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Issue 44



OBAN



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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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, as apprentice or staff member, 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 Office at the REME Museum, and on the Association website, www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



I am sat here looking out on yet another cold and frosty morning – the country seems to have gone into ‘deep-freeze’ mode! I sincerely hope that you have all battled through the cold spell and that, by the time you read these few words, Mother Nature will be regaling us with a warmer smile!

I am hoping that this issue of OBAN makes its bow more or less on time, as there was an extended gap between the last two issues. It reminds me of that age-old comment made by teachers on school reports – “*Must try harder*”!

As usual, it is always hard to decide on the balance of articles and essays, which the readership will hopefully continue to find interesting and – at times – amusing! Not that I have any complaints on that score, regarding the material received – it is a privilege and delight to read through and assemble all the ‘tales of yore’ that hit my desk!

It will have been noticed that, outside of the 48-page ‘reunion’ issue, we have been fortunate enough to have increased the other two annual issues from 32 to 40 pages each. This has certainly given me greater scope in selecting from the large treasure trove of material ‘in the bank’. However, this obviously involves a greater cost, and your Committee will keep this in mind in respect of future issues, as ‘budgeting’ is an ongoing process.

On a more personal basis, I am proud to say that intake 56B had another great get-together in October and plans are already afoot to ‘do it again’ next year – which will be the fiftieth anniversary of us leaving the old School back in 1959. I know it’s been said many times, many ways – but “*where does the time go to?*”

In closing, may I say once again a huge ‘thank you’ to all contributors to OBAN, who continue to make the task of this Editor such a pleasant one. If you have never put pen to page, or fingers to keyboard, before – make 2009 the year that you decide to break the mould and have your words in print – in OBAN. I look forward to hearing from you!

Pete Gripton, 56B

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OFFICERS' REPORTS

Chairman's Message



In OBAN43, I recalled to you the story of a young Corporal working with 94 Locating Regiment. Perhaps it is appropriate to switch to the other end of the spectrum, where the young Corporal ex-apprentice has emerged from the career chrysalis as a Colonel, in his last posting before retirement and as 'Member G' at the Ordnance Board in Abbey Wood, Bristol.

The Colonel's role as Member G, short for guided weapons, was to ensure the user's and public safety of the Army's guided weapon systems before they came into service. To help him in this task, he had the valued expertise of a number of Majors and retired officers, who were experts in their fields. Throughout the development of the systems, there were many trials to demonstrate that the equipment did what it was supposed to - and safely so! Probably the most important was the final manned live firing trial. It was a tradition with the Board that these manned trials were not only observed by a high ranking officer of the Board, but that he should participate in the trial 'at the sharp end', either operating/firing or alongside the soldier who was doing the firing. The message was clear - *"Put your money where your mouth is where safety is concerned."*

It came to pass that a man-portable anti-tank missile system was to demonstrate its effectiveness over a set range and penetration of a great depth of armour from its fully armed shaped warhead. The trial was set and, on the appointed day, Member G duly turned up at the range. Kitted out in combats, boots and beret (made a pleasant change!), he took his place alongside an infantry S/Sergeant, who was to be the gunner/operator, also dressed in combats, but looking more the part, wearing a helmet. After others witnessing the event had retreated to a place of safety, the missile was fired. A small charge ejected it from the canister on the launcher and, within a couple of metres, the main booster ignited and the missile tore away like a bat out of hell, finding the centre of the scanned laser array. Several hundred metres later, the missile hit its target with a loud explosion. All was right with the world, the Colonel and the gunner stood up and the Colonel congratulated him on a good shot, giving him a good natured punch to the chest (as one does). It was then that he noticed the rigidity of the S/Sergeant's frame and he remarked on this. *"Oh that"*, said the NCO, *"I always wear Kevlar with these missile tests. You can't always trust them, regardless of what they say!"*

Brian Hutchins (61B)

From the Honorary Secretary



May I start by wishing everyone a very happy New Year and hope that you all survive the fall-out from the 'Credit Crunch' as we progress through 2009. The AOBA HQ here at Arborfield is in good heart and as busy as ever, and you will be pleased to hear that we don't expect to lay off any staff! We recently installed Keith Evans into his own office space, complete with heater, AOBA telephone and computer. He can be contacted directly, either on tel: 01189761923 or by e-mail: aoba-asstsec@btconnect.com. Keith really is one of the unsung heroes of the Association, working extremely long hours on AOBA business; if we had an AOBA medal to present, he would surely be a worthy recipient. Keep it to yourselves, as Keith didn't want me to tell anyone, but he will be eligible for the reduced subscription this year! The AOBA continues to grow and I find particularly heartening the growing number of new members from the 60s intakes. Some of this is undoubtedly due to the hard work being put in by Jim McIntyre, Charlie Buckett and John Crowther, chasing up ex-members of their Divs. Well done, chaps. As far as the future of Arborfield is concerned, it has all gone horribly quiet, although I am sure it is bubbling along somewhere in the background. I hope to report something a bit more substantial in the next issue of OBAN, which will include the application form for the 2009 reunion.

God Bless, Bill Cleasby (61C)

Web Developer's Report



If you've looked at the website since the start of the year, you will know this year we have our own AOBA 2009 calendar. I put this together using some of the photographs loaned by the Museum, to see if there is an interest in developing the idea. I have to say the feedback has been very positive, so expect it to continue next year on a

grandeur scale. If you haven't downloaded your copy - go directly to the home page and do it now!

Last report, I made an appeal for volunteers to head up their intakes - the more Old Boys we can find the better. I am glad to say a number have been in contact and are working away in the background, but we are still looking for more - so don't be shy - get in touch and I'll help you get started.

Don't forget, we look forward to seeing any photos you have of Arborfield/Army life. We've found the best format now, so if you've photos to send in, please save them as Jpeg with a file size of around 150kb. If they are 'landscape', around 600 pixel width works well and, for 'portrait', try 400 pixels.

As ever, the Forum continues to provide a friendly environment for banter - long may it carry on that way. My thanks go to all who use it - and if you don't - why not?

God Bless, David 'Tich' Schofield (65A)

Money Matters



Another year has passed extremely quickly for me as Treasurer. Your fund is in a healthy position financially and is being examined by the accountants as I write. Gift Aid has been collected from the Inland Revenue, the reduction of annual subscriptions for our more senior Old Boys has been actioned, and our Reserve Fund has been transferred to a Bank of Scotland Guaranteed Fixed Deposit Account (for better or for worse!). Subscriptions for 2009 have started to arrive but please, if you are a cash payer, I would be grateful to receive them by 31 Jan 09.

The history book, *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*, has been selling well. A thousand copies were produced, of which we have only ninety left in stock, so do not delay in acquiring one from either the REME Museum shop, Pete Gripton or myself.

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All 1960 intakes need to be aware that 2010 is their 50th anniversary and that hopefully they can be persuaded to sign up to the AOBA.

*Enough from the Treasurer for now - All the best
Mike Davis, (60B)*

Recruiting and Membership



Firstly let me thank those of you who have contacted me to help us find new members. I have been away lately and, now that the festive season is behind us, I shall get to work on them. Please keep up the good work and let me know of anyone you think should be a member with us. A

happy New Year to you all!

Kind regards, Fred Mills (51B)

Report from Keith Evans (45A) on Membership details

It is encouraging that 14 new Members have joined us since the

last OBAN: Stokoe DM, 41A; Burnell DF, 47B; Read NR, 51B; Sly-Jex DR, 53B; Upritchard J, 57A; Muir MG, 59A; Coxon WE, 60C; Flynn JM, 62A; Clarke MM, 62C; Griffiths JW, 64B; Gaylard SD, 64C; Kavanagh OP, 66A; Spencer AC, 70X and Dalzell M, 79C;

Two resignations: Joe Plant, 52A; Irwin Grounsell, 52A.

3 OBANs returned:

NP Dunmore, 88A – last known at 134 Clothierholme Park, Ripon, N. Yorks

J Kavanagh – last known at 3 The Vines, Barkham, Wokingham, Berks

D Pilkington – last known at 14 New Road, Kelvedon, Colchester, Essex

If anyone knows the whereabouts of the above, please contact Keith on 01189761923 or any other Committee member. Keith now has a new e-mail address of aoba-assstsec@btconnect.com

1 Member rejoined - K Anderson, 58A.

An Ex Apprentice All At Sea 1980 to 2008.....

A little bit of personal history.

by Andy Knowles (64A D Company)

(A follow up to 'It All Started In 1963')

In 1979 at the age of thirty I decided to leave the Army. I had young children and decided it was time to attempt a settled life. I had planned on remaining in the South of England, but had no joy in getting employment that I really wanted. So towards the end of 1979 we decided to move back home to Aberdeen. We settled quickly, living with my father for a short time. Early 1980 I started work with Marconi Marine (Oil Industry Division). On joining Marconi's, I met the only other ex Arborfield Apprentice who was working in the oil industry in telecommunications, that I knew of. This was Arthur Gibson (57A) whom I met again at the 2007 reunion. (A few stories could probably be told about the early days at Marconi, on various equipment courses, don't mention any bars, and flower displays to Arthur).

This employment in a way was to be on a par with Arborfield, and the Army in general. After spending about two months at the Marconi workshop in Aberdeen, getting familiar with some of the equipment in use on offshore installations, I was sent on my first job offshore to the ill fated Piper Alpha platform. (For those who may not know, this installation was destroyed in an explosion, and massive fire in 1988 with the loss of 167 lives).

My first trip offshore coincided with another accident offshore, with the Alexander Keiland semi-submersible rig. I



was flying out to the Piper and heard when I arrived, that the Alexander Keiland had broken its anchors in a storm and one of its legs had broken. This resulted in a list, and eventual capsizing. I believe they managed to evacuate all but 3 personnel before it capsized. It was eventually towed away to a Fiord in Norway.

Anyway back to my first job. I was on the Piper Alpha to install a new aero beacon for flying operations. This was required because they had installed a new helideck, installed was a bit misleading, as they just lay the new one on top of the old. So I strung the new wire antenna around the helideck, removed the old equipment from the cabinet outside. (Not the best of sites considering the weather conditions.) I installed the new equipment in the Radio Room and commissioned it, and was ready for returning to onshore. Three days

that was my first offshore trip.

I then spent the next eight months going to various installations around the North Sea. In between I had a six week spell in Hamburg at the Blohm & Voss docks starting the installation of a new radio room in a module for the Fulmar Platform. Six weeks there and practically nothing was done. Time waiting for the likes of electricians to supply power, and install sockets etc. was the biggest hassle. Especially when they were Romanians, and they thought you could install a cluster of four 13amp sockets orientated in all four directions. I had enough after six weeks and returned to Aberdeen and some other lucky person had the pleasure of finishing the job.

I then started my first, as they called it permanent job, on the Ninian North Platform, with a two weeks on two weeks off rota. This was much better to my mind to have a regular routine. After a year on this platform I applied for a job with the owners. (Chevron an American owned company.) I was successful and started with the company in October 1982 on the Ninian Central Platform.

NINIAN CENTRAL PLATFORM

Ninian Central was Chevron's flagship installation in the North Sea. It was constructed at Kishorn base in Scotland. It was a massive construction, with the



concrete base at 600,000 tons, the largest concrete construction, at the time in the world to be floated out to its position approximately 100 miles east of the Shetland Isles in 450ft of water. During the passage to the Ninian Field it was at times barely 10 feet above the sea bed. Once in position, it stayed in place by sheer weight, all up with the topside at over 700,000 tons. Unlike other standard platform installations, which were metal construction, and had their legs pinned to the seabed by basically what were giants nails, at 75 to 100 feet long.

Having already spent time on the Northern platform I was relatively familiar with the equipment on the Central, apart from the Tropospheric Scatter main communications link to onshore. I soon got the hang of this system. Five metre dishes were pumping out 1000w to be received at the BT station on the Shetlands for onward routing to the mainland. Both the Northern and Southern platforms had line of sight radio links into the Central to be multiplexed on to the main Tropo link. Lots of evenings and nights were interrupted over the next few years keeping these systems going. But the most labour intensive system was the telephone exchange. It was no other than the Strowager electro-mechanical monstrosity which took up half of the 25 foot by 25 foot communications room. This equipment must have been obsolete when it was installed. I remember being at the Marconi site in Coventry on a course and saw some bits and pieces on display in cabinets. In the late 1980's it was time to get a bit more up to date with equipment, and we had new electronic exchanges installed on the Ninian platforms. These were the TSX50 and S200 Mitel exchanges, they were a delight to work with compared to the Strowager, which I took great delight in ripping out, and disposing of. Also at the time we were in throws of getting into data networking and communications. So we had new TDM multiplexing equipment which overall was making the whole communications set up a lot more reliable and easier for maintenance purposes. PC's were in their

infancy as far as we were concerned. (Lots of ZX Spectrums going about) But further progress was made with the introduction of PC's with 'Windows', a revolution to the offshore world. These soon took the place of teleprinters and typewriters.

During this time we did enjoy ourselves as well,

there were onshore parties organised for all parts of the country. The furthest we travelled for one was down to Portsmouth on the Friday, returning on the Sunday, a long way for a few drinks but always fun. (Not as sedate as the AOBA reunions.) We also had our characters offshore. One that springs to mind was Malcolm Paterson. He insisted he was the only sane person on the platform, as he had a certificate from Nettleby Hospital saying he was. (An ex-matelot for you). He gave an outstanding performance when we had a VIP visiting party offshore going round the installation. As the party were going through the turbine hall, there was Malcolm running around with a kids windmill stuck to his hard hat, saying 'I am only testing the wind strength'. When engaged in conversation he was asked what his family thought of him working offshore, his reply was 'the wife only thinks I have nipped out for a packet of fags'. These were only a few of the pranks he got up to, some could not possibly be printed.

Over the next few years things settled down communications wise, in the Ninian field, there were a few more updates on equipment, but nothing mind boggling. In 1992 I then moved on to the project for



Chevron's new installation, the 'Alba North Platform'

ALBA NORTH PLATFORM

This was a new challenge again as I was to spend six months onshore at the yard building the accommodation module for the platform. This included the new telecommunications room. Located in this was the majority of the systems, including a KU band satellite communication link equipment, line of sight radio, multiplex, UHF repeater stations, telephone exchange, PA system, Cisco routers, and a few other computer based bits and pieces. This was being built at Burnt Island in Fife. I was there to oversee the installation work of the equipment and do some pre-commissioning work. I also spent a few weeks over in Holland where the module



containing the radio room was being built. I did manage to get home most weekends during this time. In July 1993 it was time for all the modules to be taken offshore and assembled during a period called 'Hook Up'. This lasted for almost eight months before first oil was produced from the platform. At the height of activity there were over 400 people employed fitting it all together. Full commissioning took another 6 months.

We all started on a three weeks on three weeks off rota, although I did have four weeks holiday to take as well, which I spread out over the year. Once all the commissioning was completed, we settled down to, an average of one hundred and twenty five people on the platform. (Max 144).

Work now for the next few years consisted of maintaining all the communications and entertainment systems. (Yes we had SKY TV.) Life progressed easily and technology was updated as the years passed, but nothing really exciting. The next major step as far as I was concerned was changing to a two weeks offshore, and three weeks at home rota. Only twenty weeks work a year, more than enough, I was still getting paid the same, and more time to play golf.

ALBA NORTH WHERE I RESIDE OFFSHORE

The next major change in the way we communicated with onshore was to move away from satellite communications, and going to a network of Line Of Site Radio links. These links were from several oil installations to one central point, and from there via a fibre optic cable which ran in conjunction with an oil pipeline to shore. This gave all participants a much better and faster communications link. (To be upgraded to 8Mhz. in the near future not as fast as some onshore but far superior to what was available offshore.) We also now have a separate Wireless Internet Cafe, for individuals to use their own laptops. The next two years should not see very many changes, apart from me probably retiring at the age of sixty two. (Even more time to play golf).

Wish all the best to those who know me, and all those I have yet to meet again.



Commander Equipment Support 4th Division and Principal Aircraft Engineer *Colonel Brian Hamilton writes...*

As I reflect on today's operational tempo, indulge me for a moment as I gallop through parts of my own career to show changing times and challenges. It's been some time since I first appeared in the *Craftsman* Magazine. The attached photograph featured in May 1975. As a newly qualified Aircraft Technician, I had been awarded the *Westland Trophy* (presented here by Director Royal Artillery at a Middle Wallop Wings parade). I was eager to get out there – no challenge too great. A posting to 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron, then in Plymouth, offered just what I was after; a 'band of brothers' bond and identity, particularly strong in commando, airborne forces and all units on operations. Northern Ireland was a demanding theatre then and, as time has passed, it is easy to forget the atrocities and many lives lost at a rate no less than today on operations. 'Op BANNER' is no more and places like Warrenpoint and South Armagh now go peacefully about their business, at spots where soldiers lost their lives during this era.

In the 80s, those in Germany were preparing for the Russian onslaught across the Inner German Border. Rehearsing unit



2 Lt Brian Hamilton some time before his promotion to Colonel!

callouts and rigid procedures were the norm. An Argentine General called Galtieri offered some relief from this routine by invading the Falkland Islands in '82. A frustrating time for me, since I was finishing my aero-mechanical degree as a young officer at Shrivenham when my old colleagues from 3 Commando were in the thick of it at San Carlos. It was a clear battle won; Maggie Thatcher riding on the wave of military success, gained another term in government and then 'Options for

Change' followed, reducing our strength! I went back to preparing for the Russian onslaught, first as OC LAD QDG and then as BEME 4 Armoured Brigade in Munster. 'Challenger 2' and 'Warrior' were being rolled out and I found myself regularly briefing government ministers when they visited exercises. We held multi-national formation, month-long exercises, all carefully choreographed to a script - with the German farmer happily reaping profits from military track damage to his crops!

