can't give you all the fine details. But there are still many memories of them both, some of which I dare not mention in case they decide to come back and haunt me! As this year is the 60th anniversary of 47B, it would be nice if more of our intake could make it to the reunion, but there are only two members listed who I haven't met. One is Bob Woolley, who I was with in 'HQ' Coy and who hasn't a contact number. The other member joined in the last couple of years. If I remember rightly, his name is Maskell and he was in 'B' Coy and lives in Morley, but I have been unable to find a telephone number for him in the local directory. Morley is only ten miles from where I live, so any chance of their details?

Tony Wilson 56B e-mails from Tonga:

Pete, you mentioned in the 56B Reunion item that Klaus Pennington was crook and I recall you earlier saying he lived near you. If you see him, please give him my best wishes. I well recall him from AAS and a couple of years later met him at the Southsea funfair, I think he was stationed at Hilsea at the time. It's currently as hot as hell here, but that does mean an abundance of fruit in the garden. Bananas, mangoes, oranges and other citrus - plus the coffee trees - are so heavily laden that branches are breaking. Best regards!

Keith Mitchell (43A) writes:

Another good OBAN, issue 38, with a wealth of interest, and covering a fair selection of Intake/Division tales, coaxing the little grey cells into nudging the memory bank. Pete Gripton's 'Serving in BAOR' - yes, I think it was 'HMT

Parkstone – and who could forget the Blue Train, with its good restaurant car, serving the inevitable onion soup? Arrival at The Hook, ready to embark – but oh! a hell of a long platform and a roundabout way to the quayside, lugging one's kit. If the train was late, no berthing card, but a washer/disc thrust into one's hand, which meant rough accommodation – was it the sharp or blunt end, or even, in one case, 'The Brig'? How they crammed us in.

John Smithson's 'Formative Years' rang a few bells – my first posting to 3 Central Wksp Bordon, where a fair contingent of 43ers landed up at Havannah Barracks. The excellent workshop had Canadian connections and very good facilities, although the engine repair hangar incorporated an un-soundproofed test bed. Our poor ears! As Chad would have said, "*Wot, no ear defenders?*" No Health & Safety in 1947. Repair work was great, a real learning curve for me, where I learned the skills of engine fine-tuning. Driving the seized pistons from a D8 donkey engine with a sledgehammer and pit prop – and yes, it did work again, the engine that is, but not the hammer!

Work-in-hand consisted of a vast variety of RE equipment, back-loaded from the D-Day beaches, all carefully preserved with a good coating of salt and sand! Engines, from bulldozers to Series 8 *Caterpillars*; *Galleon 101* graders; *Johnson* pile-drivers and *Muirhill* dumpers – in all states and conditions. On one occasion, I was dispatched to the stores to get a set of spark-plugs, which I thought was a bit of a wind-up akin to 'long stands' and 'straight hooks'. However, I quickly learned that the *TD18 International* was a clever beast, starting on petrol, before switching to diesel for running!

Quite a number of German PoWs were still there; I recall Rudi the tractor/sled driver, skillfully speeding along the hangar passageways, delivering parts etc. Shades of *Ford* at Dagenham! Marching to and from work in winter, carrying hurricane lamps, white and red, fore and aft. We must have worked longish hours, but they were very happy 'first posting' days. That is, until the Pioneer Corps detachment caused dissention and many of them were ousted from the workshop to the cookhouse – and vice versa!

It wasn't too long afterwards that the postings came in, thick and fast – BAOR, the Middle East, Far East and such far-flung outposts of Empire. For those seeking adventure, there was Airborne training and earmarked for Palestine. Certainly the first great split of pals from those Arborfield years, with many not seen again until reunions and, sadly, some never again seen at all. But I digress, for I only intended to reply to the Latin "*Odi et amo exerucior*", which translates as "*I hate and I love – it hurts*". That came from the Roman poet Catullus and seemed to me apt for Chas Pepper and his parrot!

