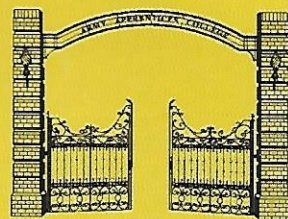


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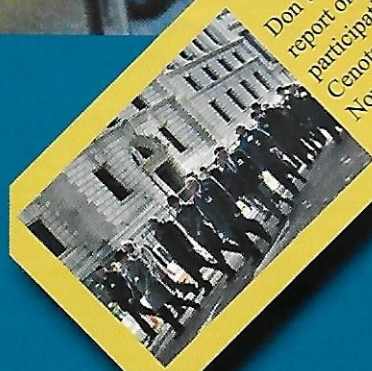
Issue 41



OBAN



Don't miss Larry Jarvis's
report on the AOBA
participation in the
Cenotaph Parade on 11th
Nov 07, on Page 36



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 or high grade JPEG format are preferred. Photographs or diagrams must be of high resolution if they are to look acceptable - aim for something at least 100kb in size.

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 £15.00. Application forms are available by post from the Membership Secretary whose name and address is shown above. Application forms are also available on the Association website www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Should this issue of OBAN appear pretty much as normal, this will be largely thanks to the effort from our ex-Chairman, Peter Gibson, who has now taken over the mantle of formatting all the e-mails that I send to him – and making it look like a proper publication! Since Ken Anderson relinquished the task some months ago, the last two issues were produced by communications between the printers and myself, so thanks are due to them for making OBANs 39 and 40 appear as good as they did. Provided that you ex-boys out there continue to provide me with such excellent material, then hopefully we can keep the OBAN going well into the future.

With so many lads from 1957 having made such a sterling effort to attend the 2007 Reunion, their numbers will certainly take some beating. But I know that much hard work is already being put in by 'the boys of '58' to try and equal their predecessors. So if any of you readers know anyone from the 1958 intakes, who may not know about the AOBA, please pass on their details to me and I will make sure it is passed on to the right recruitment office! *(Don't mind helping Jeeps now and then!)*

As I write this, the autumn sunshine is still fairly warm, following an overnight frost. Some forecasts are already warning us of a cold winter, so I'm hoping that it is not that drastic+++! Because, instead of heading for sunny climes, like any sensible pensioner at this time of year, my wife Joyce and I have booked to go and spend Christmas and New Year with my elder daughter and husband – just outside Chicago! Whatever the outcome, I just hope that the 'festive season' has been a good one for everyone – and a Happy New Year to you all.

Pete Gripton, 56B

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Cover Pictures

Front Cover

The photograph was taken at the October 2007 Executive Committee meeting and shows Keith Evans (Asst. Hon Sec), Pete Gripton (OBAN Editor), Bill Cleasby (Hon Sec), Brian Hutchins (Chairman), Fred Mills (Membership Sec) and Mike Davis (Treasurer) at the REME Museum. (For more about the Executive Committee, turn to page 34).

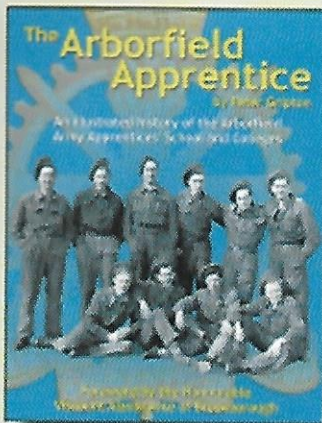
Rear Cover

John Pewsey (45A and photographer, phailed!) sends a photo taken at the '41 – '45 members' mini-reunion 'Oop Nawth' at Mickleover, Derbyshire.

Left to Right: John 'Rip' Bowen, Marjory & John 'Sailor' Bradshaw; Eddie & Louise Broomfield; Doreen & John Brown; Lew & Alma Dickinson; Patricia & Alan Gillam; Michael & Marjie Grantham; Marguerite & Tony Guy; Dave Higgs; Johnny Horwood; Bob & Jean Jones; Lawrence 'Unsinkable' Nixon; Rose & Fred Roberts; Frank Sands; Anita & Les Scapens; Joyce & Robert Ward; Sheila & Bill Wellborn, Molly & John Pewsey.

OK, so there's an error around about Jean Jones and Master-Mariner Nixon - can anybody spot Jim Morgan? Meanwhile, many thanks to Mike G and Les S for organising a most enjoyable weekend – and all the very best wishes to everyone.

THE ARBORFIELD APPRENTICE



An illustrated history of the Arborfield Army Apprentices' School and Colleges
By Peter Gripton (56B)

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, 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 with more than 200 photographs. Peter Gripton has done a great service to all Arborfield apprentices and staff members in writing the history and he certainly deserves the accolades of the many old boys who will welcome this rendering of their story. His light and readable style gives all the appearance that he enjoyed writing this history. But, bearing in mind the dictum 'that which is written without pain will be read without pleasure' - there is ample evidence that Peter took great pains to ensure that his readers will enjoy his book. Many of his readers will have actually made the history that he has so faithfully recorded. The author has been punctilious in awarding an equal

balance to each period of time. The Army Apprentice system has been an outstanding success from its foundation. It is excellent that this chapter of a great tradition has now been recorded for posterity.

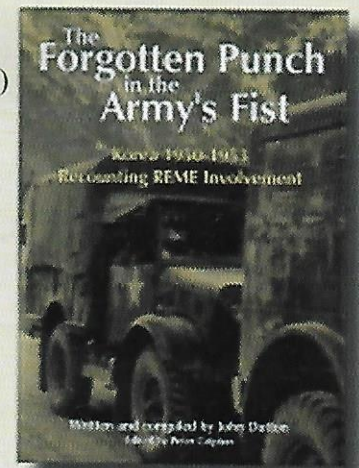
SUPPLEMENT - THE FINAL CHAPTER

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 the 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 part of the production and postage costs.

THE FORGOTTEN PUNCH IN THE ARMY'S FIST

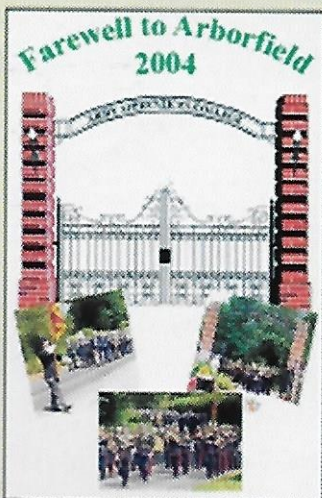
Written and compiled by John Dutton (43A) and edited by Peter Gripton (56B)

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 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 + £7.70 p&p whilst 'The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist' is £12.50 + £3.00 p&p. Cheques should be made payable to 'REME Corps Account No 2' and credit cards can be accepted for telephone orders.



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. It does great justice to the last Reunion to be held on the Rowcroft Barracks site, with most of those who attended being recorded on film.

The film also includes a clip of the final Passing Out Parade on the 12th August 2004. To top and tail the movie, two black and white historic movie-tone clips of the early days of the Army Apprentices School are also included. 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 the shop on 0118 976 3223 to enquire about postage charges and to place an order.

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 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



For my seasonal address to you, which you will probably read in the New Year, I have a message and a Christmas gift from you to our Octogenarians. After the successful reunion, the committee met to see what fault could be found in its organisation. As that was a very short meeting (well done Bill), we turned our attention to other matters and how pleased we were to see so many Old Boys on parade from the Royal Hospital Chelsea. In the ensuing chat, we decided that our octogenarian members need pay no membership subscription, other than a small token, receipt of which will keep the admin side ticking over. I wish you and your families the very best Christmas, and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Best Wishes

Brian Hutchins

From the Honorary Secretary



Isn't it extraordinary how the year has flown? I don't know about you, but I always feel a bit lethargic at this time of the year and the thud of Christmas cards on the mat only adds to my general state of inertia. It must be the weather or part of the aging process. The year has certainly had its ups and downs. This has been the worst year in my time for the number of deaths being reported and my thoughts and condolences are very much with the families and friends of departed members, who must be finding it very difficult as Christmas approaches.

On the upside, we continue to attract new members and the camaraderie that characterises all ex-Apprentices is still very much alive - long may it continue. You will be pleased to hear that the AOBA prize for the best Technical Junior Soldier of Intake 17 at Harrogate was presented by our President, Brigadier Nigel Williams, to Cfn O'Neill on the 16th of November. The ceremony took place in the Brigadier's office, which was an occasion to remember for the young man in question. Incidentally, Brigadier Nigel is shortly leaving Arborfield on posting and our new President and head of the Corps of REME will be Brigadier Brian McCall. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing Brigadier Nigel all the very best in his new appointment.

Not much more to say, other than to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas - take care and I will see you all at the 2008 Reunion in July.

God Bless

Bill Cleasby, 61C

Web Developer's Report

Our AOBA forum is going from strength to strength. As I write, we have some 225 members engaging in friendly banter on all subjects to do with Arborfield - from RSMs to 'Charlie the Barber'. Not one single dispute or upset. We have three moderators, Phil Graham, Larry Jarvis and Egon Taska, but not one of them has been called upon to do their duty. If you have not joined, then why not sign up today at <http://aoba.editboard.com> - only by doing that can you see how well it is going. A small plea though - please sign on using your known name, and not a pseudo such as 'tich65a', as we all agreed this was not a good thing. I am getting a number of guys still trying to log on with pseudos and I don't like not letting them in.

If you've been to the site recently, you will have seen the pages for 'Find a Friend' (if you haven't, click 'Notice Board' then 'Find a Friend'). Here I have listed all the years the Boys' School was open, with live links to those with information. I await volunteers to act as co-ordinators for searching for old boys from their year and can report that, so far, we have three years live and a couple of others where lads are digging out names from theirs. With over 60 years still to do, we need more help! So if you are interested in becoming a co-ordinator for your year, get in touch and I'll run through what's involved. As our site has now been on the internet for over 6 years, all the search engines find it and it is amazing just how many old boys there are out there looking at it - so the I expect the 'Find a Friend' pages will increase our membership substantially.

God Bless to all,

David (Tich) Schofield 65A

Recruiting and Membership



Since the 2007 reunion we have recruited five new members and, I'm glad to say, the death rate is lower! Only one of our members has passed away in that same period. I am now working with the 58ers to recruit their new members, in time for the next reunion in July. If you know of any of your old mates who do not belong to the Association, please let me know.

Happy New Year

Fred Mills, 51B

Money Matters



Another year has passed by in record time! Thank you to those members who sent back their completed replacement Standing Order forms. To those who may have forgotten to complete them, I would be grateful if you could action them soonest. All Direct Debits have been amended and the cash/cheque payers need to send their subs to me by as soon as possible!

The examination of our fund took place in the first week of the New Year and the report will be presented to the Chairman for his approval or disapproval. I think that is all I have to say in regard to Treasurer matters. I hope that you all have had a reflective and happy Christmas and looking forward to a most prosperous New Year.

All the best to you all,

Mike Davis, 60B

Looking Back

by Andy Knowles, 64A

"Come in son and sit down. Now, so you want to join the Army do you?" I was in the recruiting office in Aberdeen, it was August 1963, I was fourteen years old and would be fifteen in September. *"What is it you would like to do in the Army?"* *"I'd like to be a vehicle mechanic"*, I replied. *"And how old are you?"* asked the Recruiting Officer. *"Fourteen"*, I replied. *"OK, when do you leave school?"* *"In December"*, I said. *"Right"*, he explained, *"as you are only fourteen, we will need to have one of your parents present, or a letter from one of them stating your wishes. Can you do that for next week?"* *"No problem"*, I responded. *"OK, we would like you to do some aptitude and other tests while you are here, if that's all right"*. Tests completed, and back off home I went, having arranged to come back to the recruiting office in early September.

With the required parent as requested, I returned to the recruiting office. Back in with the Recruiting Officer, I sat down and he went through the normal formalities. He then announced, *"We have your results for the tests you completed and they are excellent - are you sure you want to be a vehicle mechanic? There are other options open to you"*. *"Could you tell me what those options are?"* I asked. *"Yes, you could go into 'electronics'"*.



"What's that?" I asked. *"Well, it's like 'electrics' - but a bit smarter"*. *"OK, I can do that, when do I start?"*

And so, on January 4th 1964, I arrived at the Army Apprentices' School Arborfield, having departed from Aberdeen station (see above picture) the previous evening, along with many others going off to join various establishments. I can't remember if any of the others travelled to Arborfield, but it was certainly the start of an adventure for me, having never actually left Scotland before.

As a member of '64A', I was installed in 'Junior Company' (white flashes – and known as Jeep Land), having trudged through the slushy snow. I believe I remember being in a room on the ground floor of a large block, facing the square. Then, over the next few days, it was off to 'do the rounds' of collecting all your bits and pieces from the various parts of the Camp, including the inevitable visit to the Camp barber (Norman Rose) to leave something behind. *(Not being funny here Andy – but wasn't Norman Rose the Garrison tailor? Ed.)*

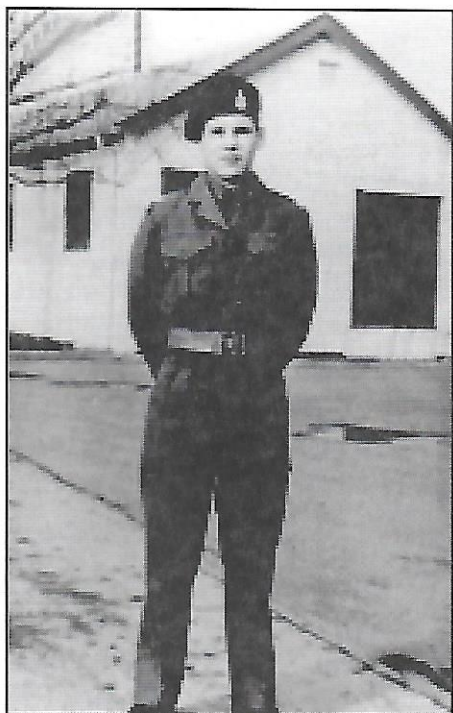
The first term obviously had its focus on licking us into shape as soldiers, some found this harder than others. Left feet and right feet did occasionally become mixed up by a few. But, at the end of the first term, it was all magically transformed and we had

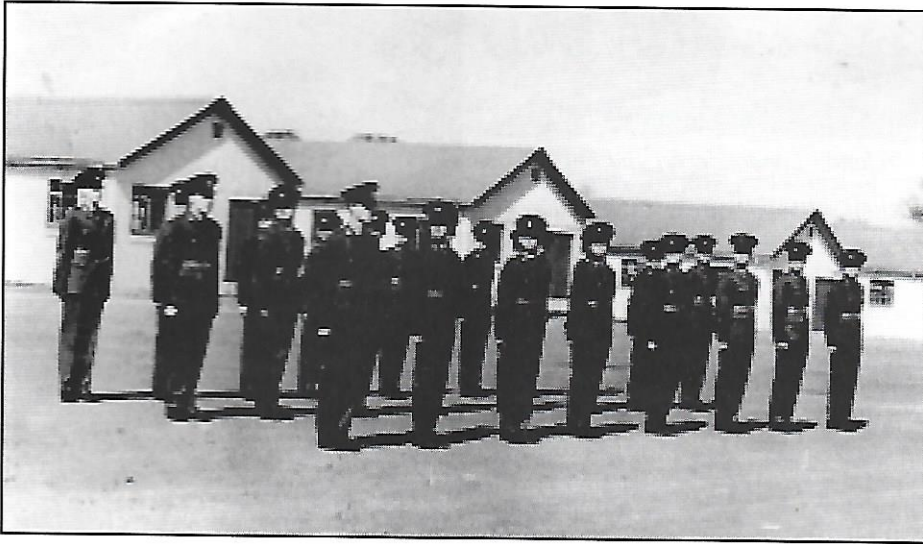
our squad drill competition and passed out into our respective Companies.

I was to become a member of 'D' Company (yellow flashes), along with a few others whose names I remember. They include Ian Holding (always had the best bulled boots), Derry Orr (not far behind Ian regarding boots), Ian Garden, Colin Crichton, Trevor Williams (future A/T RSM), Phil Moran, Gary Foster and Jock MacKenzie. I am sure I will eventually remember some more.

Memorable among those early months was the Cookhouse (not the food), obviously for the usual 'gypping' but, most of all during meals, the Juke Box playing the likes of the *'Dave Clark Five'*, singing, *'Glad All Over'*, with the accompaniment of everyone banging knives and forks on the tables at the appropriate times. Another favourite at the time was *'The Searchers'*, with *'Needles and Pins'*.

I am not certain if it was during Junior Company or 2 Div, but we had the compulsory boxing event. I am almost certain I remember being paired against someone called Pete Howes. (He is mentioned in Peter Gripton's book *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*.) He was tall and I was stocky, but about the same weight. The bouts were held at Bailleu Camp and I can't remember if it was 'two x three-minute' rounds or 'three x two-minute' rounds - or something completely different! I





believe I won a close fight though.

Another memorable thing I found at the time was being paid the vast sum of £2 10s 6p per week. From that you had a compulsory amount saved for you for the end of term. The rest was obviously spent on the purchase of blanco and brasso, and the ever-present 'fly pie' in the NAFFI (sic). I went home on my first leave with the princely sum of just over £7. You were paid according to you age at the time. I earn as much now in a day as I did for the whole first year at Arborfield. But that is all due to the excellent grounding I had in electronics and life at Arborfield. (I am still working in telecommunications, in the oil industry, but that is a whole new story.)

So, over the next two years, of progressing through 2 Div to 7 Div, it was a busy but generally happy and enlightening time. Education and workshop practices featured a whole lot more during that time. These again have been well documented in *'The Arborfield Apprentice'* book. (Peter's book brought back many events that had slipped from my memory - Quadrangular games, Remembrance Day, etc.) I became involved in a few of the sporting activities. (I retired from boxing after the first fight!) I do remember playing cricket occasionally, tennis and basketball featured well for a period, but my first sport was always football. As part of the 'D' Coy team, we won the District League and Cup in the same season. I am sure it was 1965/66 that I remember we went down to Aldershot stadium to play the final.

One name I remember, from the times I played cricket was David Spawforth. Had he really been back

squadded so often that they thought he was one of the permanent staff? He was also a very good rugby player.

Military training was always well featured, with the drill and passing out parades. Memorable again was the camping expeditions, to Hawley Common amongst others. But the one I remember best was going to Wales - the Brecon Beacons. Walking up Pen-y-fan, you could almost never forget. (Although I have done a lot more hill



walking since.) I remember one time, we had to venture out in small squads in the early hours and do a route march through various checkpoints. It started well, but whether it was our map reading, incorrect information, or bad weather (who will ever know?), but I *think every squad went off the track* somewhere. Our squad ended up having bacon rolls at a café near a main road somewhere, before resuming what we thought was the way forward. But, either way, it was very late on that evening when we were eventually

picked up along with others and transported back to camp.

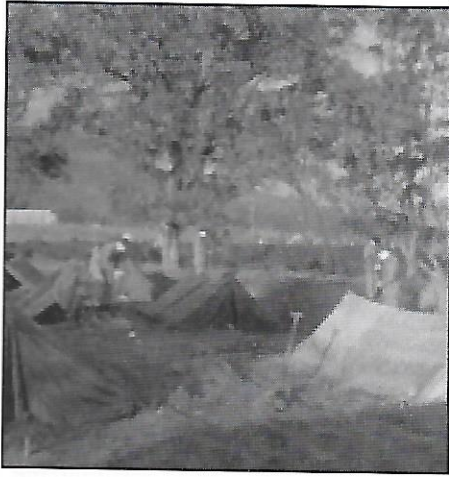
And so, into Senior Div we went. I didn't realise, until reading Peter's book, that we were the last-ever Senior Div to pass out from the College. *'The Bramshill Hunt'* featured a lot more on the agenda at weekends by this time. 'Of course we were old enough'. This was the time of introduction to the 'Yard Of Ale' and the 'Wellie Boot', great competitions - or so we thought. I don't remember anyone actually completing either though. On visits to Reading, the focal point always appeared to be at *'The Boar's Head'*, before moving on.