In the early 90s, I found myself in Aldershot as OC 10 Airborne Workshop, practising for out-of-area operations. Aldershot was teeming with airborne forces then; it was truly Home of the British Army. It was possible to complete several jumps, from the balloon on Queen's Avenue, before going into the office. With the move of airborne forces to Colchester, by comparison there is now some tumbleweed blowing through Aldershot. However, the developments planned as part of Project Allenby-Connaught will produce a fantastic super-garrison in Aldershot (and Tidworth) in 2010. I was also very fortunate to command 103 Btn REME and gain experience with the TA. It is worth

noting that 103 Btn REME alone has provided over 130 Individual Reinforcements on recent operations. In this 100th anniversary year of the TA, over 1,200 personnel pan-TA have been deployed on operations and they have earned their share of gallantry awards. It is no wonder that we continue to send our best warrant officers and SNCOs to TA units as PSIs.

Fast forwarding, we all know where we were on 11 September 2001. I was driving to work, in my first week as the UK 'Apache' Liaison officer in Huntsville, Alabama, when car radio reports of a light aircraft crashing into the twin towers later proved inaccurate. It was clear life had changed as we knew it – and would never be so cosy again. As we held our breath waiting for US reaction, I admired the way they galvanised as a nation. In the following two years, I worked closely with the US in developing our own *Apache* programme, learning useful lessons from their deployment to Iraq. As we became committed to this operation, I returned to UK on promotion to manage support for our *Apache* programme as it approached introduction to service. I am proud of my contribution to the first operational deployment and the successful sustainment of *Apache* in Afghanistan, at a time when the most

senior government and military eyes keenly watched. This has been just one of many successful acquisition stories. The effectiveness of recent weapons, vehicles and aircraft deployed operationally has been phenomenal. As a former project manager for *Rapier*, I truly appreciate the response times of UORs, cautious of the need though for a proper support package to match delivery of the equipment.

As Commander ES of 4th Division and Principal Aircraft Engineer, I am totally focused on delivering operational effect. I tell my Team that anything which does not contribute directly or indirectly to the operational effort is irrelevant and should be stopped or avoided. We are now experiencing the most intense operational tempo since the formation of the Corps and we must make best use of all our assets. Despite 'Harmony' guidelines, we have a posting cycle that is often too punishing and we have training units sometimes working 3 out of 4 weekends. 'Better than on an op tour', I hear you say, but we need to work more cleverly. The rollout of In Barracks Equipment Support will relieve REME tradesmen/women of routine tasks. This is not yet fully optimised, since Defence Support Group are not yet fully recruited in pinch point areas; there are also conflicting challenges for them elsewhere supporting the

emerging Land Training Fleet etc. We are, however, now making better use of the TA supporting regular battalions for clearance of routine work at weekends, but this has more potential and must be linked formally with TA training weekends.

As I reflect on the last 30 plus years, the 4th Division has ADMINCON responsibility for 60 percent of the Army, across southern England (as well as Brunei and Nepal), and I am struck by many similarities in the challenges that we now face. Whether on peacekeeping duties in Belfast, or now in Basra or Bastion, the quality of our soldiers (and civilian staff) has never been better. In this appointment I am privileged to meet many soldiers and officers, with the same infectious can-do attitude. We ignore the needs of our people at out peril; I have seen (and experienced) areas where this has failed. Those of us in command have a fundamental leadership role in exercising selfless commitment – our people are our number one asset.

(I thank Col Brian and Craftsman magazine for their kind permission for me to reproduce this slightly shortened version of the Editorial that appeared in November's (2008) magazine. Ed.)

The inquisitive mind of a child

*"Why are they selling poppies Mummy?
Selling poppies in town today."*

*"The poppies, child, are flowers of love
For the men who marched away."*

*"But why have they chosen a poppy, Mummy?
Why not a beautiful rose?"*

*"Because, child, men fought and died
In the fields where the poppy grows."*

*"But why are the poppies so red, Mummy?
Why are the poppies so red?"*

*"Red is the colour of blood, my child,
The blood that our soldiers shed."*

*"The heart of the poppy is black, Mummy.
Why does it have to be black?"*

*"Black, my child, is the symbol of grief
For the men who never came back."*

*"But why, Mummy, are you crying so?
Your tears are giving me pain."*

*"My tears are my fears for you, my child,
Lest the world is forgetting again."*

(With the 90th anniversary of the first Remembrance Day having itself having now passed into history, the above poem – by an unknown author – touchingly reminds us all just what the symbol of the poppy stands for. Ed.)

Berliner Luft – und Sand!

by Chas Pepper, 43B

955 Car Company Royal Army Service Corps, Berlin. 1948

The RASC is moved out of its spacious *Frankfurt Halle* residence and relocated into a large garage-cum-workshop. Piled against a wall was a heap of automobile-type engines made of light metal, most certainly not aluminium, bits that had been obviously left over from the war. On one side of the compound, separated from it by a fence, was a large area of allotments. Each plot of arable land had its own large hut. In the evenings, a mate and I used to climb onto the easily accessible garage roof, overlooking these garden huts. From there, we made acquaintance with two sun-bronzed sisters, about our own age. Unfortunately, the separating wall was too high; jumping down would have been manageable, but climbing back up again was too great a challenge. Virtually everything I'd been taught back at Arborfield has since been used for one escapade or another. But, "What", I used to wonder, "had been the reason for my being forced to climb that vertical gym rope and touch the ceiling?" And now – here it was! Being part of a Recovery crew, we borrowed a long rope and we were away. Everything seemed to be going well, until our idyll was abruptly broken by the arrival of the girls' mother. She took steps to prevent any possible 'soldiers' farewells', by wrapping each pair of us in a large swaddling blanket and muttering something like, "Ist mir kalt heute Abend!" Being in such close contact with a comely girl was nice at first, but we were too tightly wrapped for further pleasantries! Someone else must have also noticed our Tarzan-like activities and an order was immediately given that the roof was out of bounds. So that was the end of that, a pity really, as it was a welcome interlude. (That was the 'luft' bit – now for the 'sand'!

Being part of the Company's recovery team, I used to travel all over the British Sector in our *Austin K6 Wrecker*. There were frequent calls out to the Army's recreation sites on the lakes (*Sunderland* flying boats made use of these during the Berlin blockade) and into the *Grunewald* – although there wasn't really much green woodland left in 1948! Berlin seemed to have been built on sand and I did once see a 'rolling wave' of sand in the forest.

Perhaps this dry sand may account for the several puzzling lightning strikes I also witnessed. These came out of clear blue skies, hitting buildings but causing no damage – just leaving a black scorch mark. Once, when sitting in a room with a copper mesh across its window, I saw a sudden flash, followed by an almighty crack, as a strike hit the wall by my side, leaving this familiar black mark. Had I been leaning forwards, I may have felt the full impact. (It has since been cruelly suggested that this may have been to my improvement!) The firing ranges were located in the *Grunewald*. The entrance was under a large horizontal bridge that connected two 'guardrooms', still painted with the title of their previous occupants – 'Panzer Grenadier Regiment'. Once inside the ranges, one could see much residue of war – piles of burned rifles and other destroyed equipment. One curiosity



The Grunewald in 1948

was the cartridges with wooden bullets – were they dummies or blanks? One incident I recall from those range days concerns the firing of the old *Sten* 'thirty shilling' sub-machine gun. History says that was the cost of manufacture, while experience and folklore stated that, once the trigger of the *Sten* was pulled – the gun then did just about what it wanted!

In this case, a man on the firing point was heard shouting that his weapon would not cease firing, whilst he was turning to the right, scattering 9mm bullets across the range towards us! The Lieutenant in charge of the shoot grabbed him by both shoulders while we, about five of us, pressed up against the young officer's back for protection – never again would he be able to boast such closely loyal followers! Thankfully, the magazine soon ran out of ammo, and we detached ourselves from the officer, feeling rather sheepish. The 'Golden Rule' with the old

Sten was to keep it pointed down-range until the magazine had emptied. This stop-gap weapon could even start firing if given a sharp knock – is it any wonder that the Americans called it the 'Stench' gun?

It so happened that the recovery wagon was called out to a job in the Havel Lake area. This was a longish trip and so we were very late in getting back to the workshop. In passing, the *Austin K6* had picked up a fair amount of loose sand, which we said that we'd leave for now and hose off the next day. Unfortunately the ASM got there first, felt aggrieved for some reason, and charged the pair of us with something or other. The odd thing was that this ASM failed to turn up as a witness, but the workshop Captain did – giving us a partial commendation as to our normal hard work. But this didn't prevent us earning a week's loss of pay, which didn't hit me too hard, as life went on as usual. British Forces in Berlin at that time were paid in 'BAFVs', denominated in £:s:d and valid only in Army establishments. To use German facilities, you needed either *Reichsmarks* or baccy – both fairly easy to obtain! Travelling on the trams or underground was free of charge, something I took full advantage of to explore the city.



A £1 BAFV

On one exploratory *U-bahn* trip, I found the scenery around the track becoming increasingly rural. Berlin city was divided into British, American, French and Russian sectors – but surrounded entirely by the Russian Zone of East Germany. Travel within the four sectors was unrestricted, but the Russian Zone was a different matter. I had the feeling that this is where the train was heading – a direction in which I had no intention of being. So, at the next station, I hopped out to board a returning train. Once aboard, I found the carriage full of women, all clutching large bags of potatoes – they had been 'kartoffel holen'

(or potato fetching) from distant farms. The Russian blockade of the city had cut off the supply of potatoes, indeed the British Garrison was living off 'pom' – dehydrated spuds that were easy to carry in the Air Lift. A youngish woman stood near me and she looked exhausted. On an impulse, I gave her a sweet I was carrying in my pocket. "*Danke*", she said, as she put the sweet into her apron pocket – followed by something that touched me deeply, "*Fur meine Tochter – for my daughter*". Such a small thing meant so much at that time and in that place.

A night at the Opera

One of our number collected me and a mate together, to ask if we'd like to go and see an opera. This obviously came as something of a surprise, as none of us were very artistic to any degree. But, with a bit of gentle persuasion, we agreed to give it a try. Most transactions in those days were via coffee, chocolate or tobacco, so we chipped in our baccy ration – and a bit more – and he went off to purchase our tickets, with words to the effect that "*you'll enjoy this*", while we wondered what we'd let ourselves in for! So, all dolled up in our best BD for the occasion, we made our way to the *Opern Haus*, where there had either been a substantial increase in the trading value of our cigarettes – or our leader was a negotiator of great standing! We were placed in the hands of an usher, who led us to a box almost overlooking the stage. The box had been well stripped of its past glory; the entrance curtain had been taken away and, of a floor carpet, there was no visible sign. The 'seats' were of the common-or-garden household variety, so that any movement or scuffling of ones' feet set up quite a lot of noise. No doubt the building had been looted during the latter days of the war. Nevertheless, there



we were, not up to the social standards of years gone by, I'll grant you, but at least able to look down upon the *hoi polloi* in the cheap seats down below!

The work we were about to see was '*Der Frei Schutz*' (*The Marksman*), by Karl Maria Weber. The basic story is that the Marksman desires something badly, but must win the shooting contest to obtain it. He therefore makes a pact with the Devil to make sure he does win! Old Nick seems to do a lot of this sort of business – and always greatly to his advantage! That is about as much as I could make of the plot, not having a great grasp of the German language, but the music and stage presentation certainly maintained my interest. The climax comes as the Marksman aims his gun, as if at a flying bird; tension rises, there is a puff of smoke, followed by a drumbeat for the sound of the shot, and the gathered chorus sings out, "*Er hat getroffen*" ("*he's made a hit*"). This is accompanied by threatening drum rolls, and a very large stuffed bird hurtles from above the stage, to hit the deck in a cloud of dust and feathers. Old Nick has completed his part of the bargain – and the Marksman's troubles are just beginning.

It is now the interval, the stage curtain comes down and we get up to stretch our legs. Like the young gentlemen of days gone by, we promenade along the landing alongside the boxes, discussing things in general and oblivious to the world around us. That is, until we reached the end of the

landing and, turning left, we ran right into a party of 'Top Brass' and civilian VIPs. They were led by the GOC British Troops, Berlin, accompanied by Emanuel 'Mannie' Shinwell, the Labour Government's Minister for War – no PC nonsense about 'Defence' in those days! The General acknowledged us with an amiable nod, in the way of Generals, while Mannie just glanced at us and turned quickly away, probably thinking we were stooges – put there to please his Socialist views. We were not, of course; we had paid (in a manner of speaking) to get in, which was probably more than he had! And so, the General's party stood there, looking at us – three RASC privates (and VMs at that) with a 'what the ****' look upon their faces, and wondering 'what do we do now?' The impasse was fortunately broken by the 'Take Your Seats' bell, and we went out different ways. Once back in our box, we could see the GOC *et al* occupying seats that spanned the end of the Opera House, obviously the 'good seats'. The performance eventually came to an end and we found the exit area full of RMP and staff cars. We picked our way through the milling throng and made our way back to billets, having enjoyed an 'interesting' evening – in more ways than one.

I cannot honestly say that I subsequently developed a keen interest in Opera! Even if I had, current seat prices would be far beyond my pension! But I did often wonder to myself what would happen, if I arrived at, say, the Royal Opera House and plonked down a tin of fifty fags, a *Mars Bar*, and a *Milky Way* as a bonus – and asked for a good seat in the house! To paraphrase an old Roman saying – "*Other days, other ways!*"

(Thanks for delving into the 60-years old memory bank again, Chas! Ed.)

2009 REUNION – Farewell to Rowcroft

Please note that the next Reunion is to be held over the weekend 24th – 26th July 2009. We hope that there will be a good attendance by boys of the three 1959 intakes, as this is their 50th Anniversary. If any of you know any ex-59A, B or C boys, please make them aware of this important date so that, if they are not already AOBA members – now is the time to join.

Remember - your intake needs **YOU!**

Then there was the old boy, of unknown vintage, who went to see his doctor, complaining of "*fluid on his knee*". The doctor told him he'd have to raise his aiming point!

OBAN Articles By Boys From The Early 50s

Here, I continue the theme that began in earlier OBANs, of looking back at all the splendid contributions so far published in our magazines. This time I am listing those articles sent in from boys who began their service during the first few years of the 1950s, as the world began to recover from the after-effects of World War 2.

<i>Brief Title</i>	<i>Contributor</i>	<i>OBAN Issue</i>
Reunion 2000	Clem Clements 50B	20
Misunderstandings	West Robertson 50B	19
The basketball court	West Robertson 50B	31
Always another side	West Robertson 50B	35
Brilliant career move	West Robertson 50B	38
I had a dream Part1	West Robertson 50B	40
I had a dream Part2	West Robertson 50B	41
In the nick of time	Arthur Ward 50B	31
What's your game?	Arthur Ward 50B	35
Sick, lame and lazy	Arthur Ward 50B	38
Chinny – a gentleman officer	Nick Webber 50B	15
Kinbalu and back	Nick Webber 50B	22
Korea and back	Nick Webber 50B	30
Memories of 50B	Mike Webb-Morris 50B	17
Mostly late	Bob West 50B	34
Scrapbook memorabilia	Alan Morton 51B	11
The life of Alan	Alan Morton 51B	22
Reunion 2001	Alan Morton 51B	23
Lenham Cemetery	John Nicholson 51A	33
A curious account	John Nicholson 51A	33
Packaged pictorial	David Barrett 52B	17
Ah yes! I remember it well	Bob Condon 52A	43
Jottings – apprenticeship and more	Eggy Eggleton 52B	22
Reunion 2002	Eggy Eggleton 52B	25
Provost and other staff	Eggy Eggleton 52B	31
Record of service	Eggy Eggleton 52B	40
Some Scammell experiences	Eggy Eggleton 52B	42
Glad they're on our side	Alan Gordon 52B	30
Busy sort of life	Clive Hartland 52B	38
What happened next?	Graham Chilton 53B	41
The first six months	Denis Elshaw 53B	17
Reunion 2003	Carl Hayhurst 53A	28
The Suez Crisis	Mike Jackson 53A	39
Bullying	Greg Peck 53B	29
Report from Down Under	Greg Peck 53B	29
Uniforms supplied	Ben Hebden 54A	22
Room D4, 'B' Coy	Lemmy Holmes 54A	27
Memorial Garden	Brian Hornsey 54A	8
Trials of a Radar Tech	Brian Hornsey 54A	9
Local inns Part 1	Brian Hornsey 54A	11
Local inns Part2	Brian Hornsey 54A	13
The mid-Fifties	Brian Hornsey 54A	16
Departure of Larry Le Var	Brian Hornsey 54A	17
Building of the Reichstag	Brian Hornsey 54A	26
Hazebrouck Barracks 1944-8	Brian Hornsey 54A	27
My boomerang	Brian Hornsey 54A	30
That other place	Brian Hornsey 54A	30
Molly Mogg	Brian Hornsey 54A	35
Tempus fugit Part1	Clive Soord 54B	24
Tempus fugit Part2	Clive Soord 54B	27
Reunion 2004	Howard Trill 54A	31

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 passed backwards and forwards through the pages of OBAN during the same years! It will be noticed that Brian Hornsey, who took over the editorship from John Northam, also made a great effort to provide material himself, in order to fill the pages and keep OBAN well supplied with 'copy'. Ed.