Is there enough space to jog the memories of a few others, who may wish to jot down their tales? Such as Doug Boucher's 'Shoot-up at the Malaysian Forestry Corral' or perhaps Stan Bate's 'Steamy tales from the Mobile Laundry and Bath Unit – smalls talk'? And how about Bob Jones's 'Jungle Strip Runaway' – or was it 'Runway'?

The year of 43, some do say,

Was set apart in Arborfield's day.

For in that year many boys were sent

On multi-skills training of pure intent.

(Mitch's p.s. 'Who's Chas Pepper?' was an obvious reminder to me of Mitch's own prolific input to OBAN over the years! Keep 'em coming, both of you! Ed.)

🔧 John Worland (52B) asks for help:

Calling all Gun Fitters from 1952 to 1955. Reference the photo on page 151 of the book '*The Arborfield Apprentice*', I think it is A/Sgt 'Ginger' Dale who became A/CSM of 'A' Coy – am I right? Who is the other A/T, adjusting the air pressure on the 3.7 HAA gun? Can someone name the instructor who taught the 'Guns' course? I think he became a civilian instructor after my Gun Fitter intake left in 1955. My course started in Sept 1954 while I was in 5 Div. (I still have the complete set of notes with diagrams and question papers – with answers. I promise that one day I will 'get a life' – but would the REME Museum be interested?)

Ref OBAN38, Spring '07, page 10 – article by Clive Hartland, 52B. Interesting to read that another ex-boy also lived in Milton Keynes. If I had known, I would have got in touch. I remember *Leica* coming to MK, but that is another story.

🔧 John Hernon (60B) e-mails:

I wish to express my appreciation to the government and people of Malaysia, on being awarded the Pingat Jasa Malaysia honour medal, for being part of the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade. In particular, the 50th Gurkha Brigade, to which I was seconded, serving with 1/10 Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, as a REME attached British other rank, during the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. I was contacted earlier this month by Mr Fred Burden of the NMBVA, to attend a presentation ceremony at Swindon, Wiltshire. This occurred during my field break from Libya, where I am employed on a geophysical exploration crew, in the capacity of chief mechanic. Due to an ongoing commitment in Ethiopia, I was unable to attend the award ceremony in person, but Fred has arranged for the award to be mailed to my UK address. I am sure that many other ex-REME personnel are entitled to this magnanimous award and should contact Mr Fred Burden at nmbva@tiscali.co.uk.

🔧 Mo Hope (59B) knows his tin-openers!

It's amazing how 'food' – or lack of it – holds as many memories for a squaddie as people, places and postings! I feel certain that I have gazed upon that sight many times, during a day on the open road, anticipating a nice hot sausage, speared by a scribe or some such tool. I reckon the photo (OBAN38) is an opened tin of cold compo sausages, best cooked in the following manner:

Half remove the lid, (those little flat tin-openers were fantastic tools, I still have one 40-years later on my key ring), peel back the opened lid to form a handle and place gently in the arms of a red-hot exhaust manifold, on a Mk3 Antar, and allow to simmer for approx. 20 miles at a sedate 36 mph – or until the smell of cooked 'bangers' permeates the cab. Then, whilst still in motion going down the Autobahn, climb out of the cab and out onto the front wing, lift the bonnet and retrieve the said bangers, to be consumed in a matter of seconds. (Mind you, if one forgot to open the tin, well that's another story, something akin to a car bomb going off under the bonnet!)

A message from our President

At last year's Reunion, having enjoyed the generous hospitality of the Arborfield Old Boys, I was asked to 'say a few words' after dinner. One of the points I made was that, despite the perennial refrains about the 'youth of today', our young soldiers are as good as you were; different, but as good. A few people challenged me after dinner, clearly disagreeing with my remarks, so I thought that I should attempt to justify them.

So how am I qualified to comment? Well, I too am an Arborfield Old Boy – 72C, so a 'Jeep' compared to many AOBA members but, nevertheless, that starting point does provide me with 35 years of nearly continuous observation to draw on. I have commanded REME units at every level from Platoon to Battalion. And now, as the professional head of the Corps, I have the joy of seeing the excellent work that our soldiers do wherever they are and whatever the challenge set.