9 Div for us was to see the changeover of the 'College' and the REME Badging parade.

Well remembered times from Senior Div, other than the sporting activities, were the likes of Phil Moran and Derry Orr, careering around the square at Bailleu on a motorbike with sidecar. Completely mad they were. But this only took place when there was a long weekend, due to a holiday, and most

people had gone home. But we preferred to follow other lines of activities and interests.

I had obviously, by this time, decided that the route I would follow would be in telecommunications, and I passed out successfully. It was then straight from the College and over to SEE, to carry on training up to Second-class technician. From then on, it was on to serve at various units and establishments as listed on the next page.



39 Missile Regiment LAD, Sennelager

9 Inf Workshop, Colchester

SEE First-class course

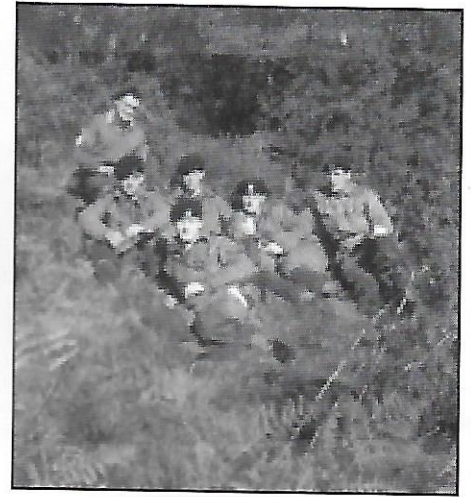
Royal Irish Rangers LAD, Watchet, Somerset

Worcester & Sherwood Foresters, N Ireland (Londonderry) and Berlin

SRDE Christchurch (3 months in Cyprus during this time, with the UNFICYP)

REME Workshop at Bordon.(2nd Tour in N Ireland, at Sydenham, Belfast)

I then left the Corps in July 1979 and had a brief period in England, before returning to Scotland to start working in the oil industry in the North Sea. I still do telecommunications work, which in itself has been a new adventure, with the many changes in technology over the



years. I may write a brief article for the OBAN on this in the near future.

(No 'may' about it Andy – you're now under starter's orders! Ed.)



Missing Members – Can You Help?

The following is a list of those members, along with their last known locations, who seem to have gone AWOL – as their OBANs get posted back to the REME Museum as 'NOT KNOWN'. If anyone has further news about them, or can shed any light upon their whereabouts, please contact one of your Committee members.

DGC Brickley, ex-61C, of KNIGHTON, Powys
 PG Coleman, ex-43A, of ALCESTER, Warwickshire
 C Collingwood, ex-62A, of WANTAGE, Oxfordshire
 GP Cooper, ex-85A, of NORTHALLERTON, Yorkshire
 J Kavanagh, (?) of Barkham, WOKINGHAM, Berkshire
 DS McCreadie, ex-58A, of GODALMING, Surrey
 PA Skinner, ex-68B, of EVESHAM, Worcestershire
 RJ Whitehead, ex-82C, believed to be still serving as WO2(AQMS)
 BJ Williams MBE, ex-59B, of Mytchett, CAMBERLEY, Surrey

I Had A Dream! (Part 2)

by West Robertson, 50B

(West's dream of following in Shackleton's footsteps looks like becoming real at last, as he sails on the FS216 with the indomitable 'Skipper King'. Ed.)

Landfall on South Georgia

As the day progressed and the sun climbed into that azure sky, the clouds, hanging like a protective curtain over a parrot cage, gradually dispersed to reveal the snow-capped peaks. Soon we sailed between these magnificent mountains, each rising sheer from the sea for hundreds, perhaps thousands of feet. Occasional splashes of sparkling blue, intense as the refracted light from a billion-carat diamond, betrayed the presence of those creeping frozen rivers which gives South Georgia its alternative name of 'Glacier Island'. To our right, the rusting ruins of an abandoned whaling station, with little obvious sign of the carnage of earlier years. Seals swam past, easily spotted in the crystal clear water, while huge fronds of kelp turned patches of that same water brown. The channel through which we travelled now narrowed, then turned a touch to the left, and we entered Cumberland Bay. High on the cliff face to our right, a large white cross stood stark and alone, a sentinel at the entrance to the bay, and memorial to Sir Ernest Shackleton, whose remains now lie in the small graveyard at the whaling station called Grytviken. My dream had finally come into being!

Tied to a little wooden jetty, *FS216* rested and disgorged her passengers and stores. The welcome we received from the men we were replacing was sincere but subdued, the natural reaction from people who have lived and shared a lonely experience - a feeling I too was to know in the months that followed, whenever a visiting ship pulled in. Late season ice was closing, so there was minimal delay in the departure and soon we stood alone, six men who would have to become a team - and do so without the assistance of the rest of the world. I have to admit to a touch of apprehension, but there was much to do, so it was a case of 'getting stuck in' and leave the worrying until later.

There are a couple of problems that spring to mind about those first few days. Our communication with the outside world was by means of a single-sideband radio, designed and constructed by our

parent unit. To give additional range, a power amplifier was necessary, but this was giving problems with a series of relays that would fail to function in the cold. To remedy this, I had brought a set of replacement potted switches, while Mick Moon had removed the originals to return to the States. My first priority was to get the radio functioning, but the wiring diagram did not relate to the actual circuits. Without power, I could not contact America, so had to 'patch' through *FS216* - only to be told that mine was a prototype radio, no diagrams existed, so 'do what you can'. They could sometimes hear my signals and referred to me as 'going barefoot', and it was a couple of days before I was able to transmit on full power. The second problem related to our beef supply. The meat had been roughly butchered and was piled on a plastic sheet, just clear of the jetty. Delayed by the radio repair, I hadn't got round to storing it and, when I eventually did, it was a snow-covered frozen solid mass. I knocked off chunks with a pick for the next few weeks, much to the disgust of the cook, who never knew what to expect - but then, neither did I!

Here, I should mention the kit I was expected to maintain. Mounted within a little fibreglass circular base, with a rotatable upper portion, a section of which could be opened to the sky, was a *Wild T4* theodolite, which had a camera in lieu of a telescope. The camera had a capping shutter fitted before the object glass, which, on a single prolonged exposure, would chop the track created on the film (a glass plate), by a moving object - in this case, a satellite and stars. A secondary shutter, controlled by a programme within a computer remote from the camera, would further chop the observed track, to produce a series of dots and dashes, each of which was related to time and verified by two magnetic gates, driven by a selection of gears. One gate opened to allow a pulse passage through the second and this could, in fact had to, be observed by the operator on an oscilloscope during a 'pass'. Since the functioning of this secondary shutter was critical to the finished product, a paper recorder noted each pulse and whether or not it was suitably centred on the gate. A margin of adjustment was available during operation, and failure to maintain pulse position resulted in a worthless

photographic plate.

In addition to the atomic clock I had brought to the Island, we ran two oscillators with *Russ Track* recorders, and two more running on standby. We kept three VLF radios constantly tuned to time broadcasting (WWF) and had two more oscillators within the operating console. All of this allowed time to be accurately recorded, and we attempted to be within one millionth of a second. But without recourse to outside confirmation, this required many backups. Every month or so, we would hire a communication satellite and I would send a sample of my frequencies for comparison with the atomic clock in France (Universal Time or UTI). There would be days when our two satellites, 'Pageous' and 'Echo', would not be visible to us, or at such an angle that we could not use them. If the duration of inactivity was going to exceed a couple of days, then we would revert to topographical surveying, mapping out the surrounding country, and placing 'trig points where necessary. It must be remembered that no true surveying of South Georgia had taken place, apart from some work by a Royal Naval surveyor, who had identified his observation points using the long handles from whalers flensing knives, and this in the 1920s. We did find the occasional marker! The requirement to be able to do 'topo' work meant that I also had theodolites, telemeters, and all the associated incidentals, to contend with. There was a flat-bottomed plastic six-man landing craft, with no natural buoyancy, propelled by a huge outboard motor (whose recoil starter didn't), both to maintain and use, to ferry surveyors to outlying points. I spent many terrified hours in that thing, returning alone across house-sized waves, sitting by necessity in the rear to control the engine, while the unladen front was whipped in all directions by the usually gale force winds.

Wind was always a problem. My transmitting antenna, a twenty-foot square horizontal spread, was positioned on top of a forty-foot mast that, being directional, required a motor drive to rotate it. The coupling between the motor and antenna shaft was a steel pipe, drilled and bolted to each component. It would take the wind, in moderate conditions, about a month to elongate the holes to such an extent that I

lost control. Replacing the pipe - and I had manufactured a supply - was an acrobatic performance. Holding the loose antenna in one hand, changing the coupling with the other, and all the time forty feet above the ground, with a gale of up to 100 miles per hour attempting to throw you into the sea! There was an anemometer halfway up the mast, which was read in the shack below. I wouldn't climb if the wind exceeded 100 mph.

Although we were remote, we were not totally free from all bureaucracy and local, sensible decisions had to be confirmed. For example, when *HMS Endurance* was due to call and lay a wreath on Shackleton's grave, instructions arrived that we should meet the ship, dressed in full military uniform, and join the ceremony. Using my now fully powered radio, I reminded the War Box that we had come prepared for tropical climes, so had olive green - hardly the sort of kit to wear on parade in the Antarctic. Well, orders are orders! The surveyors decamped to some remote spot, the cook took refuge in his kitchen and I was left, standing alone in a blizzard, frozen almost rigid as the ship came alongside. The day was so bad that even those intrepid sailors didn't want to leave the snug innards of the ship, so the ceremony was over with a speed that Shackleton himself would have appreciated. On another occasion, I sent a bill for plates and mugs, twelve of each at 1940 prices, which I had purchased from the whaling station. The bill was queried, there only being six in our party, so I halved the quantity and doubled the price, then returned the invoice. With it, I mentioned that I had heard of a navigation system using timed pulses from satellites (fore-runner of the now popular GPS systems), and suggested that this might be useful. The next ship brought me reimbursement for the crockery - and a complete navigation system.

Because cutting hair required a tool, I became the barber! I was ration storeman and occasional cook, part-time surveyor and regular console operator. I assisted some fellow in America obtain his PhD by studying the transmission of time; was a builder when the kitchen caught fire; took and developed photographs; and attempted to carve objects from the unlimited supply of whale bones littering the beaches. As summer approached, the snow retreated and the days grew longer, until we had virtually no night. The camera became almost redundant, with most of our time being spent on topographical surveying.

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But the dream came true ...

These were the days when I could really live my dream! I walked among the countless elephant-seal cows, crowded on the beaches where they had come ashore to pup, always vigilant less a raging, rampant two-ton bull took a fancy to me! I befriended the local Gentoo penguins and teased, with honking calls, the travelling Kings, only to get a slap for my cheek, when they got close enough to recognise that I was not one of them. On the steel-edged skis, there were distant places to explore, and a six-hundred foot steep slope of rotten rock was an ideal place to 'scree run'. I learned that a leopard seal could travel faster than I could, when I stumbled across one sleeping on the beach, so took every opportunity to disturb those found resting on an ice floe, when piloting that little boat. From that same boat, I spoke to Orca, the killer whale, and watched small icebergs calve from the face of a mile wide glacier. From the beach, I welcomed the occasional fur seal and I sat with shags, as they dried their feathers, and flicked out fish. These fish had a front half that looked more like an alligator than a fish, but the rest was good eating. I also admired the tiny Wilsons petrels, dancing like large, black and white butterflies above the surfing sea.

There were, of course, some days when all was not so rosy. Permission had been granted to take one hundred elephant-seal bulls as food for the dogs living further south on the ice. Conditions were imposed and, as a representative of the Falkland Island Governor, I was tasked with ensuring that they were adhered to. Each animal had to exceed four metres in length and, since the moult was taking place, it was fairly easy to measure them. Then the beast was shot, above one large, black, beautiful eye. Blood spurted from the wound and formed small rivulets that ran to the sea, staining the whole foreshore crimson. Giant skuas fought over this rich harvest, as huge hearts continued beating long after the carcass had been dragged away. Then I would move on, to measure the next.

Not all of the wildlife that was taken from our Island suffered the same fate. A ship, heading for the ice, called in to drop off some cages, to be used to transport live penguins back to some wildlife park. The cages were about fifteen inches square and a couple of feet tall, which, to me, seemed a bit small. Since I was again to be involved in this activity, I questioned the wisdom of using these small cages but was

assured that all was in order - and to wait for the birds to start to moult. People the world over have been amused by the antics of these miniature butlers, but to see them when their feathers start to drop presents a different picture. Unable to swim, or fly in the sea to be more accurate, they just stand, dejected, not moving from the spot and tramp the fallen feathers underfoot. The cages stopped them falling over!

A sense of fulfilment

Through the trials and tribulations of those bygone days at Arborfield; through the humid, sticky, and sometimes foetid air of the tropics, the oppressive heat and bone-chilling nights in the deserts of the Middle East, I had dreamed my dream. There were times when, to escape into that dream helped me find the strength to meet the days ahead, and others, when all was right with my world, to bring pleasure to my mind. I was privileged to realise my dream, to see in life that place where history and bravery met in a cruel, unforgiving spot in the sub-Antarctic, a place where the harshness is equalled, and more, by the spectacular beauty. That Glacier Island is no longer just a figment of my imagination, but will live forever in my pool of happy memories, is fulfilment of my dream. There will remain little evidence of my time spent there. I replaced some missing letters, on the granite pillar that marks the last resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton; I did the tasks I was called upon to do, but most of all, I walked in the footsteps of those I had so long admired.

Notes:

1. Arborfield was well represented on the strength of 512 Spec RE, with Mick Moon (50A), West Robertson (50B), and Alf Tozer (47B) doing consecutive tours. If others were involved, I apologise for my ignorance of the fact!

2. When the troubles arose over the Argentinian invasion, a party of SAS was landed on South Georgia to attempt to regain Grytviken. To the best of my knowledge, no contact was made with any of the team who had so much to offer regarding the local terrain, although I, for one, was still serving.

3. The navigation system I had requested consisted of a Dish receiving antenna, a box with a digital read-out, cables and a book containing reference

tables. The only position I had to mount the dish was on a shed that we had built, to house a few chickens we had brought to the island, and was accessible only through the back door of our team house, due to the deep lying snow. When Russian visitors arrived, I was happy to show them the operating system, this being US policy, but when asked about the little house, I said we had chickens there and kept the visitors out. I can only surmise that it was the devilment instilled at Arborfield, that the more the Russians wanted to see inside the chicken house, the more emphatic and

secretive my denial became!

4. A couple of years ago, I received a letter from a gentleman who had heard about my activities on South Georgia. He informed me that the 'James Caird', the ship's boat that was used in Shackleton's epic crossing from Elephant Island to South Georgia, still exists and is housed at Dulwich College, London. The 'James Caird Society' keeps the adventures of Shackleton alive and a Newsletter is published to keep members informed of Antarctic and associated activity. They apparently hold a candle-lit supper around

the boat, twice a year, so perhaps my dream was not so personal as I had imagined! The first successful retracing of Shackleton's crossing of the Island was achieved, I believe, by the 1964-65 Combined Services Expedition. For more information, the society can be located at www.jamescairdsociety.com.

(I am sure that readers will have enjoyed West's tale of following an almost lifelong dream. Whilst reading and editing his saga, I certainly felt the icy blast of the Antarctic chill my bones at times. Ed.)

Life's Rich Experiences

by Ray Jenkinson, 48B



After leaving the Army Apprentices' School (AAS) Arborfield, it was a few years before I found myself back in a classroom environment, attending No.10 Clerk of Works (Mechanical) course at Chatham. This was to take some twenty months, with some experience at a civilian firm towards the end of it, between 1956-7. I then entered a 'new world' at the rank of Staff Sergeant. I spent several years based at the Royal Engineers Stores Depot at Liphook, in deepest Hampshire, a holding base for several trades and from which we were frequently selected for overseas tours. These were generally of six months duration and, more often than not, unaccompanied.

And so, my first posting, in October 1959, took me all the way to Christmas Island, where my original six-month tour was later extended to a full year. The atomic bomb tests were completed and the scientists were packing up to leave. The

main camp and its service installations were being closed down so, for my second six months, the port camp became the main centre for living. This provided good experience, as I was mainly occupied with various improvements to existing installations, making for better reliability and ease of operation for the plant attendants. On this last point, an attempt was made to use some Gilbertese operators to relieve service personnel. But there were two major problems. One, they spoke hardly any English and, secondly, they had no concept of time.

My next RE works team posting was to Bahrain, another six-month stint, building a camp for a Paras unit – aluminium huts, each with individual air-conditioning units. An attempt was made to provide a swimming pool for the troops. We had access to a bore-hole, using an air lift pump. The pool was constructed by a RE Troop and was made up from scaffolding and interwoven tarpaulin sheets. Upon completion, the pool was filled with water, but overnight the whole thing collapsed and the water spilled out across the surrounding desert. Over the next few days, it was almost a miracle to see newly sprung grass bursting through what had previously been dry sand!

That was back in 1962 and, the following year, I began a three-year tour at the RE Workshops in Malta GC. As my wife, Huguette, was none too keen on flying, we decided to take the scenic route! We loaded up our car, a Renault 2-litre, with two children and all our travel goods. Off we went, across France and through the whole length of Italy, then sailed across the Med, via Sicily to Malta. What a great experience that was! We made good time as far down as Naples, but in

the foothills from thereon it became somewhat tedious and slow. In fact we missed the planned boat and had to wait three days for the next one. We decided to have a break in Sicily to recover – and the children thoroughly enjoyed that experience!

I was most impressed by the workshop in Malta, solidly entrenched on the island after many years, with grand military tradition and craftsmanship – particularly valid in the woodworking department. There was also a well-equipped machinery shop and a foundry, with two cast-iron cupolas and two non-ferrous metal melting furnaces. There was also sheet metal and welding facilities, with a pattern-making shop. Some of the patterns went back years, under control of a well-skilled pattern maker. Then came an electrical rewinding and repair shop. In fact there was very little that they weren't equipped to carry out. It was during my tour that the RE works services became part of the Ministry of Public Building and Works (MPBW) and the workshop staff was handed over to new management. I duly adopted their dress code instead of uniform!

For the carpenters, their bread-and-butter work was the manufacture of the wooden shutters that ran around the barracks, quarters and Headquarters building. It had turned into a seemingly never-ending replacement task, with the occasional kick up the pants when work got short. After the MPBW take-over, changes in the workshop set-up were inevitable. Malta is only a small island and we had three workshops – Army, Navy and RAF – so rationalisation got under way, with closures and staff shedding – a rather sad time. However,

before Malta's independence came about, Commander RE decided that some 'installation intelligence packs' were required, at El Adem, Tobruk and Malta. Thus, I was sent across to North Africa on such a mission - main power station, water supply, sewage works, and the cold stores at Tobruk.

On my return, I did a similar task on Malta, this time a dual effort with Peter Shinn, an ex-boy from 44A. Here, the water supply was most interesting. Deep shafts were located at the ends of several underground tunnels, cut through sandstone and meeting at a central point where the main pumps were situated. The pumps were all electrical, but there was a stand-by set of some wonderful *Ruston* oil engines, with huge flywheels and of various horse-power, which dated back to the Twenties. It must have been sheer hard work for the original installers, to get them assembled at the bottoms of those deep shafts. The operators were only too happy to demonstrate the starting and running procedures. The actual amount of water pumped was limited, but work was in hand down at the harbour for a huge gas-turbine driven power station, incorporating a desalination plant - they wouldn't let us anywhere near that!