From the Pages of 'Craftsman' Magazine.

The Ridgback

British troops in the urban environments of Afghanistan and Iraq are set to benefit from greater protection, as the first 'Cougar' vehicles begin their transformation into 'Ridgbacks'. MoD has ordered 146 *Cougar* 4x4s from *Force Protection Inc* in America, as an Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR). Having arrived UK, the *Cougar* base vehicles will morph into the *Ridgback* – being upgraded with integrated additional protection, weapons, communications systems and specialist electronic counter-measures equipment – and then join their big brother, the 'Mastiff', on operations.



Ridgback, *Mastiff* protected vehicles, along with the *Viking*, *Bulldog*, *Warrior*, *Vector* and *Snatch* (all being currently used

on ops) are variously suited to different threats, terrains and tempos of operation. Together, they give UK commanders the ability to choose the best vehicles for each situation. The total number of new protected vehicles MoD is delivering to support ops in Afghanistan and Iraq now stands at almost 600. The *Ridgback* will offer high protection, similar to *Mastiff*, but in a smaller vehicle. It will provide greater protected accessibility in urban environments, whilst *Mastiff* will continue to operate in the urban fringe and rural environments.

DSG Secures First Major MoD Contract

Launched on 1 April 2008, following the merger of *ABRO* and *DARA* business units, the *Defence Support Group (DSG)* recently secured its first major MoD contract. Awarded for the maintenance, repair and overhaul of military vehicles and land equipments, the contract runs for five years and is valued at around £875M. The work will see *DSG* carry out scheduled maintenance and base overhaul of vehicles and equipments through programme load activities. It will also cover unscheduled maintenance through the Land, Strike and Fleet district load activities.

DSG's Head Office is located at Andover and provides strategic direction to the main sites at Bovington, Catterick, Colchester, Donnington, Sealand, St Athan, Stafford, Stirling and Warminster. Smaller support sites, located in Aldershot, Bicester, Edinburgh, Kinnear, Sennybridge and York, further enhances *DSG's* geographic coverage. Small support teams are also permanently embedded in other UK military sites.

Quad Delivery

The Army is set to benefit from more mobility and agility on operations, thanks to a new batch of quad bikes. With a top speed of more than 40 mph, the rugged vehicles are currently being used to deliver ammunition, food and water to remote and difficult operational locations. Connected to a trailer, they have also been playing a vital role in evacuating casualties from the front line.

Around 250 of the vehicles have so far been bought from Japanese bike manufacturer *Yamaha*. Half have been deployed on Op HERRICK, with 50 more rolled out for TELIC operations in Iraq.

Future Armoured Vehicle

MoD has announced the provisional selection of 'Piranha 5' as the preferred design for the *Future Rapid Effect System (FRES)* Utility Vehicle, the first of the Army's programme for a new force of battlefield armoured vehicles. *Piranha 5*, offered by *General Dynamics (UK) Ltd*, is the first vehicle to be selected in the *FRES* family of vehicles, an incremental programme to replace parts of the *Saxon*, *FV430* and *CVR (T)* vehicle fleets and deliver a new medium weight capability.



military operations.

FRES will be delivered in stages, the Utility Vehicles being introduced first and then the more complex Specialist Vehicles delivered in planned increments later on. It is intended that the total *FRES* capability will be delivered in five families of vehicles: Utility, Reconnaissance, Medium Armour, Manoeuvre Support and the Basic Capability Utility. *FRES* will be used widely to support the whole spectrum of

West Country Flying Squad

This is a genuine complaint to Devon & Cornwall Police Force, from an angry member of the public.

Dear Sir/madam/automated telephone answering service,

Having spent the past twenty minutes waiting for someone at Bodmin police station to pick up a telephone, I have decided to abandon the idea and try e-mailing you instead. Perhaps you would be so kind as to pass this message on to your colleagues in Bodmin, by means of smoke signal, carrier pigeon or Ouija board. As I'm writing this e-mail, there are eleven failed medical experiments (I think you call them youths) in St Marys Crescent, which is just off St Marys Road in Bodmin. Six of them seem happy enough to play a game, which involves kicking a football against an iron gate with the force of a meteorite. This causes an earth-shattering CLANG that rings throughout the entire building. This game is now in its third week and, as I am unsure how the scoring system works, I have no idea if it will end any time soon. The remaining five walking abortions are happily rummaging through several bags of rubbish and items of furniture that someone has so thoughtfully dumped beside the wheelie-bins. One of them has found a saw and is setting about a discarded chair like a beaver on speed. I fear that it's only a matter of time before they turn their limited attention to the bottle of Calor gas that is lying on its side between the two bins. If they could be relied on to only blow their own arms and legs off, then I would happily leave them to it - I would even go so far as to lend them the matches. Unfortunately, they are far more likely to blow up half the street with them and I've just finished decorating the kitchen.

What I suggest is this. After replying to this e-mail, with worthless assurances that the matter is being looked into and will be dealt with, why not leave it until the one night of the year (probably bath night) when there are no mutants around. Then drive up the street in a Panda car before doing a three-point turn and disappearing again. This will of course serve no other purpose than to remind us what policemen actually look like. I trust that, when I take a claw hammer to the skull of one of these throwbacks, you'll do me the same courtesy of giving me a four-month head start, before coming to arrest me.

I remain sir, your obedient servant,

Dear Sir

I have read your e-mail and understand you frustration at the problems caused by youths playing in the area and the problems you have encountered in trying to contact the police. As the Community Beat Officer for your street, I would like to extend an offer of discussing the matter fully with you. Should you wish to discuss the matter, please provide contact details (address/telephone number) and when may be suitable.

Regards,

The Community Beat Officer

Dear Community Beat Officer,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the speedy response to my original e-mail. 16 hours and 38 minutes must be a personal record for Bodmin Police station, and rest assured that I will forward these details to Norris McWhirter for inclusion in his next book. Secondly, I was delighted to hear that our street has its own community beat officer. May I be the first to congratulate you on your covert skills? In the five or so years I have lived in St Marys Crescent, I have never seen you! Do you hide up a tree or have you gone deep undercover and infiltrated the gang itself? Are you the one with the acne and the moustache on his forehead, or the one with a chin like a wash hand basin? It's surely only a matter of time before you are headhunted by MI5.

Whilst I realise that there may be far more serious crimes taking place in Bodmin - such as smoking in a public place or being Muslim without due care and attention - is it too much to ask for a policeman to explain (using words of no more than two syllables at a time) to these twats that they might want to play their strange football game elsewhere? The pitch on Fairpark Road, or the one at Priory Park are both within spitting distance, as is the bottom of the Par Dock. Should you wish to discuss these matters further, feel free to contact me on If, after 25 minutes, I have still failed to answer, I'll buy you a large one in the Cat and Fiddle Pub.

Regards

P.S If you think that this is sarcasm, think yourself lucky that you don't work for the cleansing department, with whom I am also in contact!

Tugging at the readers' heartstrings

by 'BSB'

The Korean War saw the first operational action for the *Centurion* tank. The *Centurion* Mk3 was fitted with a sophisticated gun stabilization system and there was a fear that any tank, knocked out by the North Koreans (or, later by the Chinese), might be captured and the secrets of the stabilizer then passed to the Russians. (We now know that they were developing their own tank gun stabilizers, so may or may not have gained help from the design of that in the *Centurion*). Tank recovery in Korea still relied on the *Churchill* Armoured Recovery Vehicle (ARV) Mk2, which was a competent machine but very slow. To ensure that no *Centurion* fell into the enemy's hands, there was an urgent need for an ARV which could keep up with the battle and drag off a damaged tank before someone else thought they had a better right to it. The original concept for the *Centurion*, then called the 'A41', envisaged a long list of variants, including an ARV. The 'Cold War' demanded the rapid replacement of Britain's remaining WWII tanks, so the design, trials and production of *Centurion* variants slipped. The Royal Ordnance Factories and civilian contractors concentrated on building gun tanks.

In Europe, some early *Centurions* had already been stripped of their turrets and converted to 'Tugs', similar to the earliest WWII ARVs. These tugs had used up most of the early Mk1 and Mk2 *Centurions* made obsolete by the production of the 25-pounder gun armed Mk3. The tugs were converted to a common design by 7 Armd Wksp in BAOR and 27 Cmd Wksp in UK. In place of the turret, a shallow drum was fitted and could be rotated by the turret traverse mechanism to wind on a towing cable. This was just a convenient way of carrying the cable and was not substantial enough to serve as a winch. The tugs carried hollebone drawbars, a form of A-frame, plus the usual snatch blocks, gun planks, earth anchors and other recovery gear. The turret aperture was covered by a steel plate with access hatch. There was no main winch, which limited the vehicle's recovery potential unless there was plenty of time to spare.

In 13 Cmd Wksp at Aldershot, a programme for converting wartime *Churchill* gun tanks to ARV Mk2 was still in progress in 1950/51. The first of these winch-equipped ARVs had reached the

troops in Germany a few months before the war in Europe ended and there was an obvious improvement on the earlier ARVs.

The economics of peacetime and common logic led to a plan for the standardisation of military equipment, as far as possible, including using fewer different types of tank. Those supplied by the USA could only be provided with spares now by the expenditure of dollars, at a time when Britain had a vast balance of payments deficit. The plan was therefore to quickly dispose of most US built tanks and to

Centurion and so had to be modified with extra steel reinforcing. The winch capacity of 18 tons was inadequate, but a rush job demanded compromises. These ARVs were designated *Centurion* ARV Mk1, but were sometimes known as the 'Aldershot Pattern'. They were based on recalled earlier tug conversions, or on any available Mk1 or 2 gun tanks that remained unconverted. While the urgency was to provide ARVs for Korea, the first arriving in about March 1952, there was no sense in returning to the production of



The Centurion Main Battle Tank

retain the British built *Comets* and *Cromwells* - and the *Churchill* for most specialist roles - until all could be replaced by the full *Centurion* range. The *Churchill* ARV was to be the interim standard, which was why it was necessary to go on converting *Churchills* five years after the end of the war.

Wars rarely time themselves conveniently for military planners. The Korean War created a need for a *Centurion* ARV - NOW! The short-term solution was to change the conversion programme at Aldershot from *Churchills* to *Centurions*. The design for the conversion leaned heavily on the former version but, whereas the *Churchill's* winch had been driven via a clutch from the main engine, the engine could not be adapted to use the *Centurion's* *Meteor* engine in the same way. Instead, a separate winch engine was used. For the REME-designed ARV, this was the six-cylinder *Bedford* petrol engine, as used in the ubiquitous *Bedford* QL. The rear spade was virtually the same as on the earlier conversion, but proved to be too weak in service on the

outdated *Churchills*, so conversions of *Centurions* at Aldershot continued until most Armoured Regiment workshops and LADs in BAOR had their quota.

The demands of the Korean War jump-started the work on the 'official' ARV variant of the *Centurion*, which was designed by the Ministry of Supply's experimental establishment at Chertsey. The new version was to become the *Centurion* ARV Mk2 and came into service some years after the Korean War ended - but they remained in service for nearly 50 years. Some Mk2 ARVs were based on re-worked tug hulls, but most were based on new *Centurion* Mk5 hulls from production. Years later, Mk2 production enabled the Mk1 ARV to be superseded. Most of the latter ended up as hard targets, or as recovery training aids, though there is the possibility that some were reworked again into Mk2 ARVs. Only one *Centurion* ARV Mk1 is known to survive. It was, for many years, in a military museum in New Zealand, but is now understood to be in the RAEME Museum in Australia.



The Centurion Armoured Recovery Vehicle

Whilst the War Office, Ministry of Supply and 13 Cmd Wksp got their act together and launched the first *Centurion* ARV, there was a need for more urgent action at the 'sharp end'. Commander REME, of the 1st Commonwealth Division in Korea, persuaded the War Office to let him organise a local solution to the problem. A number of *Centurion* tanks had already been heavily damaged and were due for base repair. The plan was to convert one of these into a prototype tug. One of the REME workshops deployed to Korea was 5 Med Wksp. Its role was to undertake repairs beyond the capacity of an Infantry Workshop - but not severe enough to be rated as a base repair. This was soon deemed impractical and, early in 1951, the workshop moved to Japan, to become part of the Commonwealth Base Workshop at Kure. Serving in the unit was then Capt, later Maj, Jack Watson. He was overseeing repairs to badly knocked-about *Centurions*, when he was given four weeks to produce a tug.

A suitable candidate vehicle was

chosen, but needed about ten days of automotive repair work before the conversion could start. The turret was removed and the aperture covered with two hinged steel plates, one opening forward and one to the rear. For speed of production, no attempt was made to shape the plates to fill the circular turret space. The plates were oblong in shape and overlapped the turret ring. The forward plate had two hatches, so the crew could get in and out without having to lift the main plate. The tug was delivered to Korea by June 1951 and further conversions followed. Eventually, the resident Armoured Regiment had one tug per Squadron. The regiment was supported most unusually by a Heavy Aid Detachment(HAD), which amounted to a reinforced LAD, equipped to carry out field repairs. Since this was the sole British armoured unit, there was some logic, but there are photos to prove that many *Centurions* did in fact end up in Infantry Workshops. There are accounts that suggest that other tugs were used by the RE. So far, no written evidence has

appeared to show that any tugs were operated by the Infantry Workshops in Korea. Although the concept was for an interim ARV, the regiment saw the vehicles as multi-role. They were used to ferry supplies to forward locations, where many tanks were dug in as virtual artillery pillboxes, and the tugs were used as ambulances, as well as recovery vehicles. They remained in use even after the first *Centurion* ARVs arrived.

At about this time, REME was in the throes of 'Phase 2', taking over the roles of regimental tradesmen who had been excluded from the original reorganisation of the Army's repair resources in 1942. As unit establishments were rewritten for armoured regiments and their LADs, the ARVs were transferred to the latter. The tugs in Korea probably remained regimental vehicles, even though pictures show them with at least partial REME crews. So far, it has not been possible to work out just how many tugs were created for use in Korea, nor what became of them. Whereas redundant *Churchill* ARVs are known to have been dumped at sea, the *Centurions*, unless totally destroyed by enemy action, were too valuable an asset to be discarded lightly. They may have been restored to their original state as gun tanks, or returned to the UK for conversion to proper ARVs. Do any readers know the answers to these specific questions or have any further information or pictures, not only of the Korean War tugs, but also of the earlier ones converted in Europe?

(The above article was published with the kind permission of Craftsman magazine, from its December 2007 issue. Anyone with answers to the queries may contact that excellent magazine directly, but OBAN is quite happy to act as intermediary! Ed.)

The Commemorative Plaque

"From 1939 to 1982 some 10,000 boy apprentices passed between these pillars into adult service with the Engineering Corps of the Army. The gates and entrance, restored to their 1939 glory, act as a memorial to the apprentices and staff who served at the Army Technical School (1939-1946), the Army Apprentice School (1946-1966), the Army Apprentices College (1966-1981) and Princess Marina College, until its move to new accommodation in April 1982. The restored entrance was officially opened by the Representative Colonel Commandant of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Major General JV Homan CB, on Friday 22 March 1985."

The above inscription still adorns a plaque adjacent to the 'old gates' at the original School entrance. Kevin Mitchell (43A) kindly reminds us that the plaque is of historical importance and hopes that it will be kept in safe keeping until a suitable mounting place can be found.

Arborfield College life (maybe a little bit Band biased!)

by Garry Chapman, 78C

Like a lot of other articles I've read in OBAN over the years, mine starts with that long trip to Wokingham station. It was September 12 1978 and I had left Hartlepool station at 09.35 on my journey to be an Apprentice Electronics Technician, at 'some place near Reading' called Arborfield. Little did I know how that 'some place' would play such a massive part in my life! My journey from Hartlepool saw me firstly change trains at Darlington and then travel onward to King's Cross. I then had to get 'the tube' across London to Waterloo, where I would board the train for Wokingham. I can remember being in a carriage with several other 16-year olds who, like myself, all looked a little nervous about what lay ahead. Having travelled all the way from the North East, I didn't arrive at Wokingham until about 16.00. There waiting for us was a white Army bus, which was to take us on the final leg of our journey to the Army Apprentices' College, Arborfield. I will never forget how quiet we all were on that bus and what a feeling of excitement and trepidation I had when we drove through those gates (which still mean so much to all of us) for that very first time.

We were all ushered into the Gymnasium, where it seemed we had a thousand forms to read and sign. There was an A/T Lance Corporal wandering around us all, who marshalled a lot of us into an area just outside the main doors. He informed us that we were going to meet 'Charlie the Barber'. I then came out with probably the most stupid line I ever said at my time at Arborfield, when I told the L/Cpl that my mother had cut my hair only the night before! To say that he was 'less than impressed' would be an understatement and so I went and met Charlie, that most famous of barbers. As a side issue, I think that the L/Cpl was called Kanuga, who was an excellent apprentice and went on to become A/T RSM. I was then shown to Junior Company ('J' Coy) block, where I found out I was to be part of '3 Squad, Intake 78C'. Having arrived late in the afternoon, I took the last and only remaining bed space and was then introduced to those lads who would be my room-mates for the next 14 weeks: Mick Warren-Smith, Sean Convey, Peter Harper, Geordie Needham and Nigel Ramshaw. I also met my Squad A/T

Corporal, a particularly nasty piece of work called 'Curly' Maguire (sorry if you're reading this Curly, but it's true!). He was in civvies so, when he spoke to me, with me not knowing his rank, I addressed him as 'Sir' – that was the first of many sessions of '10 press-ups' I would be doing in 'J' Coy!