The British Army is currently fighting two wars. These are smaller wars than some of you experienced, but they are nevertheless pretty ferocious and demanding for those involved – more so than one might deduce from most of the press coverage. And our soldiers are performing superbly. They are displaying remarkable skill, ingenuity, courage and humour; our reputation in the Army is as good as it has been at any time in my service. Perhaps I could illustrate this with a couple of quotes.

The first refers to Corporal Simon Brown, a Recovery Mechanic who was seriously wounded on operations in Iraq. It is an extract from a letter written to Corporal Brown's parents by his Commanding Officer:

"I have always been tremendously impressed by our attached REME personnel for their ability to fix things at almost any time or under any circumstances. This view has been reinforced by what I have seen on this tour so far with Simon, and many of his colleagues, now doing the same difficult job under fire. It is humbling to see, and we would be lost without them. What has happened to him will carry us along with renewed determination to live up to his example".

And the second is an extract from a report sent back from Afghanistan by Major Phil Prosser, the Officer Commanding 8 CS Company REME:

"There is minimal movement on the ground, due to the threat of ambush and attack from TALIBAN forces. Although this reduces routine work, it places extra pressure on support to road moves. If a vehicle cannot be repaired or recovered in under an hour then it is denied. The skill of the tradesman has been thoroughly tested, both militarily and technically. Outside the wire it is not a case of 'if' they get attacked, it is more how long the contact will last. The number of rounds fired by REME soldiers is in the 1000s; ...[REME soldiers have] taken the lead in dangerous combat missions. They have done this in the usual professional and cheerful manner, facing danger and fatigue with optimism and banter. The soldiers continue to volunteer for every task. The mix of soldier and tradesman has been fully tested and it is testament

to the flexibility of mind and body of every REME person out here that no one has been found wanting".

And these quotes are in no way exceptional - for example, a REME Recovery Mechanic, (then) Corporal 'Fred' Comber, on Operation Telic 1 won the first MC to be awarded to a REME soldier since 1947. Rather, the quotes reflect the contributions being made by our soldiers, including our youngest soldiers, on a day-to-day basis. We train them pretty well but this is not sufficient: it is the quality of our people that counts and that quality remains high.

There are more objective measures. On Operation Telic 1, when the Army was fighting a manoeuvre battle, availability of key equipments never dropped below 90%; for most equipment, for most of the time, it was 95% or higher. I wish that this were due to a significant improvement in reliability. Regrettably it is not. This was achieved because REME soldiers did their jobs in pretty extreme circumstance and did them well.

I could go on. Suffice to say that, throughout my service, I have been keenly aware of the '10 year Corporal syndrome'. It is a truism that, for pretty much every soldier at around that stage of service, he will consider that the young soldier is in some way worse than he was. Frankly, I think that we all forget just how raw we were when we first joined.

So, as good but different, in what way? Well, there are some obvious points but they are all to do with experience. The society from which we draw our young soldiers has much greater material wealth and leisure time than was the case, say, 40 years ago. As you will all know, less sport is played in schools today, so the overall fitness level of our entrants is lower, and leisure time seems to involve fewer outdoor pursuits and more time spent on computers. But it is not all negative. Our young soldiers have, on average, spent longer in education than their predecessors of 40 years ago and they are much more familiar with and responsive to modern technology. And, although there are fewer sporting opportunities for school children, avid readers of 'The Craftsman' will have observed that our soldiers still perform exceptionally well on the sports field once they are in the Army.

I won't labour the point. To put it briefly, the young soldier today is different to his predecessors only because his environment is different. His inherent capabilities and potential are as good and he demonstrates this every day.

To finish, may I thank all members of the AOBA for the warmth of your welcome and the generosity of your hospitality at the Annual Reunion. I have thoroughly enjoyed the two that I have attended, from the parade through the excellent dinner to having the opportunity to chat to the few stalwarts who make it to Church on the Sunday morning. It really has been a great pleasure to be involved in the weekends. Surprisingly, I have not come across a single member of 72C.....