Future planning

Prior to going to Malta, I had been seriously thinking of the future and of buying a house. I had taken out quite a large insurance policy with 'The man from the Pru', but that wasn't to mature until the following century! However, being interested in making more money, the Prudential allowed me to cash in the policy. I put the cash towards the cost of a piece of land with planning permission, this in the village of Greatham, Hampshire, and looked at the options. One of these was to erect a self-build bungalow and the 'Colt' system seemed to fit the bill. Having selected the pattern I liked, I applied for the final planning permission whilst still on Malta. My disembarkation leave was spent in clearing the site, to allow sufficient room for a caravan in which we would first live. I would then build a garage and work on further site clearance.

My follow-up posting was to the Works Office in Aldershot, basically civilian, as I became the resident site supervisor on the build of a new high-security prison at Bisley, which included staff housing. This couldn't have been more convenient, as the experience at Bisley showed me how to lay out the

footings for my own place - and gave access to the equipment to get all my levels correct. The house base was completed on April 1st (don't say it!) 1967 and Colt delivered the complete build-kit shortly afterwards. A spot of leave meant that I soon had the structure, apart from the roof, well in place. I did require the assistance of some friends to lift a large 'oriel' window into place, but apart from that, the whole project was built by myself and the site foreman (otherwise known as Huguette!), including all the main drainage, heating and electrics. It was hard work and it took up every spare moment, but by the end of October that same year, our bungalow was complete - painted and decorated and passed at every stage by the local authority and electricity board.

Meanwhile, the Bisley site had hit a major stoppage, so I was directed to other jobs in the area, which included a telephone exchange at Alton and the married quarters at RAF Odiham. And then, out of the blue, came the offer of a posting to Singapore. I didn't really want to disturb my family and schooling at that point and I knew that there were many others who would give their eye-teeth for such a posting. So I wrote back a nice letter to explain my thoughts. All went quiet, until I was ordered to present myself for 'positive vetting'. "*What next?*" I thought. Well, 'next' turned out to be a posting to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe, otherwise known as SHAPE, at Mons in Belgium. This entire establishment had just been kicked out of France and there was much work to finish and things to be put right.

The place was run by the Americans and the office staff a real mixed bunch - this was going to be an interesting three years! Looking back, it's amazing to realise that I had access to all areas. I was in the control rooms for major NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) conferences and oversaw the installation of large early computer systems, which had to have very strictly-controlled ambient temperatures and precise uninterruptable power supplies. I went there unaccompanied and, after around six months, it came about that another Clerk of Works, also unaccompanied, was due to return to the UK. In his spare time, evenings and part weekends, he had been running a woodworking shop in an American craft complex. "*Do you want to take it over?*" he asked. I welcomed this pleasant opportunity and began operating in an environment well

equipped and maintained by American know-how. The storeroom was well stocked with all sorts of wood and ply, and the manufactured goods were sold to customers at a very good rate. In my spare moments, I also became interested in pottery, leather-craft, enameling, photography and the hot-wax casting of precious metals. It was certainly an excellent opportunity to learn new skills.

Return to England

My final posting was to MEXE AT Christchurch, where I was mainly required to write repair practices procedures. But I also took the chance to attend Southampton Technical College on day-release and complete the final year of my full Technical Certificate in Plant Engineering. Then it was time to hand my kit in and make final preparations to leave the Army and uniform behind. I started civilian life with a bit of a holiday, then began applying for various posts. A local placement was hard to find, so I opted for the London area, and commuting backwards and forwards by train. My final list came down to one of three jobs - good old MPBW, New Scotland Yard (police engineering department) and Hospital Engineer at St Thomas' Hospital. The hospital was very interested in my application and, because I was on holiday in France, delayed my interview until I arrived back.

If I recall correctly, the hospital job wasn't the best paid of the three, but it had the asset of being close to Waterloo Station and within walking distance to and from the train. I thus began on a Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., routine. It was a good team in the engineering section and we worked hard at giving a good service to the various departments, cutting costs wherever possible. 'Times they were a'changing' however. The old 'direct contact' style of rapport with Ward sisters and Matrons was phased out by bonus schemes, productivity drives and such like. After a year or so, I was promoted to Deputy Chief Engineer, dealing with on-going projects and doing some staff training. To assist in this latter task, I began to attend Further Education classes on a Saturday morning.

In 1974, the British Rail system began to fall apart. Getting into work was a lot more certain than returning home, and I was often reduced to spending the night at the hospital. It was then that I read in the press that some Lecturer posts were being advertised in the Engineering Science Department at the School of Electrical and

Mechanical Engineering (SEME) at Bordon, just a few miles from my home in Greatham. It didn't take me too long before I was back in the classroom – but this time at the sharp end! I began teaching motor vehicle related subjects at all levels, from basic students to Artificer courses. And, of course, this 'local job' also opened up a whole new range of personal activities.

Ever since my own basic 'fitter' training at the AAS, I had enjoyed metalwork. This led naturally to a keen interest in model engineering, such as miniature steam engines. So I set about constructing my own workshop, fitted out with the smaller industrial machines. I was most ambitious about this and ploughed in with quite a hefty building programme. However, I was more often than not easily sidetracked, succumbing to some other type of locomotive before I had finished the previous one. I don't think I ever completely finished any of my larger projects! In 1993, at the age of sixty-one, I decided to take early retirement. Along with my model engineering, I had also begun establishing myself as a piano teacher. I didn't even have to advertise and the music business just snowballed. I am happy to say that I helped many children to pass their grade

exams and at as low a cost as I could manage on. It was inevitable that, during this period, my workshop activities were greatly reduced, but my interest never waned and I became a keen member – and eventually Chairman – of the Liphook Modellers Club.

Disaster strikes

As I approached seventy, I tapered down the piano teaching. In one respect, it had become quite a tie, restricting our holiday periods to the same time as school holidays. It was time for a serious return to the workshop! But it was at this time that I developed a pain in my upper left arm. At first I put it down to 'repetitive strain injury', as I had been busily fitting some flooring in the bungalow roof-space and I had been using my left arm to pull myself up the loft ladder. My sixty-ninth birthday drew close and, in celebration, all the family was invited to mid-day Sunday lunch. To 'make room', I decided to 'just pop this in the attic' – just a box, nothing too heavy, no problem. But as I pushed upwards, my left arm just snapped like a carrot. I was in a great deal of pain, so had no choice but to call an ambulance, by which I was swiftly transported to the local A&E department. That ruined plans for the Sunday lunch of course – and

started me off on one of life's more traumatic experiences.

On the Bank Holiday Monday, my arm was drilled and a pin inserted, with retainers at each end. At least, from vast experience, I could remark that it was a 'proper engineering job'! But it transpired that my arm bone had become weakened by a tumour. Upon investigation, the specialists decided that I was suffering from prostate cancer, while a bone scan indicated just how my bones were being attacked by the secondary cancer. My first reaction to all this was to wonder if all this had started as a result of my twelve months on Christmas Island some forty years and more previously?

(Sadly, Ray was unable to complete his story, passing away in January 2007. A couple of years before that, he mentioned to me that he had once served on Christmas Island and had just recently attended a reunion of personnel who had also served there. I asked him if he'd write a contribution about both the reunion and his service and, despite his illness, he made a major effort to write the tale above. I have edited this from Ray's personal hand-written notes and hope I have done justice to a very nice gentleman. Ed.)

Return From Germany (1963)

by Pete Gripton, 56B

(Readers of previous OBANs may recall that my spell of service in BAOR came to a shuddering halt, when I was told that I had become 'a security risk'. Hence I was now sent back to Arborfield to change my trade stream from Radar to Control Equipment.)

As we returned from Celle to Reading in April '63, my wife Joyce would have been around six months pregnant, so it must have been a great relief to her, returning to the 'bosom of her family'. With me about to start a conversion training course at Arborfield, we were able to stay with her parents for a short while, at their little home in 17 Queens Cottages, just off the town centre in Reading. At the time, Joyce's older sister Janet was having marriage problems, but did own her own house at Woodley. I guess we must have looked around in Reading for a 'hiring', there being no Army quarters available, much as it had been in Germany. I can recall looking over one large flat up near the old Elm Park football stadium, but it

was dark and cavernous, hardly anything to write home about. As it was, things fell into place quite nicely, as Jan kindly offered us the use of her house at No.1 Coleman's Moor Lane, while I think she went off to stay with another sister, Eileen, and her husband Mike, at their place in Caversham for a while.

So we moved into the house in Woodley on May 11th 1963. As we were 'renting' the house, it qualified as a hiring in Army terms, so they paid a special addition to my wage to cover that hire charge – which of course went straight to Jan, so we were all more than happy with that arrangement. 'Number 1' was right on the corner of a junction, with a fair bit of garden and certainly very comfortable for just the two of us, and so we settled down to virtually a 'civilian' style of life. Arborfield wasn't too far away, so I bought a 'moped' (*Paloma?*) and began riding it to and from work, a distance of some five miles each way. Brian Robbins (Janet's errant husband!) had left behind

an old leather 'flying jacket', complete with thick fur collar, which I wore on the moped. It was warm enough, but hardly waterproof, so I got a few soakings for my pains. That 'funky moped' was hardly the most reliable form of transport either, the plug used to foul up quite often on the two-stroke mixture, so I was always having to stop, remove the plug and clean it up!

There was a Staff Sergeant (whose name may have been 'Key'?) on the permanent staff who also lived in the Woodley area, and he was kind enough to give me a lift in his car on the odd occasion. I think his car was one of the old 'Ford Populars', which were probably amongst the first mass-produced family cars in the country. The course at Arborfield was a bit of a 'doddle' for me, after all I'd already trained as a Radar Mechanic, so going through the basics of Control Equipment electronics and electrics was more or less bread and butter stuff. Except for 'servo-mechanisms',

under Mr David Rowley, who seemed to make the subject into a complete mystery – but then, that may have been down to me!

The rest of the lads on my course were 'first timers' and I can only recall a few of them. There were two Fijians, one's name was Simpson and the other was a great guy, very good sportsman, by the name of Jim Vakatali. There was a chap from Jamaica too – he was actually white, but definitely spoke the island *patois*. Then there was another tall West Indian lad called Eric Ricketts, he actually came from Stroud in Gloucestershire and it was only years later that I found out that he was also an ex-apprentice. *(Eric's photo appeared in OBAN 14, part of an article by Barrie King of 60A. As mentioned, Eric was very tall and I believe he must have played basketball for the Corps – anyone got any news of him?)*

One fond memory was of sitting in the 5 Batt NAAFI canteen at morning break time, stuffing shillings into the jukebox and playing, and singing along with, over and over again, the Beatles' *'I want to hold your hand'*. Those were the days of 'Merseybeat' music, with pop groups from

Liverpool Institute, a couple of years behind me. Where did I go wrong?)

Having eventually completed my trade conversion course, I was able to persuade REME Records that, because I had been forced to change trade, I was now at a disadvantage in the seniority stakes, when compared to my peers. This was resolved by my being allowed to stay on at Arborfield for an extended tour, in order that I could attend an 'upgrading' course at my new trade, now known as 'CET' (Control Equipment Technician). That started in January 1964. Once again, I cannot recall all the members of that course, but I do know that Bob Ord and Dick Emmett were part of it – two guys I had known at 'boys' school' a few short years earlier. The official title of the course included the terms 'Fd', which must have indicated 'Field', and 'Up' for 'upgrading', as well as a '9' to show that we were the ninth course of that type. Needless to say, this soon got converted, so that we were popularly known as '*Fed up 9*'!

Serving at Bordon (1964 - 66)

As the end of my upgrading course at

and thankfully that's just what I ended up with! And so, around the middle of May 1964, I was posted as a Corporal CET to SEME Bordon, down in darkest Hampshire.

My arrival at SEME (School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering) was a bit of a shock to the system, to say the least. As far as I remember, I had travelled down there with a travel warrant that involved me using three separate buses – Reading to Camberley, then one to Aldershot, and a final one south to Bordon. I booked in at the RDO (Reception and Dispersal Office) and was sent to occupy a bunk in a barrack room at the far end of the parade square. From there, I'd been told that I could get changed into civvies and go back home, as I had rather inconveniently arrived at a holiday long weekend! (The inconvenience is all yours, I thought to myself!)

However, just as I was happily changing in the corner bunk room, who should arrive but a jumped-up five-foot nothing Sergeant of the permanent staff – an almost exact replica of Sgt Fred Silver from my old boys' school days! The room I was in was apparently one occupied by Army Catering Corps (ACC) cooks, who were probably the world's worst offenders when it comes to personal hygiene and overall tidiness. I hadn't really looked into the barrack room, too eager to get back home, but now this Sergeant was pointing it out to me. It was certainly a shambles, smelly cast-off clothes and stuff piled high everywhere, no semblance of the orderliness that I'd always been accustomed to. And to cap it all, this Sergeant was yelling at me that, as 'the room Corporal', I wouldn't be allowed to return home until the place was tidied up!

After he'd charged out in a cloud of steam, spewing expletives, I realised that these cooks had probably gone off themselves on leave and that any 'tidying' was obviously down to yours truly – having been 'in charge of' the room for all of five minutes maximum! In a none-too happy mood, I marched down to the RDO and managed to gain the attention of this Major, immaculately dressed in civvies – he was just about on his way home for the same weekend. I told him my sob story and he was immediately on my side – he told me not to worry, he would sort things out with the Sergeant the following week – and kindly offered me a lift as far as Fleet, where he lived! I jumped at the chance of course, took the lift and he dropped me off at a bus-stop from where I



Paul (now Sir Paul) McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr – 'The Beatles' in their heyday – whatever happened to Grippio?

Liverpool and the surrounding area sweeping the world with their versions of rock'n'roll. As well as the Beatles, there were such others as Gerry and the Pacemakers; the Swinging Blue Jeans; the Searchers; the Merseybeats – I could go on and on, it really was Merseyside that ruled the musical world in those early Sixties. *(I must admit to a certain amount of bias here, as both George Harrison and Paul McCartney had been students at the*

Arborfield approached, I again went back to REME Records with a bit of a sob story, bemoaning the fact that I was missing out on completion of my training for the Ordinary National Certificate (ONC), for which I had started in 1959. *(I didn't mention the fact that my earlier failure of the ONC had been down to wasting such a lot of time in getting up to the sort of jests and japes that we 'brats' did in those days!)* I asked for a posting in England

was able to travel directly back to Reading.

Following that leave weekend, I was moved down to Martinique Barracks (which has long since disappeared) and now found myself in charge of a room full of Nigerian students! Even with the weird music they insisted on playing, they were far easier to live with than ACC cooks, I can assure you! The other barrack rooms (spider-style, just like boys' school) were full of guys on their upgrading courses, either Vehicle Mechanics or Armourers. I remember going out with a few of them on a couple of occasions, as they all seemed to have their own cars with BFG number plates – which was handy!

Once I accompanied a car full to the 'Seven Thorns' public house, up on the old A3 between Hindhead and Liphook. It was a bit of a dive in those days, mainly used by 'girls' from the nearby QARANC barracks, long since closed and demolished. If you wanted to date one of these 'girls', it appeared to be quite difficult to me – they seemed far more interested in each other! The pub later closed down and was converted into a restaurant called 'The Spaniard', but this eventually fell victim to a fire. The burned-out shell of the building remains there to this day. (*Brian 'Roly' Wells mentioned this in OBAN36.*) Another night out almost turned into a disaster. Again I jumped into a car with a gang of lads, not knowing where we'd end up. The eventual destination turned out to be Camberley and a dance-hall called 'The Agincourt'. Completely unknown to me was the fact that it was the place to be if you were up for a fight! The local tearaways and the soldiers from nearby barracks used the place as a venue for letting off steam. Thankfully, it must have been a quiet night when we arrived – and we were able to get out just as things were hotting up!

I become an 'instructor'

As a CET, there wasn't much work at Bordon, so I was asked to report to the Electrics Department, for an interview with 'The Chief' (civilian supervising instructor), an ex-Navy guy by the name of Bob Hunt. He was a gruff sort of fellow, seemed absolutely ancient to me, and came with a built-in hearing aid! He asked if I'd be interested in doing some classroom instruction on basic electrics and I agreed to give it a try. The rest, as they say, is history!

I started life as an 'instructor' by sitting in with various other instructors, a lot of

them were elderly gentlemen, full of experience, and I seemed to fit in very well, even though I was probably the youngest-ever member of staff at the time! Around the same time, I was promoted to Sergeant and eventually was able to face up to my first classroom full of students. The trade of electrician (V & P - vehicle and plant was the term used) had just been abandoned and vehicle mechanics were now given responsibility for fault-finding and fixing on vehicle electrical systems – and it was at this level that I started my instructional career. It wasn't long before I decided that 'this was the life for me' and that I would leave the Army at my nine-year point in 1967 and try to get a job as a civvie instructor.

Back in those days, the Electrical Section was located right at the top end of the camp, it had a two-tier flight of steps going up to it. There was one old chap, Jeff Shove, who suffered from emphysema. He could just about manage to make it up the first flight of steps in one go, then needed to rest a while before he made it all the way. And then he'd lean against the rail and light up a cigarette! I think that it was eventually arranged to deliver him by car at the back entrance, adjacent to the battery shop, to prevent his morning climb! (*No truth in the rumour that he went into the battery shop for a fast booster charge!*)

Most of those old civvy instructors I remember with affection. Reg Morrison was probably the first one that I 'sat in' with, as I set off to learn the ropes. He was resident in a practical classroom and knew all there was to know about ignition systems. Frank Gillians had his leg in 'an iron', so clumped about the place a bit. Joe Coleman ran the battery shop for more years than anyone was able to remember. The dapper Vic Lawrence, with his military-style moustache, and the cadaverous Bill Graves could always be seen with either a ciggie or cigar in their mouths – and were famous for their games of bridge played every lunch break. Then there was dithery Wally Long – known to all as 'Lolly Wong'! Bill Pepperall ran the 'B' vehicle layouts – he was to later die whilst on holiday in Spain with Pat McGuirk. (Pat himself later left to run a guest-house down at Ilfracombe in North Devon and quite a few of the Electrical Section had a coach-trip down there one weekend in May 1979.)

Norman Dibb was a gentle soul, wouldn't say 'boo' to a goose, who later became one of the supervisors. His one regret in life was that he couldn't work out

just how a single-phase motor was able to work! One of the worst instructors you could meet was Les 'Dodger' Green, although one could like him a lot as a character. He used to smoke this old pipe and was interested only in railways and engines – how he ever held down a job as an instructor, I'll never know. I had occasion once to deliver a message to one of his students and, when I walked into the classroom, there was Les, drawing on the blackboard, while all his 'students' were apparently fast asleep – or pretty near it! I'll give Les one thing though – his blackboard drawings of the RB310 control box were a thing of beauty and a joy forever!

On the personal side, I was also able to finally gain my ONC by going to Guildford Technical College on day-release from my job. That in itself was a bit of a struggle, as getting to Guildford each day involved a very early start, to catch a bus into Farnham. From there I would catch a train into Guildford – a journey that had to be repeated in reverse in the evening. However, one of the guys on the course was about my age, named Ralph and ex-Navy, who had this big motor-bike. I got friendly with him, as most of the others were a lot younger, and on a number of occasions he would give me a lift back along the A31 'Hog's Back' road between Guildford and Farnham at the end of the day. I can remember sitting on the back of his bike, doing 'a ton', with my briefcase sort of trailing in the slipstream behind us! Later, I found that there was a guy from Bordon on another course at Guildford, who owned one of those new-fangled Citroen cars with the hydraulic suspension – and I soon began to travel with him in a lot more style and comfort, as well as being door-to-door!