After our first week, we were all to attend a 'hobbies parade' in the Gymnasium, to select what we would do as a hobby on a Monday night (I'm sure a lot of ex-boys of the period will remember what a fantastic selection there was to choose from). After a great deal of deliberation, I chose the Brass Band, as I had played for a while at school. Little did I know that, at that time, that Band members weren't very well liked within the College, as they received quite a few perks. During Spring and Summer months they were exempt from duties (guard/cookhouse etc), due to the external parades/carnivals/fetes etc at which they were always booked to perform. They would also get an extra day's leave at Summer, Christmas and Easter, again to compensate for the time they spent carrying out public duties and all of the rehearsals that entailed. Overall, amongst other Apprentices, the general perception of the Band wasn't good (because of the perks) but I had agreed to join and my intention was to give it my best shot. The first Monday night I attended, I was met by the Permanent Staff (PS) Band Sergeant Major (BSM), by the name of Sam Spowart (Royal Scots). There were a few of us there for our first night and we were all issued with our instruments (mine was the cornet) and asked to play along with the Band. Luckily, the tune was one I had played at school and BSM Spowart immediately said, "*You will play first cornet and sit alongside the lead Brass Band A/T L/Cpl, Les Sinclair*". I was obviously honoured and, at that time, didn't quite realise what this position would mean to me during my future time at Arborfield.

As 3 Squad, we had a great PS Squad Sergeant, who was a REME soldier by the name of Hill and whose catch-phrase was "*Don't Fu****g Worry Abaht It!*" (in a real Cockney accent). As a gift for him when we left 'J' Coy, we all chipped in and bought him a tankard with that very catch-phrase engraved on it. Having visited the

REME Museum recently, I noticed there's quite a big picture of him (in the military training section) as a Corporal, showing a young REME soldier how to fire a SLR. Those first 14 weeks went so fast and we all quickly went from schoolboys to young soldiers. The highlight was a 'Parents' Day', where we carried out the usual parade and then gave a PT display in the Gym. Then it was time to move into our respective Companies in the spiders. When I moved to 'B' Coy (now early '79), I was initially in room D5 and had the most wonderful room NCOs (A/T Sgt Chris Billing in the bunk, A/T Cpl Chris Affleck and A/T L/Cpl George Smart). Even though I was in the Band, they made me feel part of the room, the platoon and 'B' Coy. To this day I still owe them a lot because of their direction, tolerance and inspiration (yes that's you guys, should you be reading this!). Without going into too much detail about my time in 'B' Coy (because there aren't enough pages in OBAN), there are things that I feel need to be said as part of this article. I had a real passion that the Band should be 'accepted' by the other Apprentices in the College - and I was going to try my hardest that this should be the case.

In 1979, 'Soldier' magazine sponsored an annual 'Best Band in the Junior Army' competition. We at Arborfield were gutted when we came only second. However, the magazine also sponsored an annual prize for the best solo player and it was my year. So, in 1979, I was the Best Brass Player in the Junior Army (I donated my certificate for this to the REME Museum). I was presented with my prize when the whole College was on parade and the cheering that came for me was unbelievable – step one in getting the Band accepted (I hoped). In 1980, sadly the Senior Education Officer for the College died. He was Lt Col McLeod and I was asked to play the 'Last Post' at his funeral. I'm sure that even if you've never played an instrument, you can imagine what a daunting task that would be. I was given 24 hours to say 'yes' or 'no'. If it was 'no', then a member of the REME PS Band would undertake that task. The following day I said I would do it, and that still stands as one of the proudest moments I had in my life at Arborfield. I received a letter from the Commandant at that time (Col Peacock), saying how proud he was of me and, indeed, of all the other

Apprentices who had helped that day (this letter is also in the Museum) - what an absolute honour.

The 'Best Band' competition was held again in 1980 and, this time, Arborfield won. I collected the trophy for this in front of the whole College population, but the best thing was that the Band was now seen as a hardworking integral part of the College. Without blowing my own trumpet (pun), I would like to think that, at the time, I helped make the Band an integral part of College life. I was very honoured at my 'passing out parade', December 11 1980, to have reached the rank of A/T BSM. At last the Band was now 'noticed' and I passed out with only the A/T RSM (Paddy Pollock) at a higher rank than myself - a proud day indeed. Obviously, I can't take all of the praise myself for the Band's eventual recognition, and I would personally like to thank the Apprentice Band members who coached me in the early days, and then supported me along the way. These were Apprentices (without rank) Les Sinclair, Kev Webster, Mike Rietzler, Bob Feasey, Paul Ritchie, Michael Kyle, Phil Collier, Taff Storey, Cuth Hill (by the way, if you could ever

trace this man, he will have the most fantastic College photos ever - especially from Friday nights in 'The Bram'). Then there were Frank Green, Mick Warren Smith, Sgt McFadden (sorry Mac, can't

and many more, whose faces I can see but whose names my brain won't allow to remember.

So far I have only mentioned the Band members who made this change at the Apprentices' College possible, but without non-Band members also supporting us, this would never have happened. So, my thanks must also go to Stevie Wood (A/T CSM 'A' Coy), Si Wall (A/T Sgt 'A' Coy) and Yank Zimmerman (A/T Sgt 'B' Coy). Plus Nigel Robertson (A/T S/Sgt 'B' Coy) - the man who started off the cheering when I won the prize for best brass player) and Phil Gammon (A/T CSM 'C' Coy) and many many more people whose names still escape me. The PS must also take credit for what happened over the two-and-odd years I was at Arborfield: BSM Sam Spowart - this man first looked at me in September 1978 and believed in me from that moment on. It has come to my attention as I write this article that Sam has just recently passed away. For anyone who knew him, this will be a great shock, but I know we'll always remember him. Another was WO2 Cummins (O'Mally) - this man was a Grenadier Guard and was 'B' Coy CSM. I think every apprentice who served with him would consider himself a better man for knowing him (I know I certainly do).

And so, my friends, I'll bring this article to its conclusion and say that I am so proud to have been a part of what is a very unique family. I will never forget what Arborfield (that 'some place near Reading') did for me and in fact what it

still means to me. I could give you more stories of my time at the College when, aside from the Band, I played football, rugby and volleyball - but maybe that's for next time. Just to complete things, I attach a photograph of me in a College promotional shot in 1980.

(I could stand corrected but, looking back over the years, I reckon this article was submitted by our youngest ex-boy yet. Can we look forward to future record-breakers? Ed.)



AT BSM G Chapman October 1980

remember your Christian name), Tony Wallington, Ted Owen Hughes, Bob Kimber and Chris West. Also 'Briggsy' (again can't remember your name, but didn't you take over the bunk in D5 from me?), A/T Cpl Russell (Russ - died 1981), Dave Green, Dave Sweeting, Phil Sparrow

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Cold War Paranoia?

by Pete Gripton, 56B

Imagine my surprise when Ken Anderson e-mailed me some time ago, with a gentle nudge towards an Internet link that he thought I “*may find interesting*”. Wondering just what was in store for me, I duly ‘clicked on’ to the stated link and found a web-site ‘Guest Book’ entry that told the following tale:

“The strange tale of CND: In 1961, having completed my training on the brand new Anti-aircraft Radar set (Yellow Fever), I was posted to 94 Regiment Workshops, to work on the 3Mk7F mortar locating radar. Well, I suppose that, as the 3Mk7 started life as an Anti-aircraft Radar in 1943, to someone in REME records this seemed logical! At the start of 1962, with the imminent arrival of the new ‘Green Archer’ radar, a new set of Staff Sergeants and WO2’s was posted into the workshops. All had been trained on Green Archer and some had actually been instructors. It was decided that, rather than send us back to Arborfield for retraining, we would be trained ‘on site’, part time. A classroom was set up and training began. The first lesson was dedicated to the technical specification of the new radar. The instructor came to one of the important aspects of the radar, but then quickly passed over it, saying that it wasn’t that important! None of us present thought anymore about it. But the following day, when we returned to the classroom, one of the students was missing. Our instructor started his lesson by saying he could now tell us about the item he’d skipped over the day before. Why the change? We later discovered that the missing student had recently married and that his new brother-in-law was a senior member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). He was therefore to be sent back to the UK and retrained as an ECE Mech (Electronic Control Equipment, tanks and the like). It just shows you that ‘spooks’ are everywhere!”

I certainly did find the above ‘interesting’, because my first impression was that the writer had been speaking about me! But then, having read the story with a little more consideration, I decided that “No”, it wasn’t me - but it was pretty damn near the mark! Let me explain. I had been posted to 94 Locating Regiment RA, Workshop REME, in Celle at the end of March 1961, but had then been moved up to Fallingbostel in January of the

following year to start setting up a new workshop. 21 Regt RA were moving out from their base in Rhyl (North Wales) and re-equipping as a ‘locating regiment’. Those were the days when fears that ‘the Russians are coming’ were very much real and uppermost in many minds. BAOR was directly in their line of sight, so to speak, and the purpose of these locating regiments, still equipped with those old 3Mk7F Radar sets, was to track incoming artillery shells and thus locate their source, so that they could then hopefully be ‘taken out’.

I had been at Fallingbostel for a few months and had recently married, that was August 1962, back in Reading. My wife, Joyce, came out to join me in October and we started living in a ‘hiring’ in the village (or town?), alongside quite a pretty park. It was just after the Christmas break when one of the workshop personnel – I won’t name him – warned me of a possible problem. Soon afterwards, I was invited to see the OC, who told me that I was being posted back to 94 at Celle with immediate effect, due to the fact that I had become a ‘security risk’! The phrase ‘*you could have knocked me down with a feather*’ springs to mind, as I tried to reason with myself as to how this situation had arisen. I asked the OC for his thoughts and he immediately became slightly ‘shtumm’ on the matter! It was just the same when I arrived back in Celle – having first had to pack my newlywed wife off home to her parents in the UK! Nobody had an answer to my question - “*What am I doing here?*” I wrote to REME Records of course, but no reason was divulged, either then or during the remainder of my Army service.

Early in March 1963, Joyce was able to join me again, this time in Celle, with the kind assistance of a German family, with whom I had previously become good friends. (OBAN16 covered that bit!) Could this friendship have been the reason for my ‘at risk’ situation? I think not, otherwise why would I have been posted back to Celle? And then came another shock. April brought the news that I was being sent back to Arborfield to be retrained as an ECE (or CET, as it then became)! Again, no logical reason was forthcoming from anyone in authority. You can imagine how Joyce felt about this ‘ping pong’ Army life that she’d married

into! The saving grace was that she was by now pregnant and would at least be back in Berkshire for the happy arrival! Thus I started on a Basic CET course, followed by upgrading in the same trade; my daughter Lorraine duly arrived on July 31st; the two courses ran almost consecutively and lasted until May 1964.

Now, just backtracking a little! In June of 1963, Joyce’s sister was married – and her husband just happened to be a supporter of CND! I don’t think he’d ever been a political zealot of any kind, in fact he had served his two years’ National Service with the Royal Berkshire Regiment, spending some dangerous times in Cyprus. But I do know that he joined a couple of the early ‘Aldermaston Peace Marches’, and was once fined for taking part at a ‘sit-in’ at Greenham Common, the American air-base. That certainly ties in with the remarks made in that letter printed above – but of course, Mike didn’t become my brother-in-law until a couple of years later than the event described. I’d certainly known Mike in 1961, as you do tend to get introduced to ‘family and friends’ when you start courting a young lady! Mike was also around to act as ‘best man’ at my wedding. But I can definitely state that he never tried to convert me to any cause – except maybe for going to see Reading play at Elm Park on the odd occasion!

It seems a bit weird to be dragging up this subject some forty-plus years after the event, but somehow I’m stuck with it. Fate decreed that I never did get any official explanation behind the decision to classify me as a ‘security risk’ - indeed, I went on to train on *Chieftain* electronic control systems in the days when it was still highly classified. In fact the vehicles were still being transported around the country shrouded in tarpaulin sheets, so where was the logic in it all? Anyway, those shenanigans certainly helped me to decide on my leaving the Army at the nine-year point, a decision that directly led to a very happy career as a civvy instructor at SEME Bordon. The Cold War has been confined to history now and the Russians are definitely (we hope) not coming any more! I do ask that my dubious background doesn’t put any of you off sending your letters and articles to me for editing! It wasn’t me guv! Honest!

In every soldier's knapsack

by John Hernon, ex-60B

Inspired by the "*I had a dream*" article (not the Martin Luther King version I hasten to add!) and other contributions to OBAN41, I wish to submit the following anecdote. Although not entirely of a military nature, it does have some bearing on those skills instilled at Arborfield as an apprentice tradesman. Over the intervening years, I have frequently had recourse to the trade training practice taught at Arborfield, where we all grumbled about the months spent on bench fitting and wondered to what conceivable use it could ever be put. It actually instilled a confidence in one's own ability to find a way out of just about every conceivable mechanical impasse, while nurturing a gritty determination to 'finish the job', whatever the circumstances. Such skills, when honed by experience, turned into a useful asset when working miles from any known habitation, be it in a blinding North African desert sandstorm - or fiddling with a broken-down outboard motor in a remote Nigerian mangrove swamp.

We were all described as 'soldiers of the sixties' in the parlance of the time as I recall; not fully realising, at the moment of signing up, that we would be plunged into a highly regimented monastic lifestyle. This bore a stronger resemblance to Charles Dickens' '*Dotheboys Hall*' rather than the Army! We were subjected to an unrelenting diatribe of jingoism and marionette responses, designed to ingrain an unhesitating response to authority. But I began to have suspicions about the goal of the regime, which seemed to have nailed its colours firmly to the flagstaff of Monty's old saying, that "*In every soldier's knapsack there was a Field Marshal's baton*". However, after an unrelenting ten-year search, I was forced to the conclusion that the Quartermaster must have neglected to insert mine in the appropriate place! That comment about 'unhesitating response' was to come into its own for me when my unit in Sarawak came under heavy fire, and I automatically dropped into the rote of 'safety catch, pouch' to return fire. This despite being accompanied by a very loose bowel action, somewhat exacerbated when the bloody useless SMG I was using had a stoppage, which turned out to be a broken firing-pin.

For me, the decade spent with HM Forces was eventful, to say the least. It gave me the benefit of extensive travel at

the expense of Her Majesty's government, with postings to BAOR, FARELF and back to BAOR, including a secondment to 1/10 Princess Mary's Own (PMO) Gurkha Rifles. That incorporated a miniature tour of South East Asia, encompassing Malaysia, Singapore, Sarawak and Hong Kong - with a short stint in the UK, at the Queen's Baggage Company RCT, Albany Street barracks! One could hardly get a more central location than that for nightlife in the mid-sixties, with sod all thought for either HM or her baggage!

the police. The case went to 'summary of evidence', but was eventually dropped after the rifles were returned and, thanks to a report in our favour by the police officer concerned, with whom we had by then established a good rapport. However, in the intervening period we were subjected to endless interviews with the SIB at Düsseldorf, along with all the AFB252 parades back at camp.

Shortly after this I accidentally reversed my pride and joy, a *Ford Taunus 17M*, into an *AEC Matador* gun tractor on the gun park, while doing a brake repair for the BFG vehicle test. The *Matador* front tow-hitch surprisingly survived the encounter without a scratch, but my *Taunus's* rear roof pillar was just about flattened, effectively curtailing any further trips to Venlo or Amsterdam for horizontal refreshment with the ladies of the night. At about this time a notice came up on Part 2 orders, requesting volunteers for secondment to 1/10 PMO Gurkha Rifles - and I was desperate for such a change. My arrival in Singapore, via Ankara and Bombay, was by *British United*, on only the second ever trooping-flight from UK to the Far East, civilian aircraft having recently been chartered as a means of moving troops. It signalled the end of the troopship run to that destination, the last one into Singapore having been the *Oxfordshire* with the KOYLI.

An Englishman abroad

When the aircraft door opened on arrival at Singapore, there was an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia due to the humidity, which was at an extremely high level. But, regardless of climatic conditions, I had arrived in the Far East and was once again on track to play my part in thwarting those devious 'commie bastards' and regain the glory of the days of Empire. Albeit and not withstanding the undeniable fact that the slant-eyed yellow peril, in the form of the Japanese, had not long since well and truly kicked our backsides out of the region. However, we were back and, as every true believer knows, we were back because God is an Englishman and, having been born English, we had won the first prize in the lottery of life - what more could one want? I was soon to be once more sadly disillusioned, unable to join my unit 'upcountry' at Malacca due to a complete cock up by the 'admin staff' at Singapore's Nee Soon tented transit camp. Where, because I was amongst several other unfortunates in that tropical limbo, victims of bumbling incompetence and gross

stupidity, I was detailed to continuous internal security patrols. This was due to a local riot, in which one ethnic group, the Tamils, had burned down a complete block of shop houses belonging to another ethnic group, the Chinese. This had in turn resulted in pitched street battles, which the local police could not control and had thus called in the Army to restore law and order. Meanwhile, the Gurkha unit had posted me as missing; it was my first taste of bureaucratic incompetence on an almost industrial level. Nobody in that benighted sin bin gave a tinker's toss about who you were, or why you were there, you just became one of the faceless herd who had no docs. I was beginning to have serious reservations about secondment, envisaging three years on continual road-block duty, attempting to keep the chogies from each others throats.