IN MEMORIAM

Brigadier Joseph Leo 'Joe' Dobie CBE

There will be many an ex-boy who will be saddened by announcement in October's *Craftsman* magazine of the death of 'Joe' Dobie, who died in August 2006, at the ripe old age of 91 years. Col Dobie BSc, AMIEE became the first REME Commandant of the Army Apprentices' School back in 1962. I didn't know him in those days, only becoming aware of his presence as he looked over my shoulder one evening in the SEME Officers' Mess, sometime during the early 1990s, if memory serves me correctly. The occasion was an 'Art Evening', at which one could view and purchase one of the numerous paintings on display, produced by the local Farnham Artists' Group. The painting I was musing over happened to be a splendid watercolour, painted by Joe's wife Joan, so Joe and I became involved in conversation. It was only then that I found out that he had been at the School all those years previously and it was a pleasure to make his acquaintance.

I duly bought the painting and, possibly the following year, at the same venue for sure, purchased a second one of similar theme, both of which still adorn the wall of my hallway to this day. I also had reason to visit Joe and Joan at their house at Grayshott, when looking for a suitable present for a family birthday. Needless to say, my wife and I were warmly welcomed and we were delighted to see Joan's complete collection of excellent paintings. Towards the end of 2002, I again visited their house, in order to provide a 'potted history' of Joe's career as part of the research into my book *The Arborfield Apprentice*. (This was later included as an Annex to Chapter 13 for those readers who have a copy.)

I am sure there will be some boys from the Sixties who will remember their old Commandant from 1962 to 1965 and who may have a few memories of those times that they could share with the rest of us?

Pete Gripton, 56B.

David Cross (42C)

David died suddenly on December 18th 2006. He joined the Army Technical School at Arborfield in 1942 to train as an Armourer and, during his apprenticeship, became a member of the School's boxing team. His subsequent tours with the Corps included time with the Parachute Regiment and it was in Aldershot that he met his wife Joan. Together, they served in Germany, UK and Cyprus. David completed his service at the Small Arms School of Musketry in Hythe, Kent, from where he set up home in 1968. The family renewed their friendship with Paul 'Tug' Wilson and wife Liz, a friendship that harked back, in the boys' case to school days and time spent at

Arborfield. After leaving the Corps, David worked at the GPO Hythe and became well known in the local area. He provided transport for the blind in his spare time, worked for the local church, and helped run the 'Delmelza' bookshop. He is survived by his wife Joan and sons David and Richard, to whom we offer our sincere and heartfelt condolences.

Chas Howorth, 55B, Hon Sec DYRMS Old Boys Association

Ron 'Hank' Ward (42C) pens the following:

David was a Dukie and an Armourer. I didn't know him at Arborfield, but remember him as a lively little boxer, who participated in many of those enjoyable (for us spectators!) inter-Company competitions. I later served with him in Aldershot, Cyprus and Egypt. I took my release in 1953, while David carried on, did his time, and retired as a WO2. He was a great chap and, when we met again at a reunion after about 30 years, he hadn't changed a bit, still as bright as ever. It was a pleasure to meet him at subsequent reunions. He lived at Hythe, Kent, and a few years ago invited me to his home, along with the late 'Tug' Wilson of 42A. It was a memorable occasion and Joan 'lashed us up well', as the saying goes. I met up with him now and again afterwards and was always made welcome, feeling that he was also glad to see me. Sadly, another good man departs and we all offer our sympathy to Joan and family.

Klaus Pennington, 56B, died 11 March 2007

I have a photo of Klaus, rigged up in his Band Drummer gear and standing alongside myself, with me holding a trumpet. We were very similar in size and looks, so often mistaken as to identity. (Hopefully, that very photograph will appear here, as I found it in my archives. Ed.) One incident comes to mind during HQ Coy 'square bashing', when Klaus called out "Ziggy Zig", which was followed by the inevitable giggles. Our 'Corporal of the Horse' turned round and looked at me accusingly. I then had the pleasure of running round the perimeter of the square with a rifle held over my head, not at that time understanding what 'ziggy zig' meant (innocence personified). I was not amused at the time, but we remained good friends during our Arborfield formative years. I understand that Klaus had arrived at Arborfield from Libya, where his father was working. He and Peter 'Ginger' Wallace would accompany me to visit my Gran, who lived in Farnborough (Hants), during the odd times when we had a Sunday off. Years later, Gran still talked about those visits, with fond memories of us lads demolishing her cakes etc with vigour. Klaus was particularly fond of her apple pie - and I also know that he enjoyed a few pints of cider!