First Army quarter

When I had arrived at Bordon, my wife, Joyce, and I were pretty pleased to be soon offered an Army 'pad' – the term used for married quarter. By that time, having two stripes up and a young baby too, I was owner of enough 'points' to qualify for the quarter. And so we moved into No. 9 Exmoor – known locally as Coronation Street! These houses were built in a long terrace and must have been put up around the time of the Boer War! They were pretty dark inside and very old-fashioned. We lit a fire to heat the water – and were still waiting for it to get hot about three weeks later – I'm not joking either! We were later shown the trick required – you shoved a screwed-up

Sunday newspaper up the chimney, set fire to it - and this would clear the soot from the chimney! We never did try it though, being pretty frightened of setting the place on fire! Thankfully it wasn't too long, well six months actually, before we moved to No.4 Oakley Road early in 1965 - an absolute palace by comparison. It even had a garden at the back and was reasonably well appointed. And of course by then I had the benefit of three stripes on my arm, which made life a little more comfortable with good money coming in. And here I must confess that I did actually use the burning newspaper trick on a couple of occasions - and I tell you folks, it worked a treat!

A Wednesday afternoon with the Army has always traditionally been 'sports afternoon' and at Bordon I used to make use of that break to do the shopping! From Oakley Road, I could reach the NAAFI Shop in no time at all. I remember staggering home from there, carrying a couple of large 'real' shopping bags - not the disposable plastic ones used today - both filled with the week's supplies and costing less than a fiver for the lot! If we had a free weekend, we'd 'take the bus' up to Reading and stop with Mum and Dad. In fact it was two buses, 'the green one' (Aldershot & District) as far as Aldershot, where we'd change over at the bus station and get 'the red one' (Thames Valley Traction). The journey used to take a couple of hours in all, but it all seemed so normal as we didn't have a car then.

One episode that occurred during those years as a military instructor is well worth a mention - though it still brings tears to my eyes! One of the 'new' vehicles being brought into service then was the FV432 - FV standing for Fighting Vehicle. It was - and still is - a troop carrier, but was also adapted for many other roles. These included a Self-propelled gun (the FV433 'Abbot'), the FV434 Recovery vehicle and

others fitted with 'Green Archer' radar sets and missile launchers. The chief military instructor at the time was Artificer Sergeant Major (ASM) H A V Williams, who later became Mr Harry Williams, the Head of Department of the Engineering Science Department.

One afternoon, the ASM and I went up the Armoured Vehicle section to check out some electrical circuits on one of those FV432s. While in the process, I was suddenly hit by an almighty pain in my side, it felt as though I'd been run through with a sword - and then someone was twisting it! I was obviously as white as a sheet and must have appeared to be dying. Harry had a couple of other guys to help me into his car and immediately dashed me down to the nearest medical assistance, which happened to be at Longmoor Camp, just up the road to where we now live. Anyway, the Medical Officer diagnosed a 'kidney stone' and gave me a pain-killing injection and sent me home to bed. Harry drove me home to Oakley Road and, by the time we got there, I was so 'knocked out' by the injection that Joyce thought I'd been brought home drunk! Whatever it was, it worked and I was right as rain the next morning.

Being on the permanent staff at SEME Bordon brought me into contact with lots of guys who I'd previously known and in fact I even ended up teaching some of them over the next few years! One of the earliest was Klaus Pennington, who must have been one of those vehicle mechanics now having to learn electrics. During my time there, one day I was introduced to a new civvie instructor, just arrived, and he turned out to be Colin Drasutis. Amazing coincidence - not only had he and I gone to the Liverpool Institute, but we had also served at boys' school together, where he made boy RSM. And now here we were, both instructing on the same subjects at Bordon. Colin had been invalided out of

the Army, having caught some sort of horrific stomach-bug over in the Far East. Prior to coming to Bordon, he had been working as a civvie electrician at the Command Workshop up in Liverpool - at Daysbrook Barracks, if I remember correctly. *(We are both retired now of course, but Colin still lives at Liphook, just a few miles away from my home in Greatham.)*

1966 and all that

Time passed by quickly and Joyce was able to present me with another daughter, Michelle, in February of 1966 - the same year that Everton won the FA Cup after a gap of thirty-three years and England won the World Cup for the first and, so far, only time. Things were obviously going too well and fate intervened with the news that I was going to be posted to Berlin with one of those Hussar regiments! Now this didn't go down too well at all. After all, I was due out of 'the mob' the following summer, I intended to pass directly into civvie street doing the same job as I was now doing, so what was the point of going back to Germany for just a few months?

And so I began to fight the move, using all the ammunition that I could lay my hands on - and eventually the posting was cancelled. But then, about six weeks later, I was told that I was going back to Fallingbommel - the dreaded 'effing bee'! The logic of this has always escaped me, but it was to no avail. REME Records stated that there was *"a severe lack of CETs at my rank and experience in BAOR"*, so at the end of October 1966 I found myself back at 'Fally', with the Royal Scots Greys, a tank regiment of long and illustrious history. As it turned out, despite my reticence at being there, those few months with 'The Greys' weren't too bad at all! But that's another tale

Priorities?

An ex-boy, dating back to one of the Fifties intakes, loves to fish. Sitting in his boat one day, he hears a voice say, *"Please pick me up"*. Looking around, he can't see any one. He thinks he dreamt it, but then hears the voice say again, *"Please pick me up"*. He looks in the water and there, floating on the top, is a frog. *"Are you talking to me?"* asks our hero. *"Yes, I'm talking to you. Pick me up, kiss me and I'll turn into the most beautiful woman you have ever seen. I'll then give you more sexual pleasure that you ever could have dreamed of"*. He looks at the frog for a short time, reaches over, picks it up carefully and places it in his front breast pocket. The frog yells, *"What, are you nuts? Didn't you hear what I said? I said kiss me and I'll give you sexual pleasures like you have never had"*. Our hero opens his pocket, looks at the frog and says, *"Nah - at my age, I'd rather have a talking frog!"*

After Arborfield

by Frank Webb 63c

My life at Arborfield was much the same as described in many articles that have been written before, so I'll try not repeat it all again. Needless to say, I faced the same future as everyone, leaving home for the first time at the age of fifteen years - fear of the unknown; what I had let myself in for; will I cope? But I'd soon find out! Once settled in, I soon began to enjoy life there, but I'm sure there were times I hated it, all the bulling, room inspections and parades, plus all the screaming and shouting that goes with it. However, after leaving Arborfield in 1966, I soon realised what a fine grounding I had received in preparation for my future career. I was fortunate to be selected to be on the first Apprentice course for Aircraft Technicians. This trade was new to the School and, at times, we felt like guinea pigs. Little did I know at the time that the training, whether it be Drill, Education, Trade or Adventure, would stand me in such good stead later.

After leaving Arborfield, I was posted to 72 Aircraft Workshops REME at Middle Wallop. There, I worked under strict supervision for three months on the Major Inspection Line (MIL). It was great getting 'hands on' experience, albeit under a grumpy 'Tiffy', an old hand who had forgotten he was a new boy once. (*We've all been there! Ed.*) However, it kept you on your toes so as not to get things wrong. The highlight of my stay on the MIL was all the checking and testing after the aircraft was rebuilt. It included intense ground and air testing. Being the 'new boy on the block', I was invited to go up on the first air test. I thought, "*What a great bunch*", to let me go first. Of course, they had been through it all before and knew what was coming!

I soon realised, after we departed the dispersal point, that they were laughing up their sleeves. It didn't take me long to use the white paper bag at the back of the seat and I handled it quite well at all angles. I hate to think what colour green I was after landing again. Sufficient to say that it 'made their day'. Well, I thought - 'tick the box' and put that down as experience. But my pleasure of getting through that safely was short

lived, after discovering that was only the initial flight test - and there was plenty more to come. Yes, I was 'volunteered' for all of the air tests - I guess until I ran out of either vomit or underpants! The ultimate test was the high altitude test flight, to ensure the engine could provide power to lift the helicopter to its ceiling of 10,000 feet. '*That's not high*', I hear some say, but I can assure you that, in a small '*Scout*', it's terrifyingly bl**y high! Especially so when you have been briefed that at that height, if there's an engine fire, the only way down is by parachute!

Having passed through my probation period, I was upgraded to Class II Technician, whereby I was no longer 'wet nursed'. But although I could now sign for my own work, it still had to be checked and counter-signed by a Class I Tech. Time passed rapidly at Wallop



Frank, aged 18, posing in front of a Scout AH1 of 8 Flight AAC at Falaise, Little Aden in 1967

and I had been gaining experience all the time. My comfort zone was soon to end, when I was informed that I was going to get the chance to 'get my knees brown' by going to the Middle East; however that was to be no summer holiday either, as I found I was on my way to Aden. And, having arrived at 15 Flight Army Air Corps at Falaise airfield, I realised I wasn't going to be working on helicopters at all - but on the '*Beaver*' fixed wing aircraft. That was another learning curve to face, but I soon settled in to the real Army life and got on with

the job, learning and gaining experience all the time. The work and climate was great and I still look back on that first overseas posting as the best of my career. I remained in Aden until the final withdrawal, towards the end of 1967.

The Flight was split into two before leaving Aden. One half remained to move to the Persian Gulf, while the remainder returned to Middle Wallop, where the *Beavers* were stripped down, inspected, repaired and rebuilt again. This time the air testing sprung no surprises, as now I had done it all before. After this, the Flight formed up again to be the first Army unit at RAF Topcliffe, in Yorkshire. Of course we were a novelty to the RAF boys and their larger '*Varsitys*'. It was all good fun and we mixed and worked together very well. Topcliffe was another favourite spot of mine and where I met my first wife.

From Topcliffe I found my way out to the Middle East again, this time Cyprus. I joined the UNFICYP Flight at Nicosia, working this time on the '*Sioux*' helicopter. Another big learning curve, but I soon got into the swing of things and, of course, was tutored for a few weeks on the new type, until I found my feet. Cyprus I found delightful, especially around Troodos, Famagusta and Kyrenia. My stay in Cyprus came to an end far too quickly, I would love to have stayed longer. I returned to RAF Topcliffe for a short while before I was off again, this time to Detmold in Germany.

I found myself again in a 2nd Line Workshop, this time 71 Aircraft Workshop REME. By this time, I had already completed my MTC Class 1 course at the Depot, the least said about that the better - not one of my best times in the Army! I had also passed my Class 1 Trade and so was promoted Sergeant. This time in the Workshops, I was heading a Major Line Crew, carrying out Major Inspections on *Scouts*, *Sioux* and *Beavers*. I enjoyed my new job and got stuck in to the work eagerly. Of course it was not all work and no play; there was the regular workshop exercise in Fussen, in Bavaria, and other trips out skiing etc.



14th/20th Hussars Air Squadron at Herford, BAOR, just prior to the return of 14th/20th to Bovington UK. The Air Squadron then became 'B' Flight, 654 Squadron AAC.

After three years at Detmold, I was on the move yet again, this time to Herford, just a few kilometres up the road. I found myself back on *Sioux* as a Crew Chief with 14th/20th Air Squadron. This was to be all new to me, supporting the 14th/20th and their *Scorpion* light tanks, in the field on exercises all over the place. Like most other units in Germany, the inevitable tour to Northern

Ireland came around all too often. I completed one tour fortunately at Ballykelly. The work there was so intense that I found time passed pretty quickly. The highlight was the Regiment's Colonel-in-Chief, HRH Princess Anne, visiting the Regiment after returning to Herford. She turned out to be great fun, as she always liked to hang around the helicopters.

From Germany I was posted back to Middle Wallop to Aircraft Engineering Training Wing, as a member of the permanent staff. I spent my last two years there, maintaining the 'live' aircraft used for training students. I used my time there usefully and was able to gain my Full Tech Certificate City & Guilds in Aeronautical Technology. Having done and seen everything I wanted to in the Army, I didn't seek to remain and decided to leave and enter 'Civvy Street' as a Licensed Aircraft Engineer. Which is where I am today, some 44 years after commencing at Arborfield.

Although I rarely get my hands dirty any more, having been promoted to Engineering Superintendent, managing two of Shell Petroleum Development Company's Helicopter Operations at Port Harcourt and Warri in Nigeria, I still enjoying being around aircraft. I could go on indefinitely about my career since leaving the Army, but perhaps another time, as I think it will fill a few more pages of OBAN!

(We're up for that Frank, as long as you are! Ed.)

A Second World War Childhood

by Frank Fendick (45A)

On the first day of September 1939, my father was called up and we four children were evacuated. Thus my mother started the day with her family and ended it alone. I remember that we all had tags with our names on. I can't remember getting to the station, but I can remember the seemingly never-ending walk (actually only about a quarter of a mile), carrying my luggage. That was from Three Bridges station (which actually had four bridges) to the school (which seemed entirely made of glass), from where we were to be assigned our new living quarters.

We four were all sent to different homes; I went to a Mrs Chitty. She had a son about my age and I remember being jealous because his feet were larger than mine! My only other memory of that house was peeling spuds, after which I was told off for not taking the eyes out. I had never peeled spuds before, I was only nine years old. Whether my mother always did it ("*It is quicker to do it myself*") might well have been her attitude)

or whether my elder sister (aged 11) did it, I can't really remember. I wasn't happy with Mrs Chitty, so I was transferred to Mrs Bull, who lived in a modern bungalow and had chickens in the garden. I was very happy there. My memories of Three Bridges are:

Watching the fighters with their vapour trails, twisting and turning as they fought, and cheering when one of theirs was shot down. We could easily recognise the *Spitfires* from the shape of their wings, but it wasn't so easy to distinguish the *Hurricanes* from the enemy. All we boys collected spent bullets and shrapnel.

Sheltering under something like a table-top, placed at a slant against an inside wall when the bombs were dropping - we never bothered with the (Anderson?) shelter that had been built in the garden. It just never occurred to me that we might be hit.

Being hated by the schoolmaster, Mr John Lloyd, and hating him in return. He once threw a cricket ball at me (he would

say he was trying to hit the wicket, but he and I know better). As I turned my back on the ball, it hit me in the back of the neck and knocked me out. From that time on I was always afraid to play cricket. On another occasion, he made me come up to the front of the class and take my Wellington boots off. He held them up to the class and said he didn't want boys coming to class in that state. In fairness to him, I had come to class wading through the ditches rather than along the road. The other incident was when someone had trodden in wet concrete and his heel hadn't quite cleared the new cement. Mr Lloyd inspected the shoes of all the class and, of course, it turned out to be me! I fantasized about meeting this monster when I was grown-up and giving him the hiding of his life - "*Rest in pieces*".

Other memories include:

Throwing stones, with a gang of other boys, at the hut of a tramp who lived in the woods. I still feel guilty about that.

Having to go out every Sunday afternoon, regardless of the weather - I had no idea why. Mr Bull was a night-worker at a munitions factory. Mrs Bull, worrying about an older boy who used to call for me to go to school. One day, coming back through the woods, he took my belt and wanted me to take my shorts down. I didn't know what that was all about, but I ran home and that was the last time he called for me to go to school.

In 1941, at the tender age of 11, I went to join the Duke of York's Royal Military School (the 'Dukies'), whose permanent home is in Dover, but which was evacuated to the Saunton Sands Hotel in Devon. My memorable times at the Dukies include:

Half the school went swimming when we weren't supposed to. The following morning, on parade, the RSM said, "*Hands up all those who went swimming yesterday*". I was the only one to put my hand up and was put on a charge (I can't remember the punishment but it wasn't a caning). The school tried hard to teach me that it is not always best to tell the truth, but I never learned this important lesson - I am still as tactless as ever!

After I won a hard boxing match, 'Cookie' Rowe (who was one of the hard-drinking members of staff) asked me what I had received as a prize. When I replied, "*Nothing*", he gave me half-a-crown, which would be the equivalent of about £20 today. 'Cookie' had probably had a few drinks. I kept that coin for some thirty years, but it was lost when I went abroad.

We used to walk the two miles to Croyde, in order to buy freshly baked ha'penny buns, straight out of the oven. Unfortunately, after we had walked the two miles back, we were inevitably starving again!

After the Dukies, I joined the Army Apprentices' School, Arborfield, as a boy soldier in 1945, at the age of 15, just in time to serve for six months during the war and thus qualify for the War Medal.

(Frank kindly sent the following separate item, but I have put them together as one article - hope that's okay Frank? Ed.)

Beginnings

How does one begin to write an essay about 'beginnings'? Think about different types of beginning: Adam & Eve, a baby, sperm meets the egg, boy meets girl, starting at school or at a new job, meeting one's future wife, the beginning of the end — decrepitude and dying. I must choose one or more of these topics to write about. What about 'the beginning of a book' - the importance of the first paragraph, in gathering the attention of the reader? How about 'beginning to be a paratrooper'? Let me see what I can write about that.

The first problem was getting past the medical - my eyesight wasn't good enough. I remember lining up for the medical and listening to the guys in front of me, reading the chart. I tried hard to remember the letters, but didn't succeed. The doctor said that I had failed - I could probably only read the large letter at the top and maybe the next line below. I begged the doctor to let me through, but he was adamant that I'd failed. I refused to leave the room and eventually he got so fed-up with me that he said, "*Oh, go on then*".

In practice my bad eyesight was no problem - until the day I was the first one out of the aircraft! For some reason, there was no smoke to indicate the direction of the wind and, because I was first, there

were no parachutes on the ground which could tell me which way the wind was blowing. One must pull on the rigging-lines on the side from which the wind is blowing; air then spills out of the canopy on the other side and slows down one's speed over the ground. It is the speed along the ground that is dangerous, not the speed of falling - that doesn't vary. The officer was shouting, "*Pull down Number 1*". But which side? I had no idea. When we were lined up afterwards, the officer asked, "*Who was Number 1, port?*" "*Me, Sir*", I replied. "*Oh, right*". I was a sergeant, so he couldn't tell me off in front of the men.

But back to the beginning: There is a two-week selection that one must pass before going for parachute training. The first week is mainly in the gym and the second week on marches, runs and assault courses. The first week wasn't too bad, as I had been to military schools at the 'Dukies' and Arborfield. I was also a boxer, and knew most of the exercises. But the second week was a nightmare: I could hardly keep going. I remember, on the log-race, where a team of guys run with a tree-trunk, the team ended-up dragging me as well as the tree-trunk.

At the end of the selection, the names of those who have failed are read out to go and see the Company Commander - my name was on the list. The gentleman asked me what I would say if he offered me a re-course. This meant doing the whole punishing two weeks again. I responded, "*I would jump at the chance, Sir*", to which he countered, "*OK then. You've passed*".

That was the 'beginning' of my six years in the Paras.

A Happy Life – by Sir Henry Wotton

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will.
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Whose passions not his master's are,
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Not tied unto the world with care
Of public fame, or private breath.

(Henry Wotton was an author, diplomat and spy; it was he who warned King James VI of Scotland of a plot against his life – and was rewarded with a knighthood when James became King James I of England. Reading his words, I thought myself that the title could well have been 'The Apprentice'! Ed.)

The Budding Apprentice

by Don Walker 45A

Listening to the wireless, just after tea one summer's evening in 1944, I believe 'Dick Barton' had just finished and I heard an announcement that they required boys to join the Army Technical School (Boys). Amongst the items they listed to encourage budding soldiers was 'good technical training, good leave and plenty of opportunities to play sport'. For reasons much more obvious later – they never mentioned pay! Although at the time my father was trying to get me an apprenticeship in the local Central Ordnance Depot Workshop, I was impressed by what the ATS (Boys) had to offer. Dare I try my luck and apply?