However, every cloud does have a silver lining and, once I eventually reached my destination at Malacca, things took a quantum leap for the better. Due to a lack of British Other Ranks' accommodation in my new unit's temporary camp, I was billeted with 3 Infantry Workshops at 28th Commonwealth Brigade garrison. With no duties or responsibilities to that unit, it was an invidious position to be in, along with Gurkha service pay of a guinea a day, recurring ration allowance - and promotion to the dizzy height of Lance Corporal! Joining a Gurkha unit in the sixties was like taking a step back in time, to the days of the Indian Raj. In fact, the 1st 10th was initially raised in India and many of the British Officers had served in that country prior to its Independence. To say Gurkha service was hidebound with tradition would be a fair statement, but that was the glue that held it all together and made it run more like a private militia than anything to do with the British Army.

The Colonel was akin to God - and just as revered; he ran the unit with an iron fist, taking care of every facet of life, including the families of the Gurkha officers. He had access to a 'slush fund' that allowed the purchase of non-government issue *Claymore* mines, shotguns and *Owen* guns for the officers, many of whom were very well heeled in their own right - along with an unending supply of *L & S* rum! A wealth of variation in officers' uniform was permitted, even down to pearl-handled revolvers for Major McGurk, the 'A' Coy Commander. There was a general *laissez faire* attitude to the attached Brit other ranks, who were there on sufferance but given virtually free rein - as long as they conformed to the Colonel Sahib's wishes. It was an amazing experience after the

homogeneous Corps life of REME, where the only *esprit de corps* that could be generated revolved around sport. Gurkha service offered an escape from years of mindless regimentation, generating a huge flexibility towards soldering that got the same job done, but in an entirely different way.

There was of course a pay-back period for all this freedom as, at that point in time, the British government was backing the nascent state of Malaysia, in its confrontation with Indonesia. We were part of the defence against the spread of communism in South East Asia as a part of the SEATO commitment to that region. The Americans had the mucky end of the stick in Vietnam and, thankfully at the time, our government was content to assist in depicting 'confrontation' as our effort in stabilising the region, thus no Vietnamese adventure. Whether or not that was fall-out, from the Americans pulling the rug from under our feet over the Suez debacle, will no doubt long remain a point of conjecture for military historians to chew over. Undoubtedly, the British won the undying gratitude of the Malaysian government which, only two years ago, issued the Pingat Jasa Malaysia honour medal to all Commonwealth forces who served during the confrontation, during the period from 1957 to 1966. On a holiday to Penang about five years ago, I got into conversation with a Malaysian gentleman on a flight from Thailand to Penang. He was almost embarrassingly grateful for the role the British had played in securing 'Medaka' (or freedom) for his country. My wife was quite surprised, having always assumed that soldiers only ever got drunk and made trouble!

One of the truly interesting aspects of our tour in Sarawak was the reputation enjoyed by the Gurkhas for decapitation. Here, they came into direct conflict with the Iban head-hunters, who followed the same penchant for removal of that particular body part, but as a way of life - and a pre-requisite for getting married, by showing prowess in battle. This was a trait followed by many nomadic tribes, such as the Danikal warriors in Ethiopia, who have to castrate any other potential admirer of the female they have selected, before being considered a suitable suitor for the fair lady of their fancy. It's sad to see these customs dying out under the guise of so called civilisation, nothing like a competitive edge for that ultimate adrenaline rush! Fortunately for us, the Ibans detested the Indonesians, who kept harassing their nomadic way of life, and we were only too glad to have these wandering butchers on

our side.

On one particularly sultry Sunday morning in June 1965, I was on guard duty at the 1/10 base camp at Semengang, Sarawak, across the road from the town police station. I saw three Ibans carrying sacks enter the police station and leave shortly later empty handed. A few minutes later, I received a telephone call from the Gurkha Signals Sergeant to come across to the police station. Inside lay the three sacks, each containing a severed Indonesian head, for which the Iban trackers had been paid thirty shillings each, the going rate. It was somewhat disconcerting and I often wondered if it all went a bit sour - whether our boys, with their glorified kitchen knives from halfway up the Himalayas, would be any match for these wiry Bushmen, who all sported the indigo blue rose shaped tattoo on they ball of their shoulder, to indicate they had taken a head. With friends like these, you did not need enemies! It was a fascinating place and our defensive positions consisted of a series of hill forts, strung out along the mountainous ridge that separates Sarawak from Kalimantan, the Indonesian side of the island of Borneo.

Many years later, I worked a geophysical crew on the Fly River, in Irian Jaya, the Indonesian side of Papua New Guinea. To reach that location one had to transit through the entire Indonesian archipelago and, from what I saw of the Indonesian army, they could never in a month of Sundays have posed the serious threat that Sukarno's bullshine had hyped them up to be capable of. A standard phrase, broadcast on Radio Indonesia at the time, was "*By the time the cock crows tomorrow, Malaysia will be crushed*" - which of course never happened but was good in terms of psychological warfare.

Moving on – and around

After the tour in Sarawak, 1/10 was relocated to Hong Kong - to San Tin camp in the New Territories, where I was allocated the Sergeants' Mess for accommodation, being the only living in British OR. This salubrious modern complex came complete with Chinese cook and mess waiter, with accommodation for eight other personnel. Here came a crossroads in life that everyone encounters at some stage or other and is frequently given recourse to reflect upon - wondering what might the outcome have been, if one had taken the alternative option. My performance with the unit, both trade and military training wise, had

been of the highest possible standard and I fitted into all their requirements and expectations. Consequently, the Colonel offered me a second tour - on the understanding that the position of MT Sergeant substantive was a forgone conclusion, with acting paid Staff Sergeant highly probable. However, I had passed the Tiffy prelim exam in Singapore and desperately wanted a crack at the selection board, which we had all been geared up for at Arborfield. Inevitably, this entailed a return to a UK-based unit.

Albany Street Workshop RCT, the Queen's Baggage Company, was predominantly a civilian establishment and highly unionised, an absolute misery in work terms but brilliant with regard to social activities, this being 'swinging London' in the mid-sixties and the 'flower power' era. I'm afraid my first attempt at the selection board was disastrous and return to Albany Street was met with a degree of approbation normally reserved for reprobates destined for Colchester. A swift transfer to BAOR followed. 6 Ordnance Field Park (OFP) at Munster was a dumping ground for troublemakers, the majority of whom had served either in Aden or the Far East, and was run by a Lt Colonel who aspired to be another Montgomery. It was from there that I attended my second board and, to all intents and purposes passed - but ran into military cut-backs, whereby of the eight successful candidates, only four were selected. One of the successes was a lad who had spent his whole career in or around Bordon - while 'Daddy' was O/C the Bordon Training Centre. 'Disenchanted' was hardly the word to describe the bitter resentment that I felt towards the system. As for me, it meant resitting the exam and waiting some time before being even considered for a retry.

From there on it was all downhill, and being reunited with the SIB gentlemen from Düsseldorf, this time for attempting to highjack a taxi after a night's drinking and having missed the last tram back to camp. Another incident involved the write-off of a *Bedford* 3-tonner, which I escaped from squeaky clean, although I had been driving it when it rolled over. 6 OFP supported 6 RCT, who were at that time designated to transport the warheads for NATO retaliatory nuclear missiles, working in conjunction with the Americans. Anyway, to test security, 6 OFP personnel were used to infiltrate the 6 RCT field locations on a night exercise. We had a young, totally naïve, 2nd Lieutenant in charge, who was easily persuaded that a nearby *Gasthaus* would

make an excellent command post from which to launch our attack. Some time towards dawn, and with most of the lads well oiled, we infiltrated their position and commandeered one of their 3-tonners. I shot off out of the location at high speed along muddy forest tracks and, at some point, lost control of the truck which barrel-rolled off one of the tracks, throwing members of my group over the side. How nobody was fatally injured I will never know.

The 'post mortem' created a huge furore and I was *persona non grata* with the 6 RCT workshop personnel for wrecking one of their trucks. However, from a tactical point of view, it was a major success and we all received commendations from the 6 OFP Lt Colonel. It left 6 RCT with egg all over their faces, in view of their delivery role with the missile parts. All in all I had now had enough; when the military wanted to play silly buggers and lost, they didn't want to win! EoS@VZYy0p

Give us men

God give us men; a time like this demands
 Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands.
 Men whom the lust of office cannot kill;
 Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
 Men who possess opinions and a will;
 Men who have honour; men who will not lie;
 Men who can stand before a demagogue
 And brave his treacherous flatteries without winking;
 Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog,
 In public duty and in private thinking;
 For while the rabble, with its thumb-worn creeds,
 Its large professions and its little deeds,
 Mingle in selfish strife – Oh, Freedom weeps,
 Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.

(The above 'forgotten verse' was written by Josiah Gilbert Holland back in the 19th century, but for me it stands as a request for leadership that could have also been titled, "*Give us an ex-apprentice*". Ed.)

Another brick in the wall (with apologies to *Pink Floyd*)

by John 'Pud' Crowther, 60C

Three days prior to my leaving BAOR for my demob in the UK, I was working in the Radar Repair Vehicle, when there was a sharp knock on the door. I opened it up, to be confronted by a young RAF Corporal, with an apparently full bolt of 'yellow duster' cloth tucked under his arm. "*Can I help you?*" I asked. "*Is S/Sgt 'X' about?*" he asked me back. I had to inform him that the Staff Sergeant was elsewhere at that moment. "*Well, can you ensure that he gets this cloth, please?*" he said, at which point I invited him to deposit the said bolt of cloth on a clear work-surface – and off he went. He'd hardly been gone a few seconds, before I had cut off around three metres from the 'full' bolt – and stowed the rest away in a trailer I had built, which was to carry my household goods back to Blighty. Upon my Tiffy's return, I informed him of the RAF lad's visit and pointed out the carefully folded three metres of cloth. He duly departed the scene, carrying his loot!

Departure day arrived and, complete with tax-free car and trailer, my good lady and I travelled via the Hook of Holland and eventually to our new house at Melton Mowbray, in deepest Leicestershire. It crossed my mind that we would have no need to purchase yellow dusters for some appreciable time ahead. But as I lifted the 'bolt' from the trailer, three house-bricks, enclosed in a couple of sheets of cardboard, fell to the drive from their

hiding place, which was a mere three remaining metres of yellow cloth. I must be the only Radar Tech ever to have smuggled house-bricks into the UK. After nine years, I should have learned never to trust one's Tiffy! Many years afterwards, I came across the said gentleman's name on a web-site and e-mailed him, asking if he had any yellow duster cloth for sale? I received a brusque return e-mail that announced, "*No duster cloth, but plenty of bricks*".

Honours even?

It was 1971 and we were moving from Dortmund to Den Helder for a firing camp. The regiment was in convoy formation, spread out over God knows how many 'clicks' of autobahn. My Tiffy, S/Sgt 'X', was driving the Radar Repair vehicle and I was his No.2. The next day, back at Aintree, was to be the day of the Grand National so, as they say, I was 'making a book'. It started to snow quite a bit and my Tiffy suddenly yelled, "*Bugger this, you take over, change seats!*" (We were young and foolish then.) It crossed my mind that gaining a HND at Reading University was not much help for the performing of acrobatics on the move. As 'X' opened the

driver's door and exited right, I slipped down the lock on the passenger door on my left, nimbly hopped over the engine bonnet and slid into his seat, promptly locking the other door behind him. My dear Tiffy - and mentor - was now standing on the running-board, with a layer of snow rapidly building up on him. "*Oh very funny, Crowther*", he spat, "*now open up and let me in*". I smiled the smile of a man who would never have gotten a HND and enjoyed the sight of X now looking like the abominable snowman. "*Open this door, you little bar steward*", came the anxious demand and, out of pure humanity, I acquiesced. It was a fatal mistake because, when we arrived in Amsterdam some time later, for a break,



he drove off without me! Two hours later, having been sitting under a canvas sheet in the back of a Recovery vehicle, freezing my proverbials off, we were re-united at Den Helder. “*Okay Boss*”, I said, “*let’s call it a draw*”. He smiled back at me and replied, “*There’s more to come*”. And there was!

The Technician recalls

Having watched the RA cutting the towing cables, between the towing plane and the target, I would bet that the *L40/70s* would have equalled the performance of *Rapier* in the Falklands. But, as we all know, time moves on and a half-ton mechanical computer is now history. (With reference to this computer, it was carried in the 3-tonner to the right in the photograph on the previous page, lined up fore to aft and held by chains.) For some reason that I don’t recall, I was put into the passenger seat of that very vehicle whilst on exercise, the driver being Sgt Slim

Sadler. As we manouvered the vehicle into position in the middle of one dark night, it started to slide sideways to its left, where I could see the yawning mouth of a ten-foot ditch. Self-preservation became the rule of the moment. One foot found itself positioned on Slim’s

The organisation required, to move all those people onto Whitehall at the correct time, was indeed a credit to the Royal British Legion. As 1100 hrs approached, it



went so quiet on Whitehall, you could hear a pin drop. Then, as Big Ben sounded off, so did the cannons from Horse Guards Parade, it was deafening and the atmosphere was absolutely electric. After a reasonably short wreath-laying ceremony, the March-past started and, in no time at all, we heard the old familiar,

"Arborfield Old Boys Association, by the Left" words of command from our Chairman, Col Brian Hutchins, who led the way.

I experienced the feeling of pride that everyone felt as they neared the Cenotaph, waiting for the *"Eyes Left"*. You could feel the hairs on your neck stand up. The support from the spectators was absolutely tremendous; they clapped every group as they passed, even round to the back as we marched back onto Horse Guards Parade. The final dispersal arrived with much pride and satisfaction, knowing we had all duly paid our respects to comrades no longer with us.

The majority made their way back to the Victory Services Club to pick up their cases and head for home. To avoid the rush, Larry Jarvis and myself decided to stay the extra night, so after a light liquid lunch, we headed off into Soho for the

night. What a night it turned out to be, as we bumped into a group of ladies all from Tipperary, Ireland, on a weekend visit to London - they certainly livened up the pub.

I know Jim Gardner said he would be staying the extra night next year, maybe we could get a few more to also attend? Although the number attending the Remembrance Parade has increased, we would still dearly love to see more people there. Those in attendance at this year's function were: Col Brian Hutchins (61B), Keith Evans (45A), Jim Gardner (57A), Larry Jarvis (56B), John Harte (55B), David Naylor (55A), Frank Townsend (52B), Paul Hudson (58A), Bill Tudman (57A) and Karen, his wife, along with George Dixon, Phil Buckman (guest), Shailesh Parekh (guest) and Steve McCarthy (guest). A hearty thanks to all who attended, for making it such a special weekend.

Arborfield – the prequel!

by Johnny Johnson, 56B

I left school at fifteen after a very undistinguished academic career and had then taken temporary work at a nursery garden, of which a school friend's father was the foreman. I had taken up this job whilst waiting for the results of the entrance examination I had taken for the Army Apprentices' Schools (AAS). It was fairly arduous work, picking flowers in the early morning dew, wet up to the armpits until we went into the packing sheds about mid-morning, where the blooms were carefully and specially packed into cardboard boxes, for shipment to various flower markets. Much of the produce went to Covent Garden and I seem to remember that the very best of our carnations were earmarked for the Palace - Buckingham Palace, that is. At least that was the boast on the farm!

Having spent all of my life 'attached' to the British Army, through my father's service in the Royal Sussex Regiment, it was no surprise to either family or friends that I chose the same life, only in my case I chose to have a trade behind me. *"You have to have a trade!"* was an exhortation that was regularly made in our household. For me there was really no other choice, as academically I was a less than average student. I was, however, good with my hands and had excelled in both woodwork and metalwork at school. To be eligible for the Army's apprentice training programme, one had to pass an entrance examination. This was because there were no school leaving certificates issued to

Secondary Modern school leavers in those days. One had to prove one's academic ability by means of a simple Maths and English test. Having applied and then sat the necessary entrance examination for the AAS, it was subsequently a matter of waiting for a reply - positive or negative - waiting being an essential part of the Army's way of life.

I was eventually contacted to make an appearance at the local Army Recruiting Office in Chichester, West Sussex, where we were living at the time. I can remember nothing of the building itself, other than it was in South Street, but I do carry a mental picture of the dingy and sparsely-furnished office of the Recruiting Officer. He told me bluntly that I had *failed* the exam, particularly the Maths test. But all was not lost! According to him, my Army Cadet Corps record was exemplary and, since there was a shortage of numbers to make up the intake for the three operating AAS, I would be accepted on a six-month trial basis in my choice of trade, that of Armourer. Although it was thought that I might not make the grade in my initial trade, I would be given a chance and moved to another discipline if necessary.