Tony Domoney 56B

IN MEMORIAM

So sorry to hear about Klaus. We haven't met since AAS. We were in the same Army boarding school in Germany, Windsor school, Hamm. I can't remember if we were in the same House (Windsor) though. Besides Klaus, there was Ralph Wright, his brother, George 'Chalky' White and myself. I wonder what happened to George?

Johnny Johnson 56B



Klaus had been suffering from ill-health for quite a long time and, during his last few months, was resident at the Phyllis Tucker Hospice near Farnham. I didn't know him that well at boys' school, but caught up with him again when I found myself teaching him vehicle electrics at SEME Bordon during the early seventies. He and his wife Pauline attended two 56B reunions, that was in 1996 and 1999, and were also present at Rodney Smith's function in 1999. Sadly, circumstances dictated that they were unable to join in with any of our reunions since then.

Pete Gripton 56B

Ray 'Ginger' Jenkinson (48B) 1932-2007

At one time, there were three ex-Arborfield boys living in Greatham, Hants – Ray Jenkinson, Mike Haben (55B) and myself, the Jeep from 56B! Sadly, and to coin a phrase, I'm now *'the only ex-boy in the village'*. Mike died last year and I was able to provide some written tribute to him in OBAN 37. Now I have the sad duty of penning a few words about Ray, who died in hospital on January 22nd, after a prolonged battle against illness. Despite looking desperately ill for some time previously, Ray made a great effort to attend his last Reunion in 2006, accompanied by his wife Huguette.

I first met Ray many years ago, as we were both then on the permanent teaching staff at SEME Bordon, where Ray was a well-respected lecturer in the Engineering Science Department. A quiet and unassuming man, it was to be quite some time before I found out that he was a fellow ex-boy. Both Ray and Huguette were popular and hard-working members of the local St John the Baptist Church here in Greatham, where Ray regularly played the Sunday service organ music and Huguette eventually became the lay preacher. Ray also gave piano lessons from home and enjoyed dabbling in the building and restoration of miniature steam engines. It also became the custom in the village that Ray and Huguette would hold an annual 'cheese and wine' party at their home, the 'takings' being mainly donated to church funds.

It was only a few years ago that I finally persuaded Ray to re-join the OBA but, once he had done so, he was delighted to meet up with old friends again and to attend several reunions. He also supplied me with a few notes on his earlier experiences, which were published as a 'letter to the editor' in OBAN 27. One of his favourite memories had been his visit to the Festival of Britain in 1951, just prior to leaving boys' school. Some time ago, he and his wife attended another reunion, this one for personnel who had been posted to and served on Christmas Island, that must have been during the Fifties. I asked him to write about this chapter of his life and I know he was working on the story until his illness finally began to take its toll. However, Huguette has promised me that she will let me have his notes in due course, in the hope that I may be able to produce something suitable for publication in a future OBAN.

Fittingly, Ray's funeral service was held at the village church in Greatham on Monday, January 29th. Not surprisingly, the church was packed to the rafters. Rest in peace old friend.

Pete Gripton, 56B.



Bill Tudman (57A) wrote in OBAN38 and sent an accompanying photograph, for which we didn't have sufficient space. Hope this fills the gap Bill!

We may walk slowly, but we still think fast!