After persuading my parents that I was serious, I applied and eventually went off to join numerous other 14-year olds to sit the entrance exam in Reading. It was with great delight that I passed. Next step, the medical. Unknown to myself, my parents thought I had no chance in passing that, as they always considered that I was, as the saying then was, "delicate". I had suffered several illnesses as an infant and my parents assumed I was still unfit, especially for Army service. They were duly dismayed when I triumphantly arrived home, waving a piece of paper declaring me 'A1'. "Impossible", said my mother, "they don't know what they're doing". My father "had to do something", but what? Living in an Army town and my father working in the COD, someone suggested to him that the local Army Medical Centre might give me another medical, to either confirm or deny the A1 status of the boy!

So off I went, to have a repeat of 'breathe in', 'breathe out', 'cough' and all the other various jargon known only to the medical profession. The MO declared the findings of the first medical as correct and that I was indeed A1, something that even I was beginning to doubt! This point cleared up, I awaited the arrival of my joining instructions, together with my train warrant and bus pass to Arborfield. It was these circumstances that led me to arrive at the gates of the ATS (Boys) on 21st February 1945, as a young lad of fourteen going on fifteen, 5'2" tall and weighing just 5 stone – not everyone's idea of a fearless fighting soldier!

Along with the others of intake 45A, I had signed on the dotted line for '8 and 4' from the age of eighteen years. What would I do with the whole shilling I was given? What was I letting myself in for? I'm sure my mother thought I'd be home for tea that day, but I never made it out of the Camp for

a month! They gave me an 8-digit number to remember, 45A was the first to have that I think, the '44 intake had only seven. I was put in 'C' Coy along with, in alphabetical order, Ades at one end and Walker, Ward, Woodrow and Wilson at the other. At pay parades they always started at the front of the alphabet, so those last four were the standard witnesses! I think we were lost when, on rare occasions, they started paying from the back – and all for 4/- (20p) a week.

Kitted out in the best of Army tradition, with "clothes I would grow into" (but I never seemed to catch up with), I started on a career in the British Army. I knew it would last at least seven years when I reached the age of eighteen (which seemed at the time a long way ahead). Or longer if I signed on to complete further service, which was the last thing in my thoughts at fourteen years of age. We were soon initiated into the mysteries of blanco, buckle and button cleaning, magic circles and toothbrush handles to bone the toe-caps of our boots. We learned how to put your trousers under the mattress, between cardboard, to get a sharp crease in them.

In the first year, I remember we also turned out some smart senior boys, having been 'educated' to blanco belts and polish boots of these third-year lads to as high a standard as they deemed necessary. It is amazing how such a menial chore took on additional importance knowing that, if you failed the required standard, you could find yourself being used as a rugby ball in the billet! Suffice to say that the learning process at the School, in practical, theoretical, trade, education, sport and life in general, was undertaken in a thoughtful, careful, serious or carefree attitude, depending upon the circumstances prevailing at the time.

I think we all had a 'sense of belonging' to the School and, in later years, when you arrived at a new posting in some far-off place and you were asked where you came from, ex-boys invariably replied with "Arborfield", "Chepstow" or "Harrogate". Direct recruits from civilian life always gave their own home town! It was sad to hear that there is no longer a School song, which was always performed with great gusto at football, rugby, hockey and boxing matches against our old adversary, Chepstow. It made us more competitive. There was always a bond and affinity wherever you went in the Army, between ex-boys from whatever School, and I hope that even in the modern updated version of the College, this affinity will

continue. It is certainly special to us old boys and I hope it will still have the same meaning to the lads in twenty years time.

We Arborfield boys could always reminisce on RSM McNally (I remember him and his wife teaching us to dance, so that we could participate in the dance at the Gym). Others like Provost Sgt Dransfield (always first to greet us off the bus), Sgt Herbie 'Digging Tonight' Paine (always won the Gardening Cup), Capt QM Ben Cook (never short of a story there), Peggy Crowe and her 'cookhouse girls', and 'Bomber' who looked after the horses. Then there was the day Gilbert the Shire horse swam in the static water tank – and the bad winter of 1947. I am sure that all subsequent intakes have their own memories and tales of their own times.

I would like to think that ex-boys have played an important role in shaping the REME, with their technical skills, discipline, sporting achievements and playing hard and fair. Long may the College thrive and continue this important role.

(Sadly, it was only ten or so years after Don's 'coming of age' tale was published in OBAN 3, that the College had to close its famous gates. But I happily add Don's story to the archive of memorable articles written in the pages of OBAN over the years, for the perusal of newcomers and latecomers to the Association. Ed.)

1939-45 Old Boys Reunion 2008

Following the continued success of our annual reunions, this year's event will be held at Alvaston Hall, Cheshire, from 13th October. If you have not yet received details - or know of anyone else who would like to do so, please contact me:

Les Scapens
261 Down Road
Portishead
Bristol
BS20 8HY

A Brief History of 'SPEC' - Student Performance Evaluation By Computer

During the mid-1970's, REME set up a study known as 'Ascot Rain' (Automatic Data Processing [ADP] for the Support and Control of Training). A number of projects was identified and one of them, involving the application of ADP to the selection and quality control of trainees, was allocated to the Princess Marina College (PMC) at Arborfield. Like the nearby School of Electronic Engineering (SEE), PMC had previous experience in similar work, using the old Elliott 803 computer, based within SEE. The HoD Quality Control at PMC, Mr Gerry Muldowney, advised Data Logic Ltd. on the requirements of a system of test validation, according to the laid-down 'Systems Approach to Training' (SAT). This would use an identification system for each individual item (question) contained in an item bank, based upon 'Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives'.

The outcome of this interchange was the production of a computer program that later became 'SPEC Mk 1'. It was written in a computer language known as Fortran/IV by *Data Logic*, running on a *Data General (DG) 'Nova'* minicomputer, mounted in a standard GPO frame. This took place in April 1977 on the 'old' College site, before being transferred to the new purpose-built PMC HQ building. (This is now called Hazebrouck Barracks East, and forms part of the School of Electronic & Aeronautical Engineering (SEAE), itself an amalgamation of the former SEE and the School of Aeronautical Engineering (SAE), which had moved from Middle Wallop.

Late in 1977, or early 1978, Gerry Muldowney gave a lecture to senior management at SEE. As the location of the 'Nova' at Arborfield had now been justified by the examination loading of PMC, SEE and the REME Officer's School, the SEE Commandant (Colonel F Spragg) concluded that SEE now wished to take up their share of computer usage. He ordered the setting up of a working party to bring this about, and after about six months of reviews and trials, SEE became a prime user of the 'SPEC' program.

The SEE operator for this computer usage was Mr WEN 'Bill' Pusey and, with the close co-operation of the PMC operator, Mr MJ 'Mike' Kapuscinski, maximum use was made of the 'Nova' over the next five years. 'SPEC Mk 1' was

a very effective tool, despite having only 64Kb of available memory and a storage capacity of 2 x 8" 256Kb floppy discs. Much work was entailed in the swapping over of disks for 'Test' and 'Text' maintenance and copying.

In 1980, the system was upgraded by the addition of a twin 5Mb hard disk device and improved software. This convinced the training staff at Arborfield that there was a need for a complete overhaul of the computer system to include automatic test paper generation, improved test records for both items and students, as well as revised operational procedures. This led to 'SPEC Mk 2', still running on the 'Nova' platform.

By 1981, *DG* had brought out their powerful 'Eclipse S140' computer, running under *DG's* own *Advanced Operating System (AOS)*. Also available was an Optical Mark Reader (OMR) from *DRS Ltd*, which read A4 sized paper sheets, rather than the previously used 40-column card reader associated with the old 'Nova' system. With other MoD sites now becoming interested in a similar system, it wasn't long before a SPEC system was installed at the following sites:

PMC & SEE at Arborfield, the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (SEME) at Bordon, and the Army Apprentice Colleges at Chepstow (Royal Engineers) and Harrogate (Royal Signals).

Early in 1982, with SEME having had their new system installed, *Data General Ltd* were invited to update and amend the 'SPEC' program at Bordon, to make it fit more concisely with their perceived method of operations. Mr P D 'Pete' Gripton, the 'SPEC' manager at SEME, in close liaison with Diane Lightfoot (later Cox) of *Data General*, brought out an updated version of 'SPEC', which met many of the needs of both SEME and other users. At the instigation of Pete Gripton, the Training Validation Officer (TVO) at SEME at that time, Maj Lucas Hellemanns (Canadian Land Forces), put up a case to the MoD for the setting up of a 'SPEC User Group' (SUG).

This was authorised, under the Chairmanship of Gerry Muldowney, still based at PMC Arborfield, with Mr Alan Atkins as Secretary for a number of years, followed by Mr Ian McKenzie, who has held that post right up until the present day

since Alan's retirement. Gerry Muldowney also retired, around 1989, and was succeeded by Dr Mike Motley up until 1996, before the present incumbent, Mr Geoff Snook, took the chair.

This User Group has met regularly over the past 17 years. Beside giving mutual assistance to all users and/or operators, the SUG has been instrumental in providing guidance to MoD staff on the priority of program revisions, development of the software, the purchase of hardware, and staff training. It has also generally provided the way forward on many training matters, all within limited financial resources for much of the time.

As a result of SUG discussions, a number of proposed enhancements were consolidated by 1984, leading to a later version of the program known as 'ENSPEC' - enhanced SPEC. The task of writing this software was given to *Data Logic*, and by now *Data General* had brought out a 'DG30' Desktop system, still capable of running the 'ENSPEC' system. This configuration was successfully tested and proved at SEME Bordon during 1985, with delivery to all sites in early 1986. The reduced costs on hardware now allowed further users to 'come on stream', in the shape of the School of Aeronautical Engineering (SAE), RSME Chatham, RE Minley Manor and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

During the following few years, many improvements were made to the operational procedures of 'SPEC' (or 'ENSPEC'), with the ability of users to write their own 'macro' programs in Business Basic. Developed by such personnel as Dave Robinson (Harrogate), Pete Gripton (Bordon) and Jim Ness (Chepstow), these macros became commonly used by other members of the User Group.

Eventually, it became evident that a replacement system would once again be required, as equipment reached the end of its life cycle. After some 'shopping around', it appeared that the best package available, once suitably modified to Army needs, was the 'TEAMS' system at HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent, run by the Fleet Air Arm. A project team was set up under the leadership of Colonel Rupert Smales, and later taken over by an SEO, Mr Mike Dean. With MoD forcing the issue of a 'Unix' operating system onto all

users, the TEAMS/A solution was eventually dropped, and a team was set up to re-write 'ENSPEC' to run on the *Unix* operating system, and the outcome of this was the present system of 'SPEX' – literally SPEC running on *Unix*. The hardware, supplied by ICL, was delivered and installed during the first half of 1994.

During the last five years, with the benefit of having its own SPEX Support Team (SST) of dedicated programmers, permanently based at Arborfield, 'SPEX' has been under constant revision and enhancement. In 1996, a multi-user version was introduced, giving security and integrity to the item banks held by the various trade disciplines. There is no doubt that over the time that first 'SPEC', then 'SPEX', has been in operation, it has

become the *de facto* system of Training Validation, and it was hoped that further development would eventually allow the input of a graphics package, for exam paper enhancement.

However, with the setting up of the Army Training and Recruiting Agency (ATRA), it was decided that all Individual Training Units (ITU's) would benefit from having the same computer package. To this effect, a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was set up, allowing a private company (EDS) to develop such a package – known as the 'Training and Financial Management Information System' (TAFMIS). Although there are obvious benefits, from the introduction of a networked configuration, plus standard e-mail and office automation packages, so

far the Internal Validation ('INVAL') part of 'TAFMIS' has not succeeded in replacing the functionality of 'SPEX'. With the ICL hardware unsupportable after the end of 1999, and OMR's which have no maintenance contract, the large training organisations at SEAE, SEME and RSME are 'sailing close to the wind' until a solution is found.

(This article is based upon some original notes by Bill Pusey (45A and 'Toy Soldier' par excellence) and subsequently updated by myself – Pete Gripton (56B). It is now out of date, as it was written as I prepared for my retirement from SEME in 2000. But I hope that it provides an insight into the way that computers were developed as a measuring tool in the training environment over a period of

The Rainy Day

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never wear;
The fine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never wear;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the day is dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart, and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

(I had missed my morning paper due to a late delivery and, after my annual flu jab, set off for the day's work. Since retiring, I have taken to doing some courier work, picking up and delivering engineering parts. This particular day was horrible! After a spell of quite pleasant autumn weather, the rain had returned with a vengeance, and I was pleased to arrive home, put my feet up, partake of a hot coffee – and read the paper! The above poem, featured in the day's paper and which was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, seemed to say it all! Ed.)

Class of '49 (A & B)

Gordon Bonner writes as follows:

May I please solicit your assistance in getting some form of notice published in *OBAN* and *Craftsman* upon the subject of a special get-together for those of us who enlisted in 1949. During the last reunion, the significance of 2009 (our 60th anniversary) led to the conclusion that we should gather together as many as are interested (including ladies) for a social weekend on either 5 or 12 September 2009.

A hotel in Stratford upon Avon has been identified as being near the centre of England for ease of travel. I have agreed to organise the event, which will have to be self-financing. Our intention is to contact as many as we can during 2008 and, depending on numbers, if there is sufficient interest, serious planning, with an agreed format and costing, will be worked up during January to March 2009.

So! Where are they now? We are looking for such as Terry Chaffer, Dave Fisher, Lofty Thornton, Joe Croft, Yank Boulter, Ginge Maynard, Geoff Dunn, Snookes Harding, Mush McComack and others of that ilk.

To register an interest, I can be contacted by E-Mail at gordon.bonner3@ntlworld.com.

The Moving Finger

by Jim Macdonald, 43A

'The moving finger writes and, having writ, moves on; nor all the world can alter one word of it'. That quote was in a book I once read. Following a couple of welcome remarks by Old Boys and a phone call from my eldest son, it would appear that my written efforts in OBAN 38 were fairly well received, with some surprise at reawakened memories that had been so easily forgotten by some. This has encouraged me to try again and I can only hope that the enclosed brings a smile to some and prods others to rack their brains and put pen to paper. I am once again grateful to Pete, who has offered to edit my scribbles. Some incidents stay in the mind, even though possibly best forgotten.

Accidents for instance, some of which, with a little common sense utilised at the time, could probably have been prevented – and others that could not. Although I feel a little apprehensive as to what some of our knowledgeable readers think, I'll make an effort to be as concise and factual as possible.

A few scrapes along the journey of life

In 1938, I borrowed a bike from Tony Eales. About 100 yards from his house in Motpur Park Road, I took a turn into Chilmark Gardens, which unknown to me had been recently resurfaced with loose gravel – a common repair practice in those days. As I turned the corner, the ground gave no grip and the bike seemed to develop a mind of its own. Consequently, I suffered a severe case of gravel rash to hands, knees, chin, nose and forehead, and ended up looking like a skinned rabbit. The pain that followed, with doctor and nurse delicately removing all the separate bits of gravel, ensured that the memory of the incident has stayed so vividly in my brain!

My last few weeks at Arborfield enabled me to pass my driving test. It wasn't long afterwards that the workshop personnel were tasked with moving a small convoy to Osmaston Barracks, just outside of Ashbourne, Derby, a journey of some seventy miles. It was a beautiful summer day with not much traffic on the road, when there came the distraction of a pretty young lady on a bike, her skirt blowing loosely in the wind. The bend approached so quickly that, suddenly, the lorry was slithering into a field and all I saw of the young lady was her waving to

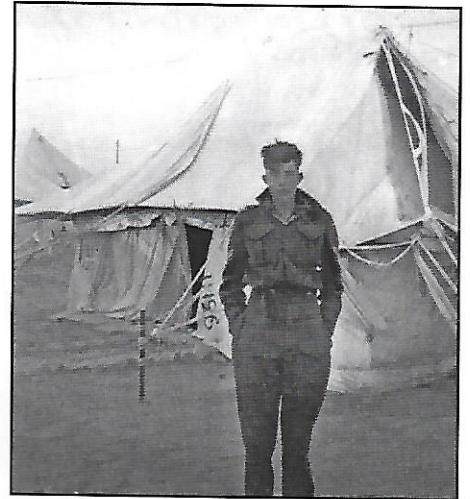
me as she went gaily on her way into the distance.

There was no proper fire-fighting equipment at Bestwood Lodge and the ASM decided that I should be sent to collect two foam tanks. These were each mounted on two large wheels, with an extra large bottle and a hose wound around some brackets. A handle protruded from the front, with which to mix the foam. Now the foam wasn't supposed to start 'foaming' until the handle was turned, but these devices were very temperamental. Anyway, we mounted one of these tanks on the lorry, with the handle resting on the tailboard and off we went. It wasn't until we arrived back that we found that the foam had activated, burst the hose, and left a ten-mile trail of foam back to where we'd come from! After lunch, we returned to collect the second device. This time we were much gentler in the handling, made sure it was securely fixed on the lorry, and drove with extra care. We got back just after knocking-off time, so we parked up just outside the workshop office and retired for the night. Next morning, there was a blanket of foam that covered the office windows and doorway! It was only then that we were told that we should have emptied the tanks of all contents before moving them.

Warmer climes

The next mishap occurred in the warmer climes of Palestine. A vehicle had broken down a few miles from camp and I was sent off with a towrope to recover it. During the return journey, 'Sod's Law' again kicked in! We were passing an orange grove, alongside which there was another possible casualty – a vehicle and trailer, stopped just – but not far enough – off the road. Unfortunately, the driver of my towed vehicle decided he'd 'just poke his nose out' to view the scene. There was a slight jerk of the towrope, followed by a large 'Bang' – and a sudden increase in my own speed! Having stopped, I walked back to find that the stopped trailer was now squashed flat between two vehicles! It was illegal for British troops to enter the orange groves – but the presence of large amounts of discarded orange peel told its own story!

Whilst in Sarafand, we experienced a period of unrest, where the notorious Stern Gang and other factions were making their presence felt. Early one Sunday morning,



Jim Macdonald at the RASC Scool in Gabel Maryam, Palestine, in 1947

someone entered our sleeping quarters to ask for two volunteers 'in a hurry'. A train had been 'stopped in its tracks', which had been carrying a group of RAF personnel back to Haifa and their troopship, either going back after a tour of duty or for demob. We followed a RMP *Jeep* in our *Dodge Recovery* to the scene. Some thirty or so RAF guys were in an undamaged coach and we helped collect a load of kit and equipment from the area whilst awaiting further orders. It was now well into the afternoon and Haifa was a good eighty miles away. We knew that all vehicles had to be clear of the docks by 5 o'clock. It was either that or stay in some pest-ridden emergency accommodation. I think that most of us treasure our own bed-space, billet or home – rather than the 'unknown' (which we already knew from reports as 'appalling'). Young and foolish as we were, it was a case of foot down, little thinking of the guys sat on wooden benches behind us, with no seat-belts of course! Thus, when we reached Haifa, before we could even open the cab doors, the Wing Commander arrived at our window and gave us a well-deserved dressing down, saying that he and his men would have been better off taking their chances on the train!

In 1948, we had to evacuate Palestine – or Israel as it now became – for Egypt and I ended up at Port Said workshops. I had parked my *Bedford* outside the office, when a Dispatch Rider (DR) came dashing in to say that I was urgently required at the Regimental Transport Office. I was on my feet in a flash, jumped up into the cab and drove off – straight over the motorbike that the DR had parked directly in front of

my truck and completely out of my line of sight! Oh dear. It was also at Port Said that I finally earned the right to join the 'most exclusive club' in the world, the only club that you cannot buy into – 'The Sergeants' Mess'.