Being the eldest of six children, I think that in many ways it was a relief to my parents that I would be doing something worthwhile and, at the same time, an economic release for them - not that they ever said so or even hinted at it. Like any other mother, mine was reluctant to see me

go, but I could see the pride in my father's eyes, as I had made the decision on my own, without pressure from either him or Mum. As I recall, I never given my parents any trouble, other than that of any normal growing lad. I didn't run with a gang, I didn't have 'bad' friends and I wasn't entirely 'thick', although as stated, my school record was not one which I could boast about! I had three brothers and two sisters, aged between 11 and 2, or thereabouts. At that time we lived with my Grandmother, as Dad was back at the regimental depot and there weren't enough married quarters available for us to be quartered accordingly.

The day eventually arrived when I received my joining instructions through the post, together with a train ticket to Brighton, where I would be met by the local recruiter and taken to his office where the swearing-in and signing-on ceremony would take place. The instructions ended with the reminder to bring along the completed consent form, duly signed by 'either parents or guardians', plus a change of underclothing. The great adventure was about to begin!

(Long-standing readers may well remember John's contribution, 'We know it doesn't fit', which appeared back in OBAN26. Having since been in regular contact with him, and obtained extra details of his life story, I realised that the above was an introduction to that original article – so here it is! Ed.)

My First Day

by John Maddox (44B)

Wartime memories

"There you are lad, you've taken the King's shilling and you are now a soldier". I was fourteen years of age! I took my shilling home, together with my travel warrant, and gave it to my Mum. In our house, Mum was the head of the household, as my father was already in the Regular Army, serving God knows where.

We were used to it, he had been away for years, and occasionally coming home with presents for all of us, then disappearing again before we had become accustomed to having him there. In wartime, we didn't follow the flag; we just dug in for the duration. The month was September, the year was 1944, and it looked like the war in Europe was coming to an end, though to us kids all the war meant was that sweets were rationed, trousers had patches on the seat and school blazers were darned, instead of being replaced. It hadn't been a bad war for us; our school in Gloucester had shared with a school evacuated from Birmingham for a couple of years; but then the Brummies had all gone home and our school was our own again. Life went on, holidays came and went, 'Lord Haw-Haw' told us that our local aircraft factory had been destroyed, when we all knew that the German planes had only hit a couple of large greenhouses at a local nursery.

American soldiers had been all over the place but, with the invasion, had all disappeared, much to the sorrow of the local girls, who had become accustomed to wearing nylon stockings. I wasn't too interested in girls generally, they were all right to tease and I had made one or two limited experiments with kissing. A bot over-rated I thought, all that giggling really put me off! My only real infatuation was with Ursula, slim and with the most gorgeous long brunette plait you ever saw. Unfortunately, she was the daughter of the English master at my Grammar School, where consorting with the opposite sex was frowned upon and, while in school uniform, was a hanging offence. This was my first experience of the devilish cunning of schoolmasters. Clothes were rationed, most of our family clothing coupons were used for school uniforms, and I didn't have too much else to wear. They really had you by the 'short and curlies', every way you turned.

However, that was all about to change. Very soon I would be in the Army, out of the clutches of Ursula's father and in uniform, which I had some idea might make me more attractive to the divine Ursula. What I had overlooked was the fact that I would not be there very often – and there was a better than average chance that Ursula would not be available when I returned home on leave. At the time, though, all that mattered was getting into that uniform. My father had always looked smart and debonair in **his** uniform – why should not I look as good? Again – another miscalculation! My father was 6' 2" tall, good looking – and an officer to boot. His batman kept him up to scratch and shiny bright, while I would be left to my own devices. Moreover, I was 5' 6" tall, with the usual outbreak of pubescent spots – and I hadn't seen the uniform that I would be wearing!

That unforgettable first day

All this is by the way. The real story begins on Thursday, September 7th 1944, a date fixed in my memory as if by steel bolts. I had been ordered to report to the Army Technical School (Boys), Arborfield – travelling first to Reading, where I was informed suitable transport would be provided. Mum came to the station with me, probably to make sure I got on the right train as, in those far off days, youngsters did not do a lot of solo train journeys. No tears though, my Mum wasn't like that. For myself, as the time grew near for the train, a small, but quite active, butterfly began to make itself felt in my stomach. When the train left the station I sat down, my companions being two rather scruffy Privates in the Glosters, returning from leave. One of them asked where I was going and I told them I was on my way to join the Army. For the next two hours I was regaled with horror stories – about sergeants who breathed fire and officers whose only enjoyment was seeing the other ranks squirm. I rapidly became more worried, my butterfly having now taken over the whole of my abdomen, causing a raging bellyache!

We reached Reading and I alighted, still followed by calls of *"You'll be sorry!"* However, I met two other boys I had previously seen during our interviews. They didn't seem half as nervous as I felt

Two elderly ex-Generals meet up at the Lord Lieutenant's Hunt Ball. "I say, Gerald", says the first, "dashed bad show, don't you know, but that butler you passed on to us when you moved down to Essex – well, he expired, just dropped stone dead in the pantry!" The second replied, "Well I'm damned, Charles, he never did that when he was with us!"

and my butterfly gradually shrank back to manageable proportions – still there, still active, but no longer in a state of frenzy. Together we left the station, looking around for the 'suitable transport' as promised. What we saw was a huddled crowd of boys of our own age, outside the nearby *Southern Railway* station, each, like us, clutching a small case or bag. Typically, for the 'British Big Occasion', it was tipping down! The rain came straight down like stair-rods and, in a minute, we were as wet as the others were. Together we huddled, as if by our closeness we could ward off any evil spirit that might be abroad. To my horror, one of the boys in the group was dressed in a khaki tunic, buttoned to the neck, a side-cap of the usual Army pattern and – wait for it – khaki shorts! Who was he? Was he in fact a serving boy, returning from leave? My butterfly grew active again, flapping and scratching at my insides. I had been in long trousers for more than two years – could I face up to having to wear shorts again? I made an instant decision. If this were the case, never again could I return to my hometown, my family would never see me again.

As these thoughts pounded through my brain, a 3-ton Army lorry puled up beside us and from it descended a tall, saturnine Corporal. *"Are you all for Arborfield?"* he asked. We all nodded miserably, for by now we were like a bunch of drowned rats. *"Hop in then and let's get on our way."* Tailboard down, in we got, including our short-trousered companion. *"Now that you are out of the rain, let's have your names."* In turn we called our names and the Corporal ticked them off on a list he produced from his pocket. *"Hold tight"*, he said, closing the tailboard. *"For God's sake don't any of you sit on the tailboard or you'll fall off. We won't be long on the*

way, it's only a couple of miles." This I was to remember many times in the future, as I walked back on a Saturday evening, not having the bus fare.

The arrival

We pulled in through the gates and stopped outside a large green hut, raised above ground level. *"Let's have you then, look lively, there's a lot to do."* As we dismounted or fell off, depending on the agility of each, from the green hut came a voice – a voice I was to become familiar with in the future. *"I am the Provost Sergeant and you lot are Apprentices. You be polite to me and I'll be polite to you."* The man followed the voice – tall, dressed in Service Dress, with the shiniest boots I'd ever seen in my life. *"Come along, Corporal Slim, get them into some sort of order, they make the place look untidy – and you know I like things tidy!"* There was a sort of hidden menace in the voice, reminiscent of my old English master, who I believe had suspected my interest in his daughter. We shuffled into three rows – not ranks, just rows – as we were bid. Our names were then called out, as if to check whether indeed some of us had sat on the tailboard, with the expected result. All appeared to be in order so, on command, we all followed Corporal Slim to a nearby office, outside which a sign informed us that this was 'A' Company. The Corporal went inside, to return with another Corporal – and a figure just as imposing as the Provost Sergeant, but with a crown on his sleeve.

Several names were again called, including mine, and we were told to remain there while the rest were marched (?) away. *"I am CSM Bradbury and I am your Company Sergeant Major. You will call me 'Sir' when addressing me – which will be only when I tell you to."* He wasn't a tall man and he wore a peaked cap, the top of which was exactly parallel to the ground; and with a peak that stuck straight out, not sloped downwards like the many others I had seen on MPs around my hometown. Again, his boots were like patent leather and his buttons shone like glass. The Corporal then took us, in our shambling fashion, to a barrack room in a block of six rooms. *"This is room A1, this is your room, together with those yet to arrive. You will sleep here and spend your free time here. But, most of all, you will keep it clean. Not clean like your mother's house, but clean Army style."* This, to my ears, did not sound too promising! We were each allocated a bed and locker, although at that time I couldn't make out

just how one was supposed to sleep on what looked like only the top end of a bed. It had a head-end like the iron bedstead at home, but it was only three feet long. The mystery was soon solved, as the Corporal pulled the bottom frame out to its full length. *"Put your cases on your beds, in your locker you will find a set of eating irons and a mug. Never let them out of your sight or they will soon become someone else's eating irons!"*

This was our first intimation that not all members of the King's Army were fine upright citizens, a warning that was to be often repeated. Our next voyage of discovery was to be the Cookhouse – or Dining Hall, as it was described to us. We sat where we were told, six each side of a long table, and dinner was served, brought to the table by an ATS (lady!) cook in a khaki overall and wooden clogs. It consisted of a bucket of what she laughingly called gravy; a square tin containing twelve squares of something flat, brown and lukewarm – supposedly rissoles; and another tin containing potatoes. These had more black eyes than enough and were not the most appetising sight I had seen! We were all however, as young boys are, very hungry. We ate it under the watchful eye of the Corporal. To follow, we were given 'duff' – golden brown, as hot as hell, and quite chewable. No taste whatever, but distinctly chewable! Tea followed, again from a bucket, again golden brown, hot as hell – and almost as chewable as the duff! My particular inner man rebelled at this; I just couldn't swallow any longer. Dinner over, we were shown the trough, in which to wash our eating irons, and then it was back to the barrack room.

Of biscuits and blankets!

There followed a circular tour of the camp, during which we were continually harangued to keep together, try to look like soldiers and not to touch anything. By now we were all a bit flaked out – but more was yet to come. *"Now I'll show you how to make your beds"*, said our Corporal mentor and guide. Thinking that, when our beds were made, maybe we could lie on them, it was a shock to the system to discover that 'making one's bed' had nothing to do with sleeping, but with satisfying the requirements of the Sergeant who would inspect them in the morning! *"Push the bottom of the bed in, put two biscuits upright, each wrapped in one blanket, one biscuit flat, again wrapped in a blanket, the other blankets to be rolled and put behind the upright biscuits."* The

rapid-fire series of instructions left most of us totally bemused. Where were the biscuits he was talking about? Why would anyone want to wrap blankets round a biscuit when, in my previous experience, what one did with a biscuit, when they were available, was to scoff it before somebody else got hold of it.

We were soon enlightened. 'Biscuits' were the three square mini-mattresses piled on each bed and the bed, when dismantled in the morning, would be made up in what was known as 'armchair fashion', ready for inspection. As there were no chairs in the room, this seemed a good idea, so that there would be somewhere to rest our weary bones and spend an idle moment. After about an hour of practice bed making, the Corporal grudgingly admitted that our last efforts were better than our first and let us rest. Rest? *"Don't you dare sit on those beds once they are made up"*, was the next bombshell. In my extreme naivety, I enquired, *"Where can we sit, Corporal?"*

With what can only be described as a sadistic grin, we were told that in the morning we would have no time to sit anywhere, before we went down to breakfast. What was more, at lunchtime we could sit on the beds if we must, but they had to be made up again before afternoon parade and could not be made ready for sleeping until all our daily duties were completed.

Teatime came, again we were taken to the Dining Hall, all together, like a duck with her ducklings. This time, the Dining Hall was full, with queues for places at the tables and queues for washing up. Two boys were told to go to the serving hotplate to collect the food, once again served in two large square tins and tea in a bucket. The food wasn't quite as bad as lunchtime, but not quite what mother used to make! Portions were not over-generous, but we did get bread and a fair share of butter. The tea was almost black, full of tealeaves, and completely free of any taste of sugar. A tentative enquiry about sugar raised a fair sized laugh from the adjoining table, from whence also came the information that we would be lucky to get sugar in our tea more than once on any day.

After we recruits had eaten as much as we could face, we returned once more to our barrack room. We were told to get our beds ready for sleeping and that Reveille would be at 6.30 a.m. *"When you hear that bugle, get your backsides of the mattress, out to the washroom, then back*

to the barrack room. Sweep the floor, make up beds ready for inspection, dust the lockers, line up all the beds exactly, put all your belongings in your lockers - and get over to the Dining Hall by 7 a.m. If you are late, you probably won't get an egg - there's never enough to go round." It seemed the Corporal had been right first time, there definitely wouldn't be time to sit on our beds after making our armchairs. *"Tomorrow you will be kitted out, the Medical Officer will see each of you, then the Company Commander will see the lot of you outside the Company Office. The rest of the day will be spent in getting you properly dressed, bundling up those rags you came in and sending them home to mother. You are not allowed to have civvie clothes, but you can wear civvie shoes when you are off-duty if walking out. So, if you have proper, decent, lace-up shoes, you can keep them - black or brown. Got it?"*

Settling in

We got it - all of it. But at least by now we were not condemned to wearing the khaki shorts that had scared me to death. Indeed, the wearer had turned out to be a new recruit, like the rest of us, but had also been a 'Dukie', a boy educated at the Duke of York Military School at

Dover. I think he was as anxious as I was to see the last of those shorts! As we made our beds as we thought our beds should be made, we slowly got to know each other. Our room-mates came from all over the UK, from the Isle of Wight to Inverness, one or two with accents so thick you could cut them with a knife. However, we were all in the same boat and we knew that we had to make the best of it. There was another boy from another military school, the Queen Victoria School at Dunblane - and he had arrived in their school uniform, cutaway service dress jacket, but sporting a kilt. He and our Dukie friend knew each other, as the Dukies had been evacuated from Dover to Dunblane. Together, they showed us how to make our beds properly, having been used to doing it since they were eleven years old. Nonetheless, as soon as I got into bed, the biscuits slid smartly apart, leaving my cold backside on the even colder metal springs! Next time, I slid gently under the blankets, as they suggested, instead of leaping in like a demented goat.

By now the time was 9.30 p.m. and we all had to either be in bed or standing at the foot of the bed, for the Orderly Sergeant's bed check. It had been a long, hard confusing day - and my comfortable

bed at home was just a wistful memory. I lay there when 'Lights Out' came at 10 o'clock and wondered, not for the first time, what I had let myself in for. Some of the other Apprentices I had seen around the camp were twice my size and seemed so very much older than I had expected. It had never entered my head that, of course, the ages would range from fourteen to eighteen years, the training period being the full three years. They looked so self-assured, grown up and completely at home in this strange new world. Altogether, it had been a sobering experience, strange people, even stranger food, beds that were armchairs, no sheets, a pillow like a canvas sausage and a lot more to follow in the morning. And so to sleep!

(The article above was first published in OBAN 8, at the end of 1995, and gives as good an account as has been told about what it was like to start one's career at Arborfield in those early years. John went on to provide further articles and attended his last Reunion in 2007, before his untimely death early in 2008. This 'archive' article is a tribute to his contributions - and hopefully an inspiration to all readers to keep up the good work towards OBAN's future. Ed.)

Middle East Memories

by Brian Atkins, 43A

I write in response to Chaucer Harvey's article in OBAN42, which I received yesterday (*Brian resides in West Australia. Ed.*). Chaucer's memory may be a bit vague - the HQ of the Regiment in Palestine was at Isdud, while the OC of the LAD was a Capt Walls. We were camped next to a Kibbutz, where they grew the biggest and best oranges I have ever tasted. I went to Latrun to inspect their vehicles, where one of the Batteries was guarding the detention camp that contained members of the Irgun Zwei Lume and Stern Gang terrorist organisations. I arrived one afternoon and, half-an-hour later, there was a massive explosion when an escape tunnel was found and then blown up. From there I went to Jerusalem to inspect further vehicles, after which we were to join the rest of the Regiment, now in a camp with the RHA, some distance north of Acre. As we left Jerusalem we came across a road block, which consisted of six 44-gallon drums - two to the left, then two to the right and the last two again to the left, in a chicane layout. As the first vehicle went

through, a GMC Armoured Personnel Carrier, all of the drums exploded at once. They had been filled with explosives and detonated remotely - the vehicle never

stood a chance and there were no survivors.

As to our leaving Palestine, we sailed on the 'SS Tripolitania', a vessel that had



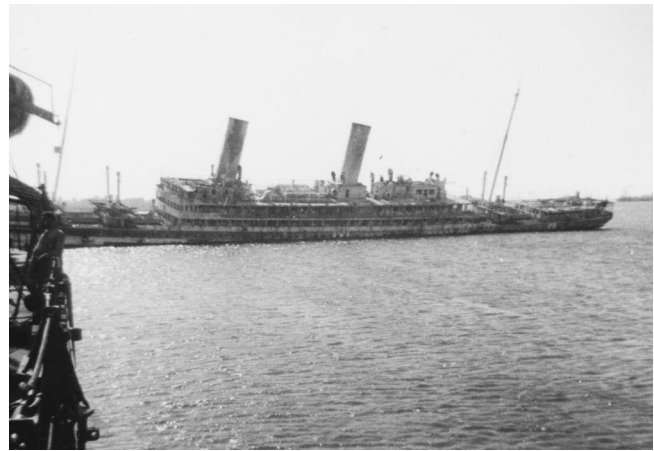
Acre, Palestine - we are all wearing the early cap-badge. The current badge was only issued when we got to Tripoli

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been sunk three times during WW2 – I had never seen so many huge cockroaches in my life! The vehicles held by the LAD were all *Ford WOT 6s*, which were always hard to start in Palestine, presumably due to the damp morning conditions – but we had no problems with this when we reached Tripolitania. I can still remember the '*Lady of Garian*'. I don't think the Americans actually removed that part of the wall, but a few years ago Colonel Ghadafi was suspected of using the barracks, to manufacture 'Germ Warfare' bacteria. I cannot substantiate this, but wouldn't put it past him!