An elderly ex-boy, now living in Australia, has now owned a large property for several years. He has a dam in one of the lower paddocks, where he has planted several mango and avocado trees. The dam was fixed up for swimming when it was built and also has some picnic tables placed there in the shade of the fruit trees. One evening, our old pal decides to go down to the dam to look it over, as he hasn't been there for a while. He grabs a ten-litre bucket to bring back some fruit. As he nears the dam, he hears voices, shouting and laughing with glee. As he gets closer, he sees it's a bunch of pretty young girls, skinny-dipping and splashing about in his dam. He coughs prudently, to make the girls aware of his presence, and they all move up to the deep end. One of them shouts to him, "*We're not coming out until you leave!*"

Our hero frowns and solemnly announces, "*I didn't come down here to watch you ladies swim naked or make you get out of the dam naked.*" Holding the bucket up, he shouts, "*I'm just here to feed the crocodile!*"

Sidney Wooderson MBE

In the early pages of *The Arborfield Apprentice*, several boys of the '39 era mention the name Sidney Wooderson, and that they had seen him running at such places as Crookham and Motspur Park. Thus it caught my eye in a recent *Craftsman* magazine that 'one of the greatest British athletes of all time died on 21 December 2006, aged 92. Apparently, Sidney had never seemed like an athlete at all, being only 5'6" and weighing in at 8 stone 12 lbs – in real money! A solicitor by profession, Sidney suffered from poor eyesight and was not called up for active service during the war. Despite his poor sight, Sidney actually repaired radios for REME after the war. He wore glasses and would have made a brilliant 'Brylcreem' advert, with his immaculately groomed swept-back hair. At various times in his career he was a world record holder at a number of short distances. His World record mile was run in 1937, as Sidney ran for his beloved Blackheath Harriers. His time of 4:06.4 lasted until 1942. He was belatedly awarded his 'gong' in 2000, having retired from competition as long as 1949.

✉ Jim Gardner (57A) e-mails the following:

Dougie Huxley, CSM 'C' Coy (Grenadier Guards, I believe?) will be a name to all '56 and '57 intakes that won't be forgotten in a hurry. Last night I was watching a Channel 4 programme on the Royal Hospital and its Chelsea Pensioners. Very much to my surprise and pleasure, there was Dougie, as straight-backed as ever and very prominent in the programme. He had just lost one of his mates at the hospital with cancer and part of the programme was about that. I phoned The Royal Hospital to make enquiries and spoke with the Chief Clerk. He gave me a direct number for Dougie, but he was away for a long weekend. Hopefully I will have a chat with him when he returns. Now, members of 57A&B, how do you all feel about inviting Dougie down for the AOBA weekend and have him as our guest at the top table? This will be of a lot of interest to 'C' Coy fellows of course! I'll be very pleased to take on arrangements to get him there and I'm sure we'd all see that he has a great weekend. I have the address of the CSM of the RHC, who will arrange transport for Dougie there and back and I will speak with the Hon Sec re accommodation.

(Great idea Jim – hope it works out successfully! Ed.)

✉ The way others see us ?

The following letter was passed on to the Editor by our Hon Sec and may provide a moment of amusement to all readers!

Dear Cleasby,

You could have knocked me down with an AF G1045 when I came across a copy of OBAN in my doctor's surgery - piles if you must know! Longer ago than I care to remember, I was a Company Commander at the Army Apprentices' School. I think we cavalry types were brought in to bring a touch of class and élan to a pretty dull outfit – all those lathes and wrenches everywhere.

As I remember it, there were not many actual REME officers or soldiers in the place. I suppose that some of the civilian instructors might have been in the REME at one time, but this is questionable because you haven't been formed five minutes have you? I always thought this a mistake, because I met some pretty smart REME operators in my time, especially when in command with my own REME chaps, who not only kept the tanks going but also managed to out-sport, out-shoot and out-soldier us!

Tell you the truth Cleasby, I always felt sorry for the poor Apprentices – thin, broke, homesick and harangued by all and sundry. No wonder they invariably did so well when they left the place, it must have been like leaving Pentonville and going to 'The Ritz'. Any ex-Apprentice who finds himself in my neck o' the woods will find my Sam Browne hanging in the stables – don't brush it, like somebody in 53B once did!

Yours aye, Hardy

Humphrey Norsworthy-Greshon-Hardy DSO, MC, General

2006 Remembrance Day Parade

Good to see this happy bunch of ex-boys playing their part in last year's Remembrance Day Parade – well done lads!



September 1944 Intake