A bridge too low

Upon my return to UK, I was posted to the Inspectorate Transport Services HQ at Aldershot, responsible for the south and west of England, as well as Wales. We had a Major, two Captains and four Sergeants, with all Regular and TA units to inspect. Capt Keene, Pete Newsome (ex-Chepstow) and myself made up one team. My first visit was to the TA at Chester and the vehicle in question was an *Austin Gantry*. Nobody had warned me about low bridges and such-like, but the number of dents in the steel railway bridge that I became jammed under told their own story! But less than five minutes had passed by before the local garage crew arrived with cutting equipment and I was soon able to reverse out. Capt Keene arrived to sort out the 'official details', as I sheepishly drove back to camp to continue my inspection.

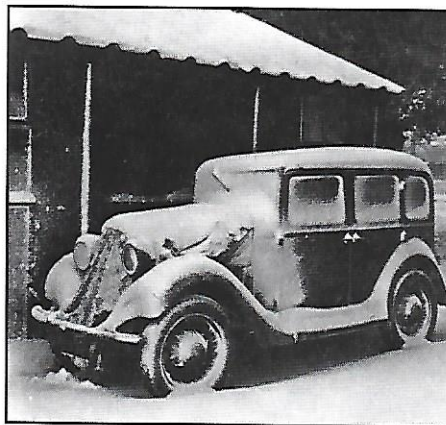
At Westmoor, Dorset, I have never seen, either before or since, such an enormous stack of jerrycans! There were also several pieces of fire-fighting apparatus. I was there to inspect a modified *Bedford QL*, fitted with a large water tank that should have been previously emptied. But, having driven out of camp at the statutory 5 mph, I then put my foot down a bit too hard and the water contents shot over to one side. Almost in slow motion, the vehicle lurched over, seemed to hang in the air for a while, before landing on its side just a few feet short of a big red phone-box. Thankfully, we were able to recover it, using another *QL*, before anyone important noticed!

Then it was on to Bordon, where the fire-tender was under the control of the RASC. What a beautiful sight it made – that huge gleaming radiator cowl, the highly polished nameplate and the bright red paint. Then a long look at the body and all the polished boots, helmets and nozzles and taps, with neatly rolled white hoses, and all surmounted by its long ladder. It seemed like a boyhood's dream come true! The care given to the showpiece side was equalled by that given to the vehicle working parts and, after a two-hour exemplary inspection, it was time for the road test. But the joy and exhilaration of the last two hours had

obviously left my common senses sadly deficient. A sudden detour to the left at Longmoor Camp, home to the REs, with brakes of an old-fashioned standard, left a very subdued me spending the next half-an-hour picking up all that lovely equipment from the roadside!

Transfer to REME

With few opportunities to climb the promotion ladder, when 'phase two' came along, I applied for transfer to the REME – and for Tiffy training. I now had four years of travel in a 1932 *Hillman*, which involved almost constant re-cambering of its rear springs. Large spring-type piston rings kept up a constant wear on the bores and it was truly a clapped-out car! So I bought a 1934 *Rover 12*, very pleasing to the eye. My Dad had been given half a gallon of enamel paint, so the car became an emerald green masterpiece. The majority of cars then were black, so wherever I parked, the *Rover* stood out like a sore thumb. But it gave me pleasure to see it outside Canada Hutments, with its



Jim's 1932 Rover 12 outside Canada Hutments in (probably) January 1956

leather upholstery and rosewood trim.

One evening, 'Smudge' Marshall and I had enjoyed a very good evening's entertainment at the '*Fox and Pelican*' (was that at Grayshott?) Tramp's Ball. Quite a number of the 'local aristocracy' was in attendance. We joined in their taste for beverages unknown previously to us, thus disabling our usual powers of recovery! And so, on our return to Bordon in 'Jennifer', as I called the car, it was most unkind of this brick wall to suddenly leap out into the road and damage her side! Awakening on the Sunday morning, it was quite a shock when someone came in and reported the damage. Our excellent blacksmith instructor soon had the running-board and wing back to normal, and another go with the emerald green

paint soon had her looking as good as new.

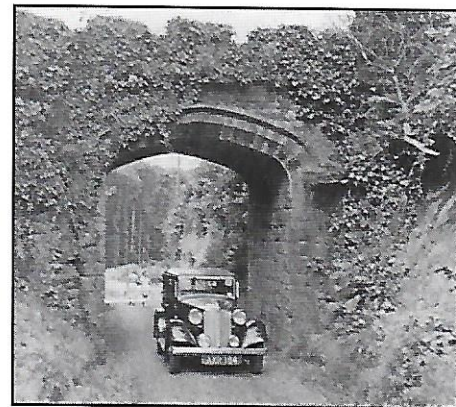
On another evening, another night out, this time with Ralph Scroggins, another Chepstow lad of the same era. We'd been to a Fireman's Ball (*all balls in those days eh Jim? Ed.*) at another large local village somewhere and, when it was over, we came out to find Jennifer missing. The duty fireman rang the police to report it, while we started the long walk back to



Tiffy Course Bordon in 1955. Joss Witty, ??, Russ Goodwin, Pop Felstead, R Nichols, P Pothercary, Laurie Knight and Ralph Scroggins. (Jim was the photographer).

camp. A few minutes later, a police car pulled up alongside – "*Hop in lads, we've found your car*". It had run out of petrol about a mile away – but I knew about the reserve tank and its tap under the spare wheel, so we were able to drive it back.

One day, I saw the police out on the square looking at my car – "*What's the problem lads?*" A heavily laden green car had been seen on the road to Basingstoke the previous Saturday and, as my car was the only green one around, it must have been mine. I was able to explain that Sergeant Cotterell's Dad had a garage down at Bristol and that I had been taking Paul 'Tug' Wilson's engine down there for a re-bore – indeed I was able to show them Paul's car, minus its engine. Apparently, a



'Jennifer' the Rover 12 on holiday in Devon while still in one piece

load of lead had been stolen from a local church roof, so any 'heavily laden' vehicle was naturally suspicious. Thankfully, all I got was a smile and an apology!

It was about a month prior to the end of my course that I suffered my first *real* accident. I was just driving out of camp when the CO's *Humber* shot out of an almost concealed drive, embellished with manicured bushes, and hit me broadside. Coming in the opposite direction was a nearly new *Armstrong-Siddley Sapphire*, driven by a very well dressed lady. With my car pushed into her path, she had no time to stop, with the inevitable result that my beautiful Jennifer had reached her final destination. Another problem was that I was due to wed my wife Mary in just a couple of week's time and now I was left without transport. Events transpired that we were out on radio training the



Another photograph from Jim's album. The Princess flying boat in Southampton Water looking very impressive. Sadly it only ever taxied, having insufficient power to take off!



The Austin 16 with Russ Goodwin standing next to it.

following week and we passed a garage at Liphook, with cars displayed for sale on the forecourt. They were all out of my price range but, having told the proprietor of my predicament, with a forthcoming wedding and a posting to BAOR, he told me that he had 'the very thing'.

He drove me down the road to what appeared to be a farmyard and there stood an old *Austin 16*, very dilapidated looking and well past its glory days. He jumped in and, after a few turns of the engine, it sort of coughed and spluttered into life. Smiling with relief, he jumped out and announced that it would be great once warmed up! We haggled over cost and

eventually settled on £42-10s. It was like climbing into a bus, but I drove it back to camp and completed the transfer of documents the following day. Apart from a leaking radiator, she proved a little beauty - as long as I kept a jerry can in the back as 'First IA'.

After about three years in Germany, I was driving a *Mercedes 218*, nice reliable car - even taught Mary to drive in it. I then treated myself to a brand new *Ford Cortina*, maroon in colour, but used an old bike to go into work at 1 BR Corps, while Mary drove the car to work at the NAAFI Shop. One evening as I returned home, I climbed off the bike and noticed that the car had a crumpled wing. Mary must have been dreading me coming home and making a scene but, after all the scrapes I'd been in during the preceding years, I was almost smiling as I got indoors - much to Mary's relief!

One final memory is of using a little *VW* minibus to take an employee on his driving test. He started to cross on an amber light when a juggernaut, obviously intent on beating the lights, hit us in the side and turned us right over. We both ended up in a German Krankenhaus (hospital) and I remember Karl lying on a trolley, with damaged limbs, and me sat on

a chair, having been 'checked over' and cleared. I decided to go home, it was only about a mile away in Wilhelm Busch Strasse, and I let myself in. Mary was in the garden and feeling a little upset, as by now I was late and she'd had to take the two little uns for some inoculations. Anyway, I took my dinner out of the oven and sat down to eat in silence. Mary then remarked about the 'mark' on my head and I told her that I'd been involved in a little accident. "*Not in a minibus was it?*" she asked. "*Yes*", I replied. "*Not near the baker's shop was it?*" she again questioned me. When once again I confirmed that it had been me, a certain remorse started to set in, as she realised that she'd been at the scene just after it happened but hadn't known of my involvement!

Well, there it is, just a few memories to confirm that there *was* life after Arborfield! Perhaps it will encourage a few others to rack their brains and pass on their reminiscences to the Editor?

(Jim recalls that, when the taxi failed to turn up to 'get me to the church on time' for his wedding, it was Russ Goodwin who stepped in to save the day, at Gloucester in 1955. Ed.)

2008 OLD BOYS' REUNION

Provisional date for the 2008 reunion is Friday 25th July to Sunday 27th July 2008

Application forms with the next issue of OBAN

Clinical Notes

The following 'notes and quotes' are reputedly taken from actual written notes on hospital charts:

The patient refused to have an autopsy

The patient had no previous history of suicides

The patient's medical history has been remarkably insignificant, with only a forty-pound weight gain in the past three days

She has no rigors or shaking chills, but her husband states she was very hot in bed last night

On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it disappeared

The patient is tearful and crying constantly - she also appears to be depressed

The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993

Discharge status: Alive, but without my permission

Healthy appearing decrepit 69-year old male - mentally alert, but forgetful

Patient had waffles for breakfast and anorexia for lunch

She is numb from her toes down

While in A&E, she was examined, X-rated and sent home

The skin was moist and dry

Occasional, constant infrequent headaches

The patient was alert and unresponsive

A rectal examination revealed a normal size thyroid

She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life until she got a divorce

I saw your patient today, who is still under my car for physical therapy

Both breasts are equal and reactive to light and accommodation

Examination of genitalia reveals that he is circus sized

What Happened Next?

by Graham 'Ginger' Chilton (53B)

It is strange how other people's memories spark one's own! The recent recollections in OBAN from ex-members of 27 and 47 Guided Weapon (GW) Regiment RA Workshops reminded me of an unanswered question that I had way back in 1967. The *Corporal* GW had 'lost its stripes' in 1966 and so its operators went back to being *real* Gunners. I was destined to take a small part in the change, one that does not appear in my AFB 108, which is why I am not certain as to exactly when it began. Probably about August '66 (still lost in the euphoric haze of England's World Cup football triumph), I was detached from 12 Light Air Defence Regt Workshop, then stationed at Hubbelrath (not far from Dusseldorf). I was sent, complete with toolbox and assorted spares, to Napier Barracks, Dortmund, where 27 Regt RA were to be re-trained as a Light Air Defence Regiment. My part in all this was to try and keep the 40/70s and

FCE 7 platforms in working order during the re-training period. They also had an old 4 Mk 7 'big-box' radar set to play with.

The experience of working with a user group who actually *listened* was a revelation, even when there were unexpected problems, attributable, I'm sure, to unfamiliarity with the equipment. But there were also downsides; like working weekends to make sure various bits were ready for use on a Monday morning and, as nominally part of 27 Wksp, I was forcibly introduced to *FORWARD* rather earlier than some - and that caused some anxious moments. The final 'work-up' resulted in exercises being held out on Haltern Ranges in late November and early December, which were cold, wet and sticky underfoot! In fact, I seem to recall that the December event was cut short due to snow - we had proper winters then! The Regiment was

then well into the throes of handing in equipment and packing, ready for its return back to the UK, when I had a bit of luck. Napier Barracks was to become the new home for 12 Regt RA, and someone had a brilliant idea - and I cannot claim it was me! They suggested that I store my kit in the QM's cellar, go on leave - and come back when it was all over. I accepted this advice, without asking any further questions.

One last thing - some way into '67, after everything had settled down, I heard that there had been a change to 27 Regt's new role. Rumour had it that, when arriving at the Ordnance Depot, it had all been changed — and the Regiment drove proudly out with — 5.5" guns! So had my work been in vain? If you know, please tell!

(Answers on a postcard please! Ed.)

OBAN Articles by Boys From the Mid-Forties

As the third Editor of OBAN, starting with Issue 31, I began to reminisce about all the splendid contributions published in earlier magazines – and now continue that theme by looking at articles sent in from boys who began their service during the middle years of the 1940s.

Brief Title	Contributor	OBAN Issue
News flash (Royal Scot)	Ray Derrick 44B	32
My first day	John Maddox 44B	8
A young rifleman Pt1	John Maddox 44B	13
A young rifleman Pt2	John Maddox 44B	16
My Paris caper	John Maddox 44B	36
Fifty years on	Tom Pearce Feb '44	6
Reunion 1994	Tom Pearce Feb '44	6
Training in the early Fifties	Tom Pearce Feb '44	9
Transports of delight	Tom Pearce Feb '44	11
Fifty years on (archive)	Tom Pearce Feb '44	38
Korea – Middlesex Regt	Peter Simmonds 44A	21
Arborfield memories	Peter Simmonds 44A	31
Memories of Arborfield	Bob Ward (Sept 44)	32
Certificate of Commendation	Fred Wells 44A	17
Bird doctor of Sek Kong	Jim Ades 45A	4
A typical day	Eddie Broomfield 45A	22
What formation?	Les Cable 45B	31
Resonant theory of love	Frank Fendick 45A	15
Easter Monday 1953	Frank Fendick 45A	17
My life	Frank Fendick 45A	29
A Second World War childhood	Frank Fendick 45A	41
The way we were	Dick Manning 45B	37
Reunion 1995	'Mac' McNally 45A	8
Traumatic occlusions	John Pewsey 45A	24
Trincomalee Harbour 1949	John Pewsey 45A	34
Korea – Gloucesters	'Tommo' Thompson 45B	21
The budding apprentice	Don Walker 45A	3
Personality slot	Don Walker 45A	7
Zomba or bust	Don Walker 45A	7
Winter 1947	Don Walker 45A	19
The Gharyan pass	Don Walker 45A	24

Once again, I must stress that the above list contains only the '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

The Garden, 'Tis A Wondrous Thing, God Wot.

by Chas Pepper, 43B

1954, Korea, Ordnance Field Park,
1 Commonwealth Div.

The RAOC OFP, being deployed on a movement exercise, pulled into this wooded area. A group of us dismounted from our vehicles and stretched our legs to have a look around the location. Beyond the trees was a clearing that, when it came into view, displayed a collection of buildings that must have been either temples or palaces; their woodwork and colouring were certainly glorious in the sunshine. Among us admiring onlookers was our young storeman, Pte Wilkie, who

had noticed something that he found of much greater interest - around one of the buildings was a ring of stone horses. With a loud 'whoop', he detached himself from our group and leapt onto the nearest horse, 'riding' it in rodeo style, waving his combat hat with the enthusiasm of a Wild West bronco-buster.

This display of horsemanship clearly offended his sergeant, who shouted at him, "Wilkie, come here!" Our brave 'rider of the purple plain' jumped down from his steed like a circus act, ran across to his sergeant and looked expectantly at him. "Now look here, Wilkie", announced the sergeant, "you must treat this place like

you would treat a religious place back home, like hmmm, like erm". His hesitance in naming a holy place drew us all nearer to him, agog to hear what it would be. Young Wilkie looked at him with a puzzled glance. The pressure on the sergeant must have unsettled his memory but, after a few more seconds of stuttering, his face brightened and his lips began to form the words he had found. "Treat it like Kew Gardens", he bravely stated. Wilkie thanked his sergeant, but then went off looking totally baffled. The sergeant didn't quite understand what the rest of us were laughing at – and I don't think he ever did!

Our Arborfield Cee-Vee

When I was small, I well recall, sat at my Fathers knee,
Saying that I'd like to go and join the Infantry.
But Dad, who'd just done five long years with them - and was no fool,
Said, *"Don't be daft, lad, get into the Army Apprentice School."*

So off I went, my little case clutched in my grubby mitt,
And travelled down to Arborfield - a cheeky little git!
I'd been in the cadets and so I thought I knew it all,
But learned darned quick that foolish pride will come before the fall.

Arriving at those iron gates, which were to be my prison,
I spied a small man with three stripes, his skin all brown and wizened.
"Please Sarge", I said, *"I've come to join; where do I go?"* Said he,
"Get your arse in double time, to HQ Company!"

"Oh, how rude!" I thought, as running down the road I sped;
I was to find out, soon enough, that I'd just met fiery Fred!
This introduction to School life, was rather inauspicious,
And doubts crept in on meeting a room sergeant, so officious.

"Stand to attention - speak only when you're spoken to!" he sneered,
"You'll do exactly as you're told!" and confirmed just what I feared.
That this was going to be my lot, for three more years, and so
Foreboding grew, my spirits sank, I really felt quite low.

But as the other lads came in, their treatment was the same,
Which cheered me up; I realized that this was just a game
That's played with all the new recruits, in case they think they're better,
When actually, the reality is, we're in the clag together!

And, sure enough, that's how it was; we really should have scarpered,
We couldn't tell if we were being drilled, bored, reamed or tapered!
Then running round, collecting kit, by storemen we're informed,
That if our clothes fit 'off the peg', then we must be deformed!

Our Drill Instructor then appeared, who said he'd be 'our Dad',
A Sergeant in the Guards Brigade, a big pace stick he had,
Which, as the symbol of his power, he used to prod and poke,
While commenting, *"You shouldn't have joined, if you can't take a joke!"*

The next six weeks were hell on earth; we hadn't time to think,
We'd pound the Square and didn't dare to move or even blink
Without permission from on high, it really was quite awful
When almost every move we made was deemed to be unlawful!

The nights were filled with lots of kit inspections and room cleaning,
No time for recreation, life took on a different meaning,
Oh, how we longed to be back home, to go out with our chums,
And then, well fed, get tucked in bed by loving, caring Mums!

Yet, ultimately, as time passed, we gained a new perspective,
And once accustomed to the life, we found it less restrictive.
In fact, we started to enjoy our new-found independence,
Responsible for our own deeds, and serving our repentance.

Repentance, in the form of 'Jankers', sometimes 'Rodeo',
If caught flouting regulations, then on a charge we'd go
And face the music at the CO's Company Orders queue,
Appearing, being found guilty, with 'seven days' to do.

But it was never unrelenting, boring, doom and gloom,
With twenty mates all of same age, in one large barrack room,
The escapades and laughs we shared just served to bond us tight,
We felt more or less like brothers, in long summer days so bright.

Amidst all this, the reason for our presence was trade training,
Therefore, a great deal of our time was spent learning and gaining
Experience and time to practice all our chosen trades,
Culminating in our ever longed-for, final Passing-out Parade.

That great day came eventually, and, marching with great flair,
We occupied the pride of place, front centre on 'the Square',
Long gone, the apprehensive boys who'd wandered through the gates,
Now, ramrod straight, erect and proud, we stood with all our mates.

But different gates before us then, symbolic of our past,
For when we passed between them, they would represent the last
Time we'd be on parade on this old, familiar Square,
For from this day on we'd cross the threshold, start our new career.

And to the strains of 'Auld Lang Syne', emotions rose intense,
As we, in slow time, wheeling in, then through those portals went
Out to the world of soldiering, to carry on the name
Of the Arborfield Apprentice School, that turned us into men.

While there, we weren't aware we didn't only learn a trade,
The lives we led were so designed to toughen us, and made
Us confident, prepared to face the world, stand proud and grow,
So, "Thank You, Arborfield", I owe to you, for what I am right now.

(Another splendid effort from the mighty pen of Tony Church, 55A - Ed.)