I enclose some photographs to add credence to what I have said, both now and in previous correspondence.

One last thing – whilst in Keren, I complained of being weary all the time. The head of the medical service came to see me and gave me a certificate for 'double rations' at all meals. I was well under weight for both my age and height (6'8") and looked like a prisoner from Belsen. At that time, no matter how much I ate, I never seemed to gain weight. Nowadays I am a victim of the dreaded Aussie syndrome –



One of the wrecks in Benghazi harbour – there were quite a few!

'a moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips'!



Me and another member of the regiment, both with carbuncles on our right arms



'Young Atkins', on a Messerschmitt 109 that we found south of Garian



Members of the LAD outside the village of Azizia, virtually halfway between Tripoli and Garian



(Left) The notice board outside the LAD Office at Keren Barracks

John Seikus, 50A

It is with much sadness that I report the death of old comrade-in-arms John Seikus, who will be greatly missed by his wife Iris, daughter Karen, his grandchildren and a great-grandchild. John was originally from Edinburgh; I served with him throughout our apprenticeship at Arborfield, from where we both graduated as Vehicle Mechs. We then shared our first posting at 40 Command Workshop, Ashford, Kent. John's subsequent service took him to Germany, Malaya and Singapore, eventually reaching the rank of WO2 (AQMS), before his final posting to the Port and Maritime Regiment at Marchwood, on Southampton Water. It was there, at nearby Dibden Purlieu, that John settled down with his family. Upon leaving the REME in the mid-1970s, and right up until his retirement, John was employed at Fawley Power Station. When he finally retired, John's latter years were taken up by caring for his ever-expanding family.

Tony Hughes, 50A



Nine months later

A devout Geordie, Jack, decided to go camping with his buddy, Bob. So they loaded up Jack's minivan and headed south. After driving for a few hours, they got caught in a terrible blizzard in the Midlands. So they pulled into a nearby farm and asked the attractive lady who answered the door if they could spend the night. *"I realise it's terrible weather out there and I have this huge house all to myself, but I'm recently widowed"*, she told them. *"I'm afraid that the neighbors would talk if I let you stay overnight."* *"Don't worry pet"*, said Jack, *"we'll be happy to sleep in the barn - and if the weather breaks, we'll be gone first thing in the morning"*. The lady agreed, and the two men found their way to the barn and settled in for the night. Come morning, sure enough the weather had cleared, so they got on their way and enjoyed a great weekend's camping in the New Forest.

About nine months later, Jack found an unexpected envelope on his doormat, obviously from a lawyer. It took him a few minutes to figure it out, but he finally determined that it must be on behalf of that attractive widow he had met on the camping weekend. He therefore dropped

1939-45 Reunion 2008



in on his pal and asked, *"Bob, do you remember that good-looking widow from the farm we stayed at on our holiday down south about nine months ago?"* *"Sure do"*, said Bob. *"You didn't, erm, happen to get up in the middle of the night, go up to the house and pay her a visit?"* asked Jack. *"Well, erm, yes"*, Bob replied, looking a little embarrassed about being found out, *"I have to admit that I did"*. *"And you didn't just happen to give her my*

name instead of telling her yours?" asked Jack.

Bob's face turned bright red and he said, *"Yeah, look, I'm sorry pal, I'm afraid I did - why do you ask?"*

"Well, she just died and left me everything!" announced Jack.

(Go on, you were expecting a different ending weren't you?)

A Message From Eddie Broomfield

In reference to OBAN43, page 44, list of Remembrance Scrolls dispatched:

John Adams (42C) should be John Adams (45A) as reported. In the Membership Directory, the member concerned is listed as Adams DF (45A), but was known as John by his family and friends, so I referred to him as John on my list of scrolls dispatched. Indications are that this was checked against the Membership Directory, thought to be an error, and changed to (42C), as there is an Adams JB (42C) listed. Sincere apologies to Adams JB (42C).

Some 'Tanky' Tales

by John Moss, 55A

Having had the privilege to be attached to 'C' Squadron, 10th Royal Hussars, I was the driver of our American *International* Half-track and Forward Repair Team (FRT). On one particular exercise, the radio crackled and we were called to a 'dead *Centurion* tank'. The driver, a beefy young chap, was still wedged in the driver's seat. *"What's up mate?"* I asked. He raised his hand, which contained the gearshift. *"It came off in me 'and Corporal'"*, he said. Quite a feat that - the gearshift lever had been snapped like a twig. No metal fatigue was detected so, taking into consideration the thickness of the lever as a ratio to the thickness of the driver, it looked as though a modification may be required.

The Berlin Wall

I remember this one quite well. The Regiment had been on a large exercise, which brought us very close to the East German border - this was 'no man's land' for us and out of bounds. SOXMIS, the Russian observers, were driving around the area in their weird looking Jeeps. *'Bluebell Major'* had passed a message on to my FRT, ordering us to proceed to a certain grid reference to meet with another 'dead gun tank'. REME to the rescue! Looking at the map, it was obvious that we were 'over the border', so to speak. Eventually we reached our destination; as usual it was pitch dark and all we could see was the glow of the campfire. A strong odour of MT80 was prevalent, which made me feel a little uneasy, considering the proximity of the fire to the tank! After having a brew of tea, we rigged up our lights and surveyed the damage. *"There was this big bang and it just overheated and stopped"*, said the commander. *"Then there was this smell of fuel. The deck plates were open and we could clearly see that the left-hand fan blade had broken off and made a hole in the fuel tank."* The fan belt pulley had given up the ghost, causing the catastrophe.

The repair would mean the removal of the *Morris* Auxiliary Generator, the left-hand fuel tank and replacement of all the broken fan parts. The fuel tank had to be patched with a plate and rivets - so to work. We were also situated near a little Gasthaus, therefore we were able to take a well-earned break when required. To stay in touch, we would park the half-track next to the pub window and bring the

radio headsets inside. *"55 Alpha, slidex message, Over"*, stated an incoming call. Scrambling for the code-book, we had to decipher the message. *"SITREP on repair, Over"*. Well, it didn't take long to figure out what the rate of progress would be. *"4 days, Over"*. Silence first, then came more slidex (coded message) - *"QUICKTRAIN, QUICKTRAIN!"* What the heck was that? We couldn't find the translation card, but eventually one of the boys said that it meant WW3! Oh! Oh! Now what? After decoding the rest of the message, we understood that the Russkies had invaded Berlin and we were now on alert. The next message went something like this: *"If you can't fix the tank in 24 hrs, then BLOW IT UP!"* Goodie, goodie, I had never had such an opportunity in my life. Take it easy boys and we might see a big BANG!

To make a long story short, we got the repair done in record time. However, as the rest of our forces had moved south, we were out on a limb and running short of the good old Compo. A quick coded message on the radio brought a 3-ton QL the next day, with all the Compo we could eat. The driver also had a box of ammunition! It contained enough for 5 rounds each. *"What do you expect us to do with that?"* I asked, *"we are outnumbered 10 to 1. Do we line the Russians up one behind one another?"* After the repair was completed, trials were conducted. I hung upside down under the 105mm gun, peering in through the kidney-plate to make sure there were no leaks. Off we went, getting a little seasick and dizzy - I was glad when the tank came to a stop. Then, all of a sudden, the fire alarm buzzer went off in my headsets. It took forever to disentangle myself and climb up through the gunner's hatch! Not a soul in sight - the crew was half a mile down the road! The buggers had left me to burn! After retrieving the crew and inspecting the engines, all I could find was an alarm sensor that had shorted out. Relieved, we went on our way. Needless to say, we were all very disappointed that we could not dispose of HM's beautiful Mk5 *Centurion* in a puff of smoke!

Tanks for the Memory

Once again, back on exercise in West Germany somewhere. I remember listening to the ongoing battle over the 'C' set. We had our map out, watching the

progress of the Red Team (or Blue Team). During the briefing, there was a specific area marked on the map as 'Bog - out of bounds'. We were all told to stay well clear of it. You've got it, me hearties! 'Commander Cloth Ears' of one of the Troops decided to take a short cut. After three months of digging in the stinking mire, we had to bid a fond adieu to the three Mk5 *Centurion* hulls, which we could not retrieve from the whacking great holes. On returning to the site a few months later, all that was left were three little flags, marking their graves. I wonder if the War Department ever deducted the loss from the Officer's pay? Does anyone else remember that incident, it happened around 1959/60?

Speaking of Tanks and Blunders,

It's funny how Officers instantly spring to mind. They must lose something on the square at Sandhurst. Either that, or their over enthusiasm takes over from common sense. No names, no pack drill! While serving with one of the finest Armoured Regiments in Germany, the following incident occurred. A certain young 'Tanky' Officer took it upon himself to order some technical spare parts for his little tank. He forgot to consult his trusted REME attachment. The driver's hatch hinge had broken off at the hatch cover. Looking at the part's drawing, the back end of the hinge was welded to the Mk5 *Centurion* hull. Here it comes - the Officer successfully ordered a hinge, complete with hull! Apparently, the requisition was passed on through RAOC in BAOR and eventually ended up with all approvals in GB. A young storeman, at HQ in England, noticed the error and cancelled the order before the 'hull with hinge' was shipped to Germany. To top that, this guy did not give up. We ended up with a huge crate, which when opened contained a deck plate. Which, incidentally, came complete with hinge
.....

One more

Attached to the 10th Hussars, I found myself on exercise in Soltau. We had quite a number of National Servicemen in the Regiment and I remember one in particular. He was a University bod and it was a wonder that he was not snapped up by the WOSB for a commission. He was so smart that he could run rings around all

of us, but one incident had us all cracked up. He came wandering into our camp area looking for 'B' Company and his *Centurion* tank. "Where is 'B' Coy. Sarge?" he asked. "Just go over that hill and keep walking", replied the Sergeant.

The chap was absent for three days, the MPs found him in Hamburg. "I was only following orders", he said (orders will be obeyed at all times)! When he came up on charge, he got 'Case dismissed'! Anyone know who he was?

(These tales came in response to a request from Keith Evans for 'tank stories, especially Centurion ones'. Not so sure that they will go into the annals of military history John, but right up OBAN's street! Ed.)

Just the ticket

One morning last year, three Scousers and three Mancunians were in a ticket counter queue at a train station. The three Mancunians each bought a ticket and watched as the three Scousers bought just one ticket. "How are the three of you going to travel on only one ticket?" asked the Mancunians. "Watch and learn", answered one of the Scousers.

All six boarded the train, where the three Mancunians sat down. But the three Scousers crammed into a toilet together and closed the door. Shortly after the train departed, the conductor came around to collect tickets. He knocked on the toilet

door and said, "Ticket, please". The door opened just a crack and a single arm emerged with a ticket in hand. The conductor took it and moved on.

The Mancunians saw this happen and agreed it was quite a clever idea. Indeed, so clever that they decided to do the same thing on the return trip and save some money. That afternoon when they got back to the station, they bought a single ticket for the return trip, then watched in astonishment as the three Scousers didn't buy even one ticket. "How are you going to travel without a ticket?" asked the

perplexed Mancunians. "Watch and learn", answered the three Scouse boys in unison.

When they boarded the train, the three Mancunians crammed themselves into a toilet and the three Scousers crammed into another toilet just down the corridor. Shortly after the train began to move, one of the Scousers left their toilet and walked over to the toilet in which the Mancunians were hiding.

He knocked on the door and said, "Ticket, please".

Remembrance Scroll

I have been requested to more clearly outline the practice of sending a scroll to the next of kin of deceased members and to provide an update on how this is progressing.

The Remembrance Scroll, as shown, is meant to record some of the most memorable things about the School/College, which, with the member's name and details, provides a memorial to the family of the deceased member. It is of A4 size and printed on stiff paper, such that it can be easily framed if so required.

In January 2008, the Association introduced the sending of a Remembrance Scroll to the next of kin of deceased members. To date, 20th November 2008, fifteen scrolls have been sent out.

The process has gone quite well and some very touching letters of thanks have been received from the families, which has been most encouraging.

The main problem has been getting the information required to compile and send out a scroll. A lot of reports of members passing away come to the Association via fellow members. When making such a report, the following details would enable a quick response. :-

Intake and full name of deceased member, plus any nickname.

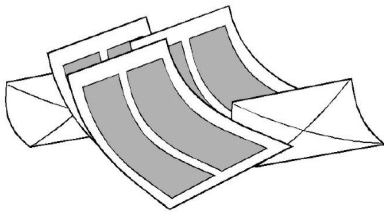
Name and address of next of kin and widow's Christian name, for use in covering letter.

Date of funeral, if not already taken place.

Remembrance scrolls can be provided retrospectively, but only at the direct request from the deceased member's family.



Eddie Broomfield, 45A



OBAN LETTERS



Mo Hope, 59B, contributes food for thought

If, like me, you only ever think of ex-boys as being aged 15 to 18, then it comes as a very sobering thought that, sadly, in the not too distant future, we may end up like the poor man in this poem, which should give us all food for thought. The poem was penned by an old man in a geriatric ward and was found by a nurse, amongst his possessions, after he passed away.

“Crabby Old Man”

*What do you see, nurse? What do you see? What are you thinking when you're looking at me?
A crabby old man, not very wise, uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?
Who dribbles his food and makes no reply, when you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try!"
Who seems not to notice the things that you do and forever is losing a sock or a shoe.
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will, with bathing and feeding, the long day to fill.*

*Is that what you are thinking? Is that what you see? Then open your eyes nurse, you're not seeing me.
I'll tell you who I am, as I sit here so still, as I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother, brothers and sisters, who love one another.
Then a young boy of sixteen, with wings on his feet, dreaming that soon now a lover he'll meet.
A groom soon at twenty, my heart gives a leap, remembering the vows that I promised to keep.*

*At twenty-five now, I have young of my own, who need me to guide them and a secure, happy home.
A man now of thirty, my young now grown fast, bound to each other with ties that should last.
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone, but my woman's beside me to see I don't mourn.
At fifty, once more babies play 'round my knee, again we know children, my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me, my wife is now dead; I look at the future and shudder with dread.*

*For my young are all rearing young of their own and I think of the years, and the love that I've known.
I'm now an old man and nature is cruel; 'tis jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigour depart; there is now a stone where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass a young man still dwells, and now and again my battered heart swells,
As I remember the joys and I remember the pain, and I'm living and loving life over again.
I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast, and accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurse, open them and see, not a crabby old man - look closer - see ME!*

Remember this poem when you next meet an older person, who you might brush aside without looking at the young soul within. We will all, one day, be there too - and remember - the best and most beautiful things of this world can't be seen or touched; they must be felt by the heart.



Harry Sebborn, 45A, e-mails from New Zealand:

Dear Editor, at long last I have gotten around to writing, firstly to thank both you and John 'Pongo' Pewsey, of Brading, Isle of Wight, for having arranged for me to receive OBAN41, which reached me in March 2008. It contained many references to guys from my intake, 45A, especially the colour photograph on the back, of the '41-'45 reunion, which included John 'Sailor' Bradshaw, Eddie Broomfield, John Pewsey - and their wives - all from my intake. I met Molly and John Pewsey

when they visited NZ a few years ago. Eddie I couldn't recall from Arborfield - but we did stand alongside each other in the photo taken at the first ever Old Boys' Reunion at the School, way back on 28 August 1948. Sailor and I were Apprentice Armourers together, and I later met him and Rod McNally at District Workshop Singapore in 1964, whilst I was with RNZEME at Terendak, Malacca, attached to 1 RNZIR (*Infantry Regt? Ed.*).

I was prompted to write this when, at a recent REME reunion in Rotorua, I met

Charles Dixon Brown, ex-WO2 REME, who was from 56B at Arborfield. He alleges that your nickname was 'Scouse', while he will be better remembered as 'Carlo'. (*He certainly was never remembered as 'Dixon'! Ed.*) Anyway, that fortuitous meeting reminded me that I owed you a 'thank you'. Carlo sends his best wishes, of course! We hold a combined ex-British Service Boys, including Royal Navy 'Ganges' School (now closed) and REME Association NZ Branch, reunion annually, usually at the

weekend in November that includes Remembrance Sunday. This year was our 15th and it was a great occasion. We are not all 'Brits', as ex-RNZEME and ex-boys from all countries are eligible to join.

Wives/partners also enjoy themselves, it really is a meeting of old friends. Our numbers attending are naturally shrinking, however our President, ex-boy and REME Major (Ret'd) Mike Kinshott, was present. He is an ex-Jersey boy of 1938 and Arborfield 1939. The only other ex-Arborfield boys in attendance were Jim Culley (44A), Ken Salmon (44B) and your pal Carlo. Eric Corscadden (42A) was unfortunately unable to attend, due to illness.

It may be of interest that in production is a history of the RNZEME. The NZEME was formed on 1st October 1942 in the 2nd NZ Division in the North African campaign. In all other theatres of war, Ordnance and NZASC remained the same.