Mo Hope (59B) E-mailed the Following:

Readers may chuckle at the following, which are allegedly genuine clips from Bristol Council flat tenants, about problems with their flats

My bush is really overgrown round the front and my back passage has fungus growing in it

He's got this huge tool that vibrates the whole house and I just can't take it anymore

It's the piles of dog mess that I find hard to swallow

I want some repairs done to my cooker, as it has backfired and burned my knob

I wish to complain that my Father hurt his ankle very badly when he put his foot in the hole in his back passage

And their 18-year old son is continually banging his balls against my fence

I wish to report that tiles are missing from the outside toilet roof. I think it was the bad wind the other night that blew them off

My lavatory seat is cracked, where do I stand?

My wife tripped and fell on it yesterday and now she is pregnant

I request permission to remove my drawers in the kitchen

50% of the walls are damp, 50% have crumbling plaster and 50% are plain filthy

The toilet is blocked and we cannot bathe the children until it is cleared

Will you please send a man to look at my water, it is a funny colour and not fit to drink

Our lavatory seat is broken in half and is now in three pieces

I want to complain about the farmer across the road, every morning at 6a.m. his cock wakes me up and it's now getting too much for me

The man next door has a large erection in the back garden, which is unsightly and dangerous

Our kitchen door is damp. We have two children and would like a third, so please send someone round to do something about it

I am a single mum living in a downstairs flat and would you please do something about the noise made by the man on top of me every night

Please send a man with the right tool to finish the job and satisfy my wife

I have had the clerk of works down on the floor six times but still I have no satisfaction

This is to let you know that our lavatory seat is broken and we can't get BBC

Not too far over the mark for a conservative magazine such as ours, I hope! You may consider reprinting a poem entitled "Just a Common Soldier", which is on REME Past/Present on the net, which they term a Soldier's Lament — a lot of the text is very close to home when you think of old boys etc.

Caption Competition (OBAN40)

I rather think you may have unleashed an unprecedented volume of response to your plea for captions in OBAN 40. Not an easy one this time, as nobody appears to be saying anything! Anyway, here are four for you to either edit out or in:

1. "How can we put this Computer-operated Dental Station through its R & D Trials, if you don't take your fingers out of your mouth?"
2. "How do you expect us to remotely drill your tooth if you don't co-operate?"
3. "It detects any eye closure which is longer than five seconds, so that if an Apprentice Tradesman falls asleep in class, a jet of cold water is squirted towards his face."

4. The Research Team at Arborfield, shown undertaking trials of the first computerised Sudoku solver.

Bob West, 50B

Answer – by Sir Walter Scott

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

Please support

The REME Association Shop

The REME Association Shop is situated at the entrance to the Museum on Isaac Newton Road in Arborfield, Reading. We sell everything from Ties to Tankards, Prints to Plaques and Clothing, including uniform items. We also provide a Medal Mounting and Engraving service. For full details of our stock, please visit our website at www.rememuseum.org.uk

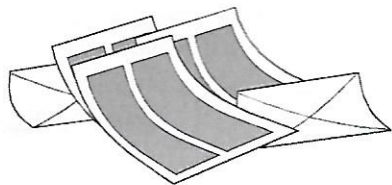
Opening Times
Monday - Thursday 0900 - 1630
Friday 0900 - 1600
Sunday 1100 - 1600



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*** New Items ***

Socks in Corps Colours • Ladies Scarves with REME Badge
Cravats in Corps Colours • Knitted Scarves in Corps Colours - College Style



Tony Domoney (56B) e-mails:

I have just heard that Doug Cresswell has joined God's angels recently. Doug was a personal friend of mine, my guarantor for CV issues and mentor when I first got my 'blue beret' (AAC) and was transferred to Kenya. He was by far the best WO1 (later Major) I ever worked with. Every time I visited the UK, I took the opportunity to visit Doug and Yvonne in Porton (Salisbury). Of course we visited memory lane, as we shared many a story and much laughter. I know he was an ex-Arborfield Apprentice and I am deeply saddened by his demise.



Jim Purdy, 49B Harrogate, makes contact via the web- site:

I have been reading the article by Chas Pepper (43B) about his time with 51 Bde in Cyprus. I was a Royal Signals Sergeant at that time (1955-7) in the same camp. I remember the REME ASM as Fred Elam, who was an ex-apprentice of around 1942/3 vintage. I wonder if he remembers me, I was the MT Signal Sgt?

(Over to you Chas – how is your memory on this one? Ed.)

OBAN LETTERS



Graham 'Ginger' Chilton, 53B, writes:

Looking back - go on, everybody does it - there are always experiences that other people find interesting, or fascinating even. The trouble is that, unless you keep a diary, or write things down later, details are largely forgotten. I was recently part of a group reminiscing about 'journeys'. We have read about several in past copies of the OBAN. Do you remember the days of National Servicemen? Do you remember 'Spearpoint' exercises in the late 50s early 60s? Of course you do. Did you perhaps serve on the permanent staff at TTS (Technical Training School), Glamorgan Barracks, Duisberg, in 1959?

TTS had a mobilisation role as an armoured recovery unit, the instructors and admin staff being pressed in to serving in some odd roles - although I must add that there were very comprehensive training courses held, on Saturday mornings, in blocks of six weeks. In '59, 1 Br Corp Troop Workshop was being moved to Bielefeld. As part of the

exercise, the opportunity was taken to move about twenty AFVs. The first batch was to be taken to 23 Base at Wetter, the second to the new workshop location at Bielefeld.

Chapter of incidents? You would only believe it if you had taken part! I have written down what I remember of my part in the affair. But first I would like to check details with anyone who was part of the Diamond 'T' section that moved the said AFVs, before I share it with anyone else. So if you were there - and particularly if you have total recall - do get in touch, so we can consider the details of the ride of my lifetime. I was coerced into riding a motorcycle for the first time ever, apart from four Saturday morning sessions that is. Good job that September was nice and dry; as lots of the German roads were still cobbled!

(No doubt Graham will continue his tale following a few nudges and winks from other participants? Ed.)



Malcolm Hay (53A) e-mails as follows:

Ex-Chepstow boy considers suicide, ref OBAN Issue 40 Page 44 - Peter how could you! Perhaps it was in case an ex-Arborfield boy saw the name of that more senior establishment, close to Welsh Wales, that they may have had a fit but to be associated with an establishment that had covered walkways between barrack blocks, oh the shame!

PS. Issue 40 - another good read.

(Just pulling your leg Malcolm – I'm sure Chep must have won a couple of times! Always good to exchange some banter with one of the 'auld enemy' – good luck with the Beachley web-site by the way. Ed.)



Pete Gripton (56B) writes:

The late summer sunshine was still with us on the morning of Friday September 7th, as my wife Joyce and I headed off down to the 'west country' to meet up with other members of 56B for what has become our annual reunion get-together. Old pal Dave Howlett had kindly organised everything this year, so it was in a relaxed frame of mind that I drove up out of Hampshire and into Berkshire for our first port of call. We had passed by Hungerford many times, without checking out the town itself. But having recently read a newspaper article that this was the twentieth anniversary of Hungerford's infamous 1987 shooting

tragedy, it had focussed my mind to pay a visit. This certainly proved worthwhile, as we were able to take a short stroll alongside the Kennet/Avon canal, which reminded me that Arborfield boys probably passed that very way as they paddled their canoes between Devizes and Westminster – an annual event that started around 1966. After chatting to the lock keeper, we then had morning coffee in a nice old-fashioned teashop, which had a splendid arrangement of cakes and bread on display.

Then it was back to the car and off across the Berkshire Downs, up past Swindon, along the A419 and the turning

off into Cirencester. It had been quite a few years previously that we had stopped there, so it almost felt like a new stopping place! The famous Abbey certainly looks as splendid as I remembered and we picked up a couple of Marks & Sparks sandwiches for our lunch – which we ate along the roadside on the road that led towards Tetbury. It wasn't long afterwards that we found out why 'Wotton-under-Edge' is so named! It is located 'under the edge' (of the Cotswolds hills) and the long and winding hill that leads down into the town offers some spectacular views across pretty countryside.

It turned out that our hotel, despite its

Wotton address, was in fact a few miles further on. So it was mid-afternoon when we booked in and had a look around the place, which appears to have once been some sort of baronial hall, well extended and modernised, but tastefully done. It wasn't long before we were sitting out in the large garden area, in the late afternoon sunshine, watching a wedding party having their photographs taken, all very romantic! In the evening, twelve of us, including 'the ladies', sat down to dinner, thoroughly enjoying some excellent food and pleasant company, with just the occasional sip of wine!

Breakfast on Saturday morning was a hearty affair. I'm normally a cereal and fruit-juice type at home, but on occasions like this, all that goes for a Burton! Afraid I had 'the works', including my favourite - black pudding! We all made our own entertainment during the day and, thankfully, the pleasant sunshine stayed with us right through. Joyce and I drove into and parked in the town square at Wotton, right next to the heritage centre, which supplied a useful local map. Wandering along the village high street, we were astonished to find several people stopping us and asking, "Are you visitors?" They were all so friendly - and

three ladies outside the local church pointed us off in the direction of a walk up Adey's Lane and onto part of the 'Cotswolds Way'. The first part was fairly steep, but eventually led out onto the 'edge' previously mentioned, and in particular to a large monument of a building called 'Tyndale Tower' - I hope I have that right!

We sat there for a few minutes, chatting away to a couple from the village, again very friendly and welcoming. Then it was the same trip, in reverse, back into town. The 'sarnies' this time came from the local Co-op, and we ate them out on the roadside on the way to Stroud. My only memory of 'Stroud' was that Eric 'Lofty' Ricketts, an excellent basketball player and ex-Arborfield boy dating back to around the early Sixties, had once mentioned that it was his hometown. I think that Lofty also got a mention back in OBAN issue 14! Anyway, it came about that we found ourselves wandering around the streets of Stroud, where we bumped into Jo and Dave Howlett and Ann and Derek Newman! I think they had experienced more of the atmosphere than we did, as there had been a music festival going on through the afternoon - we were a bit too late to catch that. All the town

centre streets seemed to be on one hill or another - and all around were views of lovely green fields.

I don't think I'd better mention too much about our evening meal - except to say that it was spectacular in its failure! How the hotel got it so terribly wrong is anybody's guess - and we await their response to some letters of complaint, which is putting it mildly! (**"Who dares, eats!"**) Thank goodness, breakfast was once again up to standard next morning. We noticed that Gerry Hincks and Russell Dodds had eaten theirs and departed in some haste - a shame that they both travelled alone and for some distance, only to have such a disappointing meal. Johnny Bilcliff was in the same boat, but at least he had some company at breakfast and was able to share a laugh or two.

Overall, particularly for those of us who had two nights, the weekend was still a memorable one - and no doubt we shall try to 'do it again' next year sometime. It was still great to meet up with old pals and, for the record, in attendance this year, as well as those already mentioned above, were Roger Brooker, Brian Mockford, Keith Smith and Tony Strong. We hope to see some more old faces next time!



John Pewsey, 45A 'D' Coy, e-mails:

Friday 28th September 2007, saw nineteen Old Boys and thirteen wives arriving at the quite state-of-the-art *Mickleover Court Hotel* and Conference Centre near Derby - highly recommended for any other AOBA reunions, as it is reasonably geographically central to the mainland UK up to the Firth of Forth. Several 'jars' and swinging lamps later, we assembled for a first night's 'smart-casual' dinner, where we continued bringing ourselves up-to-date with events since last we met - some going

back more than 50 years! Although your virtuous (creep!) scribe retired early, I was informed next morning that the Bar staff didn't close up until well into Saturday morning.

Way back in 1949, I personally discovered that I was in the company of an ex-S/Sgt, with whom four of us Craftsmen had been on board a Dory-B recreational sailing dinghy in St. Paul's Bay, Malta. Sadly, due to overload and frolicking, it sank - slowly, but surely, to the gunwales. At that point, the S/Sgt announced, quite calmly, that he could

not swim! (Expletives deleted) *"Just stand to attention, Staff, we will lay you on your back in the water and tow you ashore"*. He did - and we did - just that. Our 'WREME Wrecker' duly arrived on the shoreline and recovered the Dory - and this whole episode lay forgotten, that is, until 28th September 2007!

On Saturday 29th, we all went to the *Coors (ex-Bass) Brewery* at Burton-on-Trent, for an enlightening tour of how your average pint emerges from handfuls of barley, hops, H₂O and a whole lot of TLC, ready for your tankard. Dinner that evening was more formal - as evidenced by the photograph (a larger version of which appears on the back cover. Ed.) However, the tight collars and dicky-bows didn't in any way inhibit further strolls down memory lane, while very few got to bed on the 29th inst. Sunday was a (latish) breakfast, with promises to meet up again next year and fond farewells, prior to our dispersal to the 'four corners'.





Barry Baxter, 57A, writes:

This is in response to some points in OBAN40, for inclusion in the next OBAN if space permits. Firstly, thanks to Chas Pepper (43B) for the information on 'beezing' in his letter. I was fairly sure that it was based on 'bees wax', but had no idea that it originated with the 'Dukies'. Written proof that someone actually read my article – oh boy!

On the subject of that article, I have to apologise to A/T Adams as was, for saying that he had trouble in keeping step during our square bashing. At the reunion in July 2007, Bob Sleep pointed out that it was a lad called Daniels! If anyone else noticed

any mistakes – please write in. It was a long time ago and I wrote it all from memory – which is wearing out fast! Bob also supplied the name of 'A' Squad's drill sergeant, Sgt Ford, Durham Light Infantry, which I'd forgotten. If I do write anything more on the Apprentices' School Bob, I'll get you to check it. Your memory seems in better nick than mine – how about it?

In the photo taken outside F1 on page 18 of OBAN40, sent in by Jim Cliff, Tom Webber sent me a copy of the same, and I have a feeling that the lad named as Bob Luck is in fact Dick Eden! Anyone else care to comment? Lastly, the photo on the rear cover, of a Queen's Birthday Parade,

is definitely 1959. I have a copy of it and can just about recognise some of 'B' Coy as 57A. They are carrying rifles which, at that time of year, means that we must have been then in 5 Div – i.e. in the first half of 1959. That's 5 Div in pre-decimal speak so to speak – with all the changes in the system around then, goodness knows what Div we really were!

(Some good observations there, thanks Barry. Perhaps Bob Sleep can be persuaded to share his excellent memory with us at some time in the future – how about it Bob? Ed.)



Jack Wigley 53B, writes:

Reading through the latest OBAN (issue 40), I was delighted to see the photograph on page 44, as two of the group are very old pals of mine! The guy on the left, proudly wearing his G-flog, is Dave 'Charlie' Chapman, who was my good pal in 'A' Coy, 53B. The guy in the centre of the group is none other than another great pal of mine, Charlie 'Paddy' Claydon, of 'B' Coy, 52B. (By the way, where did the 'Euan' come from?) Charlie and I, having just passed out into REME, were at that time on an equipments course at 3 Battalion REME. I believe that Paddy was then at the Base Workshop in Donnington. As luck would have it, about a year later, we were all posted together at 21 Command Wksp up at Burscough, Lancs. I have a feeling that 'the face' looking over Paddy's shoulder may belong

to 'Killer' Kelly of 'A' Coy, 52B, but I am not at all certain!

(Thanks Jack – you seem to have (almost) answered the query that I posted underneath the photograph in question. As for the 'Euan' bit, Ron Janes 'thought' that was young Claydon's name, but when I asked him about it myself, he was as certain as you are about Kelly! My own memories of your mate Paddy involve his 'hiding out' at boys' school a couple of years later, apparently 'on the run' from the RAF, another Arborfield legend! I am pretty sure that he used A/Cpl Mick Cullen's bunk in 'A' Coy lines as one of his hideouts – anyone else have any clear memories of the infamous 'Paddy' Claydon episode? Ed.)



Chas Pepper, 43B, writes:

I received my latest OBAN this morning and found a good collection of interesting tales as usual. I enclose a couple more of my own 'stories from long ago' and hope that you'll be able to make use of them for another issue.

(It's always good to hear from one of our most prolific contributors Chas – and I'm sure we'll be able to find space somewhere! Keep 'em coming – and let's hope it encourages many others to get their thinking caps on and their typing fingers busy! Ed.)

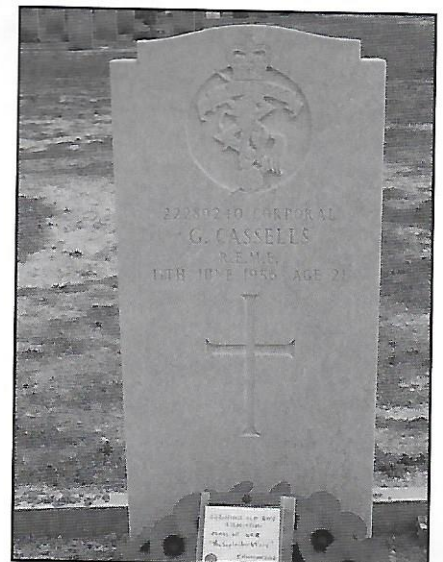


Gordon Bonner (49B) e-mailed the following:

I was in Cyprus from 31 Oct to 7 Nov. Whilst there, and on behalf of John Cassels, I arranged to visit the Military Cemetery, Wayne's Keep, Nicosia, which lies within the UN Buffer Zone. Here I paid respects on behalf of the AOBA and the Sept 49'ers at the grave of George Cassels. By prior arrangement, I was met by a Cpl Baruer, a member of the British contingent at JOC HQ. Because the cemetery is a matter of dispute between the UN and the Turkish Authorities, rules for access are strictly applied. However, I was given a good briefing by Cpl Baruer and the visit passed without incident, although I understand that, in the past,

there have been, on the odd occasion, jeering and threats from the Turkish Border Guards.

I was able to spend a quiet 30 minutes at the grave, remembering the young boy with whom I shared the Arborfield experience almost sixty years ago. I performed an act of remembrance by reciting the Remembrance Poem, followed by a minute's silence, and closing with the Lords Prayer. I have briefed John with details of the visit and have sent him several photos as a record for his retention. Tomorrow is Remembrance Sunday and I shall be down in the City Centre 'on parade' with the rest of them.





John 'Doc' Houghton, 56B, e-mails as follows:

Another splendid issue of the OBAN (No. 40) - keep up the good work. I was intrigued by the photo on the rear cover of this issue, Queen's Birthday Parade, sent in by Ray Walker. I have put a few words together, in an effort to determine/solve what year it was.

The photograph of the boys on parade presents quite a challenge. Ray states that it was either 1958 or 1959, but not 1957 (as he was still at Chepstow during that year). Taking a closer look, I make the following observations in an effort to solve the puzzle:

There are obviously the four Companys of the School, plus the two Bands, on parade.

The first three ranks would be the Senior Div of each Company (Rifles .303in No.4 at the 'present arms').

The remaining six ranks behind each Senior Div would have been the two 'half Companys', comprising 5 and 4 Div in the front, and 2 and 3 Div in the rear.

The Queen's Birthday Parade takes place in the June of each year; therefore, the Senior Div on this occasion would have been of the 'A' intake (called Summer Term) at this particular time.

Unfortunately, the quality of the photograph does not allow you to positively identify individuals on parade. However, just to the rear of the Senior Div, it looks like RCM Sallis RHG (the school RSM of that era) and possibly to his left, the current boy RSM. The only other person with that style of dress uniform at the School at the time was SCM Cosgrove RHG ('D' Coy CSM) - but my money is on RCM Sallis.

The Company at the top of the square (LHS of the photograph) would have been Champion Company, as they always took the lead in all parades. The AAS Banner (always carried by Champion Coy) can be seen towards the rear of the Company.

In the front rank (10th and 15th from the left), behind the rear rank of the Senior Div of the leading Company, are two coloured A/Ts (Sierra Leone, Gold Coast or Burmese?). In their position on parade, they would have been in either 4 or 5 Div.

From the observations above, which Company was Champion Coy with two coloured A/Ts (at the same time) in either 4 or 5 Div, June 1958 or June 1959? As I was in '56B', we would have been the Senior Div in June 1959 and I don't re-call two coloured A/Ts in our Div in the same Company. From this, I can only deduce that the photograph was taken in June 1959. Can anyone dispute this and offer any other information as to what year the photograph was taken?

(You certainly have been doing your homework on this one John! Alan Sharman's email (below) refers to the same photograph - is anyone else going to come up with a different answer? Ed.)



Alan Sharman, 56A, e-mails:

Regarding the photo on the rear cover of issue 40, may I suggest that the squad with the rifles, nearest the camera, is 56 intake, 'D' Coy, which would put the date as 1958. My reason for this suggestion is that I believe the right hand marker (not the man saluting) is Peter Tidey. Most of his face is obscured, but I feel sure that is him! There are a couple of other people there that I think I recognize, although I would like to see the original photo before sticking my neck out any further! Keep up the good work on the magazine, I look forward to the next one!

(Thanks for your observation Alan - there's nothing like an old photograph to stir up dissension in the ranks! Getting away from the personalities though - aren't they a smart bunch of soldiers? Ed.)

Pst! Pass It On

Ex Boys from the 1958 intakes wanted, to join the Association in time for the 2008 Reunion.



Tony Wilson (56B) e-mails from the South Seas:

Right now I'm in Tonga, where we spend most of our time. As we get older, we find we need more medical checkups, medication and so on. So we sold our house and bought a small apartment, right in the middle of Wellington, so we don't need a car whilst there, but have a place to rest our heads. Now we're both over 65, it costs us only \$3 for 3 months supply of any medication we need, while GP visits in NZ are heavily subsidised too. As a consequence, we go back every 4 to 6 months and have a check up, as well as a holiday. Also, we are in receipt of NZ pensions and we would drop out of those if we were absent for more than 6 months. We do some shopping for things like bacon and cheese, which are prohibitive here, but cheap in NZ. As my wife, Eseta, runs a florists business from home, and we sell a lot of floral bits and pieces, we can only get away together when we can get friends to come over from NZ and run the shop for us. The rest of the time we take it in turns. We have two nieces at university in Wellington and they stay in the apartment for much of the year. I'm due to go to NZ in February, going to the Bay of Islands to stay with friends for a week and do some fishing. He and I

landed in NZ together in late 1963 and both of us finished up marrying Tongan girls. They have a place at a small settlement right on the water - beautiful. I still enjoy getting the OBAN - it goes to Wellington, but that's fine, as either I, my wife or one of my nieces brings it over here. By air we are 3 hrs away from Auckland and a further hour to Wellington.

Does anyone recall Gordon Richardson, 'B' Coy, a hell of a nice guy? Both he and Alan 'Aldo' Hadfield became A/CSMs, one in HQ Coy. I am surprised at not seeing his name in any of the Old Boy docs, similarly with Mick Stevens.

(I'm afraid those names seem to have 'gone missing' over the years. I did meet up with Aldo a couple of times when he was still living in Yately, Hampshire. But he then moved back to Manchester, then across to California (where he and Rodney Smith got together), before moving back, as far as I'm aware, to Manchester once again. Rodney did give me an e-mail address, but Aldo hasn't replied to any messages I'm afraid. If any reader has info on those missing names, please contact me! Ed.)



Jim Macdonald, 43A, writes:

I am enclosing another effort for my friendly Editor, which I have asked my youngest daughter to type up for me – he may even be able to understand this one! But first, a couple of points raised on items in OBAN40. Jim Cliff's included a compliment to the Military Band, which *"never achieved the universal popularity of the Pipe Band"*, for which I thank him, as I feel sure will all Pipe Band members. The Editor's own reference to his 'white coveralls' brought a wry smile. During

my last year, I was instructing Tiffies on 'FORWARD'. Someone put such a set of coveralls on my table, complete with an ASM's badge to be sewn on, for the forthcoming visit of 'a Royal' and Maj Gen Girling. They were still on the same table when a 'pre-inspection' was made. I said that my uniform was what I was wearing – and refused to wear anything else. I still smile to myself at the 'little memo' that duly arrived from the Colonel's office – *"Excused Parade, take the day off"*!

We had a sharp frost last night and it was so cold this morning that it reminded me of Bordon and its surrounding countryside. In many ways, it would have been a grand place to settle down – the hoar-frost gave that area a wonderful look.

(Jim – thanks for the article, which will go into the pending tray. You will have seen that your previous article appears in this edition on Page 21! Keep up the good work! Ed.)



John Worland, 52B, e-mails:

I refer to the book, *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*, page 150, which states that, *"On September 6th 1952, tragedy struck at the Farnborough Air Show"*, where Mr Staggs and 26 others lost their lives.

I arrived at AAS Arborfield on the 9th Sept 1952 and, for many years afterwards, right up to reading the statement above, thought that the civvie in charge of the Technical Drawing Office was 'Mr Staggs'. It seems that I was wrong – so who **was** the 'gruff gentleman'? As my name begins with a 'W', it was always me that had to take the register to his office!

Please note that I was 'Pay Witness' for one year in 'HQ' Coy, 'E' Squad. The smallest squad and always last. I was third from smallest at 5ft 2" and 90lbs soaking wet, followed by 'Taffy' Sherratt and 'Titch' Hughes. Then 'C' Coy, 2 Div. every Thursday/Friday on 'Late Dinners' for a year! I left AAS at 5ft 6" and now weighed in at 140lbs!

Reading OBAN40, Autumn 2007, page 45, 'Eggy' Eggleton, 52B. If all ex-boys had served their 20 years, REME would have been 'wall-to-wall' ex-boys. Like 'Eggy', I only served 10 years – Sept '52 to Sept '62. I did not take the extra 24/6d per week. Many thought that I was stupid, but for all those that did, why were they buying themselves out, between 1958 and 1962, at much more cost than the 24/6d per week originally 'saved'? My comments to 'Eggy' and, I suppose, many others is, *"What happened next, after leaving REME?"*

In my case, after leaving REME in 1962 – read 'Radio Man', the remarkable rise and fall of C.O. Stanley (the multi-millionaire owner of the PYE group). My own personal 'What happened next' starts in Chapter 9, 'Danger Years'. I have all the pages that I know about bookmarked. I was an Instrument Technician in the Research and Development Dept. of *Unicam Instruments Ltd*, York St, Cambridge, and married my

wife Ann in December 1962.

In 1967, another 'What happened next' moment. I moved to Milton Keynes as an Engineering Lecturer and retired in 1993 aged 57. Retirement age should have been 65! This is another story. My sheet-metal class certainly did 'classy' work, thanks to my own training in the subject by JR Williams (see pages 39/40, OBAN37, Autumn 2006).

For a very small light-weight boy who came from Framlingham, Suffolk in 1952, followed by 'Boy' or 'Beau' Mike Allen, 'A' Coy, 54A(?) Radar Mech. Then David Farrington and his friend 'Ginger' B Hammond (approximately 1960), both joining the Army Air Corps after leaving AAS. Mike and David left REME after 9 years. Mike joined the Pye Group in Cambridge and worked on the colour equipment, when BBC2 came on-stream. Who remembers the TV advert, *"PYE x 625 lines = 1963"*? David went to Great Yarmouth, to work on helicopters flying out to the oil rigs in the North Sea. 'Ginger' B Hammond I am not too sure about, but I think he went to America?

Arriving at AAS was like entering a different world. Thanks for the 'growing up and life-changing experience' that provided good training for what was to come. For those that carried on serving up to their 20 years and over, who remembers Sgt Johnny Neal, ex-13 Inf Wksp and 27 GW Wksp (Malaya, UK and BAOR)? Or AQMS/Capt Cronin, a real gentleman, ex-39 Base Wksp, Bicester and then Wksp Officer at 27 GW Wksp, BAOR? There are many more names that I remember, as I have a 27 GW Wksp photo, dated 1960 and taken at Crookham Camp, just outside Fleet.

To finish, this is an attachment to a 'e-mail', as I am attending a 'Word processing' course at 'ACE' (Adult Continuing Education) in Stony Stratford. My tutor is a lady by the name of Liz Bulbeck (Tuesday

mornings, 9.30 to 11.30) and it is real fun. I have been educated to use 'Computers' and I have got 'Certificates' to prove it! *"What happens next?"* is another story, for another time.

(And who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks eh, John? Ed.)



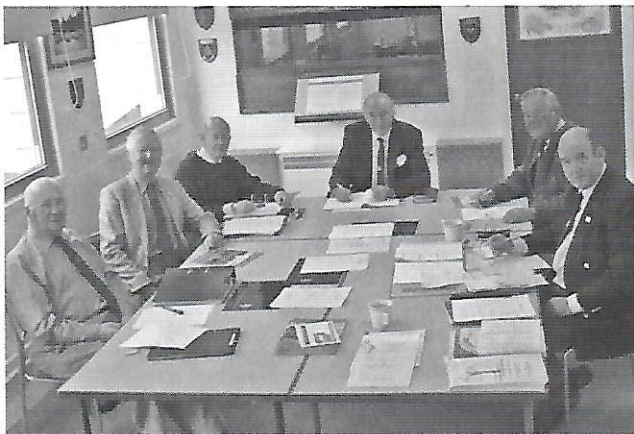
Eggy Eggleton, 52B, writes:

In reference to OBAN40 and its Reunion 2007 Roll-call, I see (well, I do **not** see actually!) that my name is missing. I realise that I only attended for the day, but so did Kaye Gilpin – and he drove me there! Ce la vie. My computer is playing up at present – I cannot record on floppies, so am sending in a hand-written item on *Scammells*, which I hope I haven't sent in before! My badge collection now includes 38 EME badges, not including 5 South African metal arm badges for EME units. Cheers everybody.

(As with your computer Eggy, sometimes they do not compute – we'll try harder next time! Thanks for the article, which will appear in due course. Ed.)

Apologies

Just a quick Editor's note here, to apologise for not saying a big "Thank You" to Max Warwick (49B) for kindly sending me his collection of photographs taken at the 2007 Reunion, from which we were able to provide the magnificent four-page centre spread in OBAN 40.



Administering the Association

The Management Committee meets regularly, usually in the REME Museum, to manage and administer the Association. They are chaired by Brian Hutchins with Bill Cleasby as Secretary

Your Association is administered by the Management Committee, each member of which has a particular responsibility. They cannot be successful, however, without your help. This short piece has been written to remind the long standing members (and to inform the new members) of how those responsibilities are shared. If you have not attended AGMs recently (perhaps, remaining at the bar in the mess or not being able to get to reunions) you may have little idea of the challenges that the individual members of the committee face throughout the year.

Membership Secretary. Fred Mills, the Membership Secretary, has the task of recruiting new members and keeping track of existing members. In 2008, thanks to the Data Protection Act, this is not a simple task. From his list of members and their addresses, Fred produces the labels for the OBAN envelopes. On each occasion that an OBAN is despatched, a number are returned as "Addressee Gone Away". In the past, Fred would have been able to trace many through Electoral Rolls, Telephone Directories and the like. Today, he relies on you to tell him if you move house or to realise that your OBAN has not arrived on time. The Membership Secretary's message is: *If you move house, change telephone number or change email address, please let him know.*

Treasurer. Mike Davis, the Treasurer, is responsible for receiving your joining fees and subscriptions, and for ensuring that the Association expenditure is matched to the income. To achieve this match, Mike produces an annual budget which is submitted to the AGM for

approval. There are a number of ways of paying the Annual Administrative Subscription. Most members now use the Committee's approved route of Direct Debit which is far far the easiest way to pay for all concerned. Members do not have to remember to send a cheque (or be reminded when they forget, as a number do, each year) and when the fees rise, as they do on occasions, no action is required of the member.

Although some members still pay by Standing Order, this is discouraged because the Order can only be amended or cancelled by the member in person. Despite fees rising from £5 to £10 and now to £15, a number of members are still paying £5 each year by Standing Order while others have resigned and failed to cancel their orders. All those currently paying by Standing Order are urged to change to Direct Debit as soon as possible.

Other members pay by cheque and this, also, is discouraged as the Treasurer does not have the time nor the resources to send reminders to members.

The message is: *If at all possible, please pay your Administrative Subscription by Direct Debit.*

OBAN Editor. Pete Gripton edits the newsletter and relies on the members to provide letters and articles for publication. Many members write for the OBAN but even more do not. Most members have a tale to tell and Pete is always looking for letters and articles from new contributors and, in particular, from the younger members.

To make his task as easy as possible, Peter prefers letters and articles to be

written using a word-processor (ideally Microsoft Word) and then emailed to him. If the members does not have email available, the contribution should be sent on CD or floppy disk. It is most important that photographs are not embedded into the letter or article but are submitted as separate files. Photographs for publication should either be sent in their original form (they will be returned) or as high quality digital images. If the photographs are to look good on the printed page, they should be produced at about 1000 dpi, be a number of Mb in size, and sent on disk. Photographs of low resolution, suitable for emailing, are rarely good enough for printing. The Editor's message is: *Keep it coming!*

Webmaster or Web Developer. David Schofield is the dedicated technical expert who develops, publishes and maintains our outstanding web-site. In the 21st Century, no organisation of any standing is without a web-site. While David can write some of the words himself, like Pete Gripton, he relies on the members to feed him with material.

The Secretary. Bill Cleasby, as the Secretary, is responsible for everything that is not the responsibility of another committee member. In particular, though, he is the mastermind behind our hugely successful annual Reunion. In fact, Mastermind is not an adequate description for the man who organises the Reunion very nearly single-handed.

The Assistant Secretary. Keith Evans is the committee member who makes Bill's life bearable by assisting with some of the Secretary's tasks. Without his efforts, for example, the Association's participation in the Cenotaph parade would probably not take place.

Although no longer a member of the Management Committee, Peter Gibson has been contracted to provide IT support to the Association and, as you read in Pete Gripton's editorial, to take the Editor's output and transform it into this newsletter prior to sending it to the printer.

The Chairman ensures that it all works together, just like clockwork!

AOBA Members Deceased

Robin Harris, intake 45A, died 18th October 2007, notified by his brother Capt PKC Harris RN (Ret'd), joined AAS Feb 1945, trained as an Armourer, served in Korea with 1st Middlesex Regiment

Brian Mitchell, 60A, passed away March 2007 – late notification

Harrogate Award Presentation

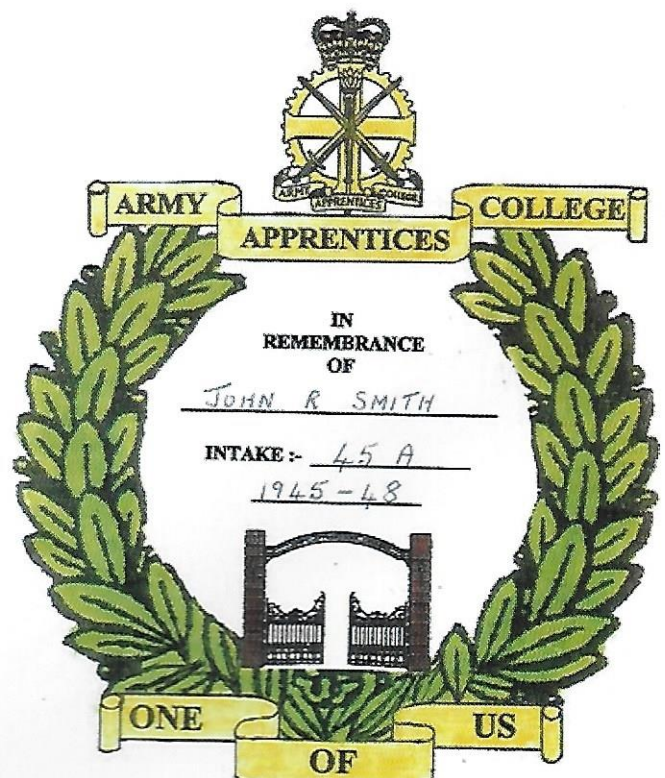
The photograph shows Cfn B P O'Neill receiving the AOBA prize from DEME(A), Brigadier N T S Williams MBE ADC, for being the best technical Junior Soldier of the 17th Intake at Harrogate AFC. Also present is our esteemed Hon Sec, Bill Cleasby. The actual passing-out parade took place in August but, due to the posting of the REME Company Commander and REME ASM, we were not advised of who had won until just recently.



AOBA Remembrance Scroll

At the last Annual General Meeting, it was proposed that a Remembrance Scroll be introduced in memory of deceased members. This would be sent to the deceased member's family, as a lasting memento from the Arborfield Old Boys' Association. This has now been ratified and will shortly come into being. A sample of the Scroll is shown here. The Remembrance Scroll can be provided retrospectively for members who died before its introduction. Colleagues can initiate a request by notifying the Membership Secretary (Fred Mills). All such requests must have prior approval from the member's family; this is most important to avoid causing any distress to the family.

Eddie Broomfield, 45A



Cenotaph Parade 2007

by Larry Jarvis, 56B

On the 10th November 2007, a small group of ex-boys gathered at the Victory Services Club (VSC) in London. This is a venue that has been used for the last three years, with provides both affordable accommodation and good food. The eight of us who sat down for dinner that evening were Jimmy Gardner, John Reynolds, Phil Graham, Larry Jarvis, George Dixon, Andy Cameron, John Harte and Keith Evans. A friend of Jim's,



Willie Brown (aged 84), was due to join us but unfortunately couldn't make it. The meal was very good, washed down with red and white wines, then finished off with a nice drop of port. The company, of course, was excellent! At around 2300hrs, we toasted 'absent brethren', before retiring to the bar upstairs, which was already busy with people enjoying the 'old time music' - ladies seemed to outnumber the men, or was I seeing double?

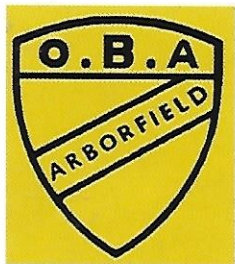
The following morning, ten of us gathered on Horse Guards Parade, those in attendance being Jim Gardner (I/C parade complete with bowler) and those from the previous evening's dinner, along with Paul Hudson and





From left to right: Jim Gardner, John Reynolds, Phil Graham, Larry Jarvis, George Dixon, Andy Cameron, John Harte, Keith Evans, Paul Hudson, Marshall Day

Anybody thinking of joining us next year will be more than welcome - as I said, we sat eight for dinner, but could have sat many more. Phone 0207 616 8335 and book a bed for next year. Let's outnumber the Beachley Boys!



Marshall Day. The weather was kind, with only some slight drizzle while we waited, which stopped once the parade started. It was wonderful to see so many people there, it being reported that 10,000 had gathered for this year's parade. It was a very moving experience to see so many elderly veterans in wheelchairs, being supported by their comrades, from every regiment you could think of. After the parade had passed the Cenotaph, we wheeled round to Birdcage Walk and back to Horse Guards again, to another saluting stand, where the Duke of Edinburgh took the salute. We then dispersed back to the VSC.



Presentation to a Past Chairman

Missing from the tales of the 2007 Reunion published in Issue 40, was a report of the presentation made to our immediate past Chairman, Peter Gibson. Just before the parade commenced (and after the excitement of Dougie Huxley's badly cut leg) Jim Macdonald presented Peter with a wonderful tapestry stool which he had crafted himself, very like the one which he had presented to Bill Cleasby the year before. The stool, pictured on the left, now has pride of place in Peter's living room in Andover.

Peter was extremely grateful for such a generous gift.