When NZEME people in 2 NZ Div returned home after the war, they were either returned to Ordnance Corps or were demobbed. The history of the NZEME was never published, probably through

lack of interest. RNZEME was formed on 1st September 1946 and was 'disbanded' (not a good term) at 23.59 hours 8th December 1996, ten years after I returned. The rank or title of 'Craftsman' ceased to exist and all ranks were transferred to the Royal New Zealand Logistic Regt, Duke of York's Own, with Prince Andrew as its Colonel-in-Chief. (Craftsmen became Privates.)

Well, eventually, one of the NZ ex-apprentices decided that the history should be written and recruited a well-known Kiwi author, Peter Cooke, for the job. A previous attempt had proven a waste, as after a whole year of waiting, not a single word had been produced. Lt Col (Ret'd) David Mowatt MBE eventually got the first draft written and printed, but very sadly passed away shortly afterwards, about a year ago. The history is quite lengthy, about 478 pages, including appendices – we are now awaiting information regarding fund raising, which will be necessary if ever we are able to publish the book.

My scrawl is getting worse, so I had

better dry up! Many thanks again for sending that OBAN. My son, Peter, gave me *'The Arborfield Apprentice'* for Christmas two years ago and it gives me great pleasure to refer to it from time to time, renewing old memories, both good and bad. I'm sure that the boys in J4 'D' Coy suggested/designed most of the 'bits' that went into the old School Badge – 'Pongo' Pewsey was very keen! I remember two Armourer ex-boys, Tom Cunliffe and RS 'Nig' Curtis (was he from 44B?) – I think Curtis served in Korea, attached to an Infantry Btn like RAL Harris. Apologies for my writing, but congratulations from all of us old Apprentices, being so lucky to have your excellent School/College history. It's my ultimate proof to my family that those days actually existed!

(It was a pleasure to hear from you Harry, especially with your interesting facts about the NZEME etc etc. I keep saying that I will one day get over to the 'Land of the Long White Cloud', as my brother Geoff now resides at Omokoroa, on the Bay of Plenty. So much to do, so little time! Ed.)



John Worland (52B) writes:

Please find attached *'The Ten Commandments'*, which I hope will bring a smile to a few faces. I copied it out in my 'best hand writing' from an original in 2 Div (Feb to July '53). A point of interest – does anyone remember an A/T SYMRR??RIDS (50A) 'C' Coy, passed out in Feb 1953 - or was he held back by 6 months? His name is written in pencil and is not very clear in this book that I acquired. I ask the question, because in July 53, I acquired a whole set of 'notes' and this book called *'A Wanderer in Khaki'* by a Maj SEG Ponder, one of the funniest I have ever read, about India between 1919 and 1936. I have tried to get other works by the same author via the Internet, but have had no luck so far. Has anybody got any suggestions? The 'notes' are all about Guns, 25pdrs etc and general machine shop engineering. Maybe the REME Museum would like them, I will not 'bin' them yet. Any suggestions from interested people?

The Ten Commandments as prescribed by Moses to GOC Aldershot, 1066

1. Thou shalt not take thy Sergeants' name in vain, lest thy name be inscribed on a 252 and a course of endurance be prescribed for thee.
2. Thou shalt not skive nor swing the lead, lest thou shalt be called to repent within the precincts of the Officers' Mess amidst many dirty dishes.
3. Honour thy pay book and Quartermaster all the days of thy service, that thy credits will be as the sands of the desert.
4. Thou shalt not take unto thyself thy comrade's kit, nor borrow thereof during his absence, lest thy sins be thrust upon thee with the quickness of the fist that blacketh the eye.
5. Thou shalt not fritter away worldly goods by brag, pontoon or poker, lest the voice of authority shalt say unto thee, 'Render unto me thy name and number' - and thy shekels be in bondage.
6. Thou shalt not line thy purse with ill-gotten coins, made by the flogging of fags midweek, lest thou incur the wrath of the powers-that-be and thereby abide in 'The Temple of the Glass Roof'.
7. Thou shalt not consult with Publicans, lest thy will be filled to overflow with coarse liquor. For it is written, 'He that gets drunk shalt surely go on the fizzer'.
8. Six days shalt thou labour and on the Seventh do twice as much.
9. Thou shalt not kill if the Cook grieveth thee, but put your complaint through the proper channels, where one must expect little and, without doubt, receive even less.
10. And it shall come to pass that thou shalt go into the street called 'Civvy', take unto thyself strange garments and there study the dole and the drawing thereof.

Date for the Diary

Please note that the date for the 2009 AOBA Reunion is the weekend of 24/26 July – almost definitely the last chance to march on the old Square!



Lew Dickinson, 45B, e-mailed:

Older members might be interested to know that Maisie Payne, wife of Sgt Herbie Payne, died recently at the grand old age of 94 years. For the younger members, Herbie was a much-respected drill instructor at the School back in the 1940s.

(Herbie had quite a few mentions in our history book 'The Arborfield Apprentice' - anyone care to add a few memories of him? Ed.)



Dave Higgs (44B) writes:

Whilst watching an Everton home soccer match on the box recently, I was surprised to hear the strains of the old School song, drifting out over the club's public address system! There was no reference, of course to 'The Reds', being Goodison Park – that would be sheer sacrilege to a True Blue Everton supporter! However, the remainder of the song appeared to be identical. Being a Gilbert & Sullivan fan, I was always aware of the musical origins of the song, but was not aware that we, at Arborfield, may have

poached the lyrics from Merseyside! Or could it be possible (tongue in cheek) that the poachers were the Scousers! After all, it has been our Old Boys' anthem for the best part of seventy years. Anyway, best wishes to the OBAN team, keep up the good work! Also thanks to the hard working Committee, to whom we are all very grateful.

(Dave – if you look back at OBAN39, you'll find reference to the same subject. Ed.)



Gerry Hincks, 56B, responds:

I was pleased to get the latest edition of *OBAN*, with so many letters of interest, relating to the 'Garian Lady'. Having been stationed in Libya for three years, I travelled up the Garian Pass several times. At the time, 1963, I was attached to 1st Btn The Green Howards. The huge drawing of the Lady was very clear at that time, with almost every part of her

outline covered with drawings of Jeeps and other military equipment. I did at one time have a very large photograph of the Lady. However I have a recollection of lending it to a photographer, for him to make a copy of it, and never saw it again, which I am quite angry about, as it would now be almost unique. I believe that I may be the last serving ex-boy to have seen

the drawing, as British troops were pulled out of Libya in 1966, which was the end of my tour. By this time, I was detached to Benghazi, but that's another story.

(It's just a shame that the picture shown in OBAN43 was so indistinct, but it must have been a copy of a copy of a copy – and so on! Are we going to hear that other story? Ed.)



Chas Pepper, (43B) writes in response:

Many thanks for another good crop of stories in OBAN43. As for 'the REME song' on page 30, I have no knowledge of the words in the published version, but what struck me immediately was how the words fitted into the tune for an old Sea Shanty, called 'A' Roving'. Can't give the musical notation, but its words went like this:

*At number three Old England Square,
Mark well what I do say;
At number three Old England Square,
My Nancy Dawson, she lived there
And I'll go no more a'roving with you fair maid.*

*A'roving, a'roving,
Since roving's been my ruin;
I'll go no more a'roving with you fair maid.*

If one can get to hear the shanty sung, you can see how there was a neat piece of musical recycling done, to get a tune full of gusto.

Poor old McGonagall (page 29) and his poems, describing important events of his day, was I think a victim of class prejudice. It seems that Scottish University students set up Clubs to ridicule his work, using comical Scottish accents; and poetry can be made to sound foolish if a comical delivery is used. Unfortunately, that tradition still goes on today. The late Spike Milligan found McGonagall a rich source of fun - a bit of the old pot calling the kettle black, I suppose! Ah well, that's the way of the world.



Joe Young, 48B, responds by e-mail:

Further to Pat Hennessy's letter in the last OBAN (43), I served with Ernie Warren at 4 Central Workshop, Donnington. We were both sent to the Far East in late 1952, but our paths then separated when I went to Korea. For my last two months, I was posted to the Base Wksp, Kure (Japan), where I met up with Ernie again. We worked in the Inst Shop with another member of our intake, George Pullen, under AQMS Beadle. From there, I think Ernie went to Africa, just as I went off to Singapore. I didn't hear of his sad demise until I joined 625 Ord Depot in Famagusta, Cyprus, in April 1958. It is my understanding that Ernie's home was in Detford, SE London, which Pat might find useful. Attached is a snap of Ernie, taken at K Camp, Donnington, during August 1952. I hope it can be published okay, after all - it is over 56 years old!



David Payne makes a plea for information:

My father, David George Payne, once served in the REME, after the war, in Greece and Egypt. He is now 78 years old and in a respite home with Alzheimers. He still talks about the REME with great fondness. Is there anyone reading this who may be or know of any of his old friends? Anything you can give him regards the REME would make him happy!

E-mail = David.payne007@btinternet.com



David Schofield e-mails the Editor:

The latest OBAN, 43, just arrived - very good and well done - as usual! I spoke with Terry O'Sullivan - you have him down as a missing member on page 9. I've given his latest address to Keith, but Terry wasn't too happy about being called 'ex-62C'. He said that he started and finished his apprenticeship in 62C, so how can he be 'ex'? Just thought you might like a bit of feedback!

(I did get back to David and reminded him that as we are all 'ex-boys' - does that mean we are all now girls? Who said 'Pull the other one!?' Ed.)



Geoff Knox, 55B, e-mails:

This might be worth publishing in 'the obits'. My cousin, who still lives in Arborfield, married an ex-boy named Viv Pentecost, from probably about 1950, so I imagine his intake to be around 48A. I never met the guy, but my other cousin visited from NZ last year and looked him up in Cornwall, then left his address and phone number with me. My intention was to contact him with a view to joining OBA, but unfortunately I never got around to it and have since learned that he died this year, whilst undergoing surgery. It may be that some of our older members may remember him, as I am led to believe he was an 'all right fellow'. I have also made contact with a very good

friend of mine, now living in Zimbabwe, who I'm hoping will join before the next reunion. Unfortunately, communications with that country are a little fraught at the moment, so I'm not quite sure what his situation is. Is it possible for me to invite him as a guest for the Saturday BBQ? I have also found another 55B mate in Manila (the Philippines), but I don't think he'll be able to attend at any time.

(Thanks for the recruiting drive Geoff! Anyone out there who knew Viv Pentecost? As for attendance at the BBQ, I'll post this on in good time to 'Uncle' Bill Cleasby, who can then contact you in return. Ed.)



Eric Cook (42A) wrote:

Many thanks for obtaining an enlarged copy of the 'Lady of Garian', it came out pretty well - pity I only had a Box Brownie at that time! I paid a visit to the Royal Hospital at Chelsea a few

days ago, at the invitation of my old mate, none other than Keith Frederick Brunger. We have been corresponding by e-mail, ever since my seeing him on the cover of OBAN37, following the

2006 Reunion. Fred and I served together in the Britcom Base Workshop, Japan, between 1954 and 1955. We played rugby against some pretty tough opposition, especially the Aussies, who



certainly played for keeps! Fred gave me a large picture of the Sergeants' Mess from those days. We were a mixed bunch – Brits, Aussies and Canadians – I'm not sure that there were any other ex-boys there, apart from the two of us.

I also came across another couple of photos, one being of the Arborfield Garrison Gymnastics team, August 17th 1946 – I'm sure I can't be the only ex-Apprentice in that team (yours truly at top right.) The other one, at Aldershot back in October '44, was after we'd had a few whiskies and some fish'n'chips, then decided to have a 'professional' photograph taken. I recognise Danny Kershaw, Mike 'Donc' Dickinson and Mick Brundle, but I do apologise to the

chap on the right for not remembering his name. (Could it have been Joe Adey – perhaps other readers can help?) When the School spit up (the famous dispersal), our intake went to Warley Barracks in Essex to do our 'regimental', and then back to Aldershot for a Trade Test. After that, we spent a long time in 13 Command Wksp, working alongside civilians on repairing tanks and awaiting a

posting. We had our meals in barracks and at midday in the workshops, supplied in hot-boxes from the Army Cookery School. I remember that they ran 4-week courses. During the first week of the course, our food was pretty horrible; week 2 showed a slight improvement; but, during the final two weeks, we were into the realms of 'cordon bleu'!

(Eric - the Mike Dickinson you mention must be the 42A version, who was a lecturer at SEME Bordon for many years, until his retirement in 1991. In 'The Arborfield Apprentice', he wrote about working in the tank section at Aldershot, where an Eric Clarke had his leg severed by a Sherman tank, which was reversing into one of the repair bays. Ed.)



Peter Gripton (56B) writes: 56B get together for another year

Earlier in the year (2008), I had been contacted by a long-lost comrade, in the shape of Colin 'Fritz' Fry, now living in Bowie, that's over in Maryland, USA. Having exchanged e-mails and photographs, I happened to mention to him that I and my wife would be visiting the States towards the end of July, to which he responded that, if I called his cell-phone (that's 'mobile' over here!), he would try to 'drop in' on us. So, in due course, we arrived in Naperville (near Chicago) where we were staying with my daughter and husband. A couple of days later, I called Colin as requested and he said he'd see us around 5pm the following day. Little did I realise that this would involve him starting at 4am and driving some 750 miles to get there! In the event, he was later than anticipated arriving in 'Chicagoland' (as the locals call the area) - and also having problems in locating his

motel, when he phoned in – so we decided to meet up the next morning instead. It was only then, as we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast at the local *Egg Harbor Café*, that we found out about his long trip. After breakfast and a stroll around the town in the pleasant sunshine, we repaired back to my daughter's house, where we had a cuppa and continued catching up on old times. We also made the decision to go to *Brookfield Zoo*, to where Colin duly ferried us for the afternoon, and we spent a good couple of hours wandering around and enjoying the fine collection of animals. When Colin dropped us off in Naperville, he was heading back for an early night at his motel, before another early-morning start – to drive the 750-miles return trip! What a star!

Colin had previously decided that he would be attending the 56B mini-reunion for 2008, so he has arranged to 'be there'

with the rest of 'the gang' this coming weekend. I shall be taking along a copy of 'The Arborfield Apprentice' for him, plus a whole scrapbook of 56B photographs that I have collected over the past few years. Colin hasn't been in touch with any of us for many years – in my case since 1961, until July of course! – so it will be a nostalgic occasion for him, I'm sure. I am writing this just a couple of days prior to the event, so the next couple of paragraphs or so will be covering what happened!

Friday morning, October 3rd, and thankfully dry as I loaded up the car. Joyce and I decided to stop off somewhere *en route*, we like visiting different places, and this time it was Abingdon (Berks) that got the vote! Good job too, as Joyce realised she had forgotten to pack a swimsuit (the hotel was to have a pool!) and also left her makeup bag on the bed at

home! Now a lady on a weekend away, minus makeup – well, you all know the score! And so, we went shopping – though there were no suitable wet-water costumes available. Having booked in at the hotel, located in rolling countryside out in the sticks between Banbury and Daventry, we then drove up almost to Leicester, where our daughter supplied not only an evening meal – but also a swimsuit for Joyce! Returning to the hotel, we caught up with two other ‘early starters’, May and Roger Clarkson, and enjoyed a chat and a drink before retiring.

The weather forecast had looked pretty horrible, but thankfully it was only cloudy and grey on Saturday morning – but still dry! Firstly, Joyce enjoyed a blissful half-hour, having the pool all to herself, after which our ‘gang of four’ was reinforced by Colin Fry and Roger Brooker, both on their own. After a hearty breakfast, we all enjoyed a longish walk around the perimeter of the excellent golf course for which the hotel is well renowned. Upon arrival back at HQ, the rest of the guests were starting to arrive, so the afternoon was a time for getting together and chatting – a few of us found local pubs for a quick bite to eat. The photo albums came out for another year – they have grown into the definitive 56B collection

over the years! There were a few late arrivals and almost a panic situation when Margarethe and John Dunn made it just in time to sit down for dinner – but we all finally sat down together and enjoyed an excellent meal, with lovely service – I’m sure I speak for all on that. Retiring to the bar, the evening of reminiscence didn’t last over long, a night in bed now more attractive than propping up the bar until the early hours!

Joyce again went for a peaceful swim, while outside Sunday morning did just ‘what it said on the tin’ – poured down! But another ‘full English’ put the spark back into everybody’s cheeks before it was time to once again bid each other farewell. As I was booking out, I overheard Roger Brooker asking for “a taxi to Banbury”. I hadn’t realised that he’d actually travelled all the way from Weston-super-Mare by train. So I offered him a lift into the town, as it was on our way home anyway, and off we went. But in a ‘senior moment’, instead of going straight across at the roundabout, I found myself heading down the slip road and south on the M40! “*Oh s**t*” was the phrase that quickly came to mind, as I realised it would be miles before I could turn around. But then it transpired that Roger would have been catching the train from Banbury – to

change at Oxford. He insisted that he didn’t mind being dropped off “*any where in Oxford*”, but I really didn’t fancy doing that – I’ve driven through Oxford before and it is not traffic-friendly! And then – the master stroke! We found that Roger was also going to have to change trains for a second time after Oxford – this time at Didcot! So it wasn’t too long afterwards that we were able to drop him off right outside Didcot railway station! I drew the line at heading all the way down to Weston – but we did all have a laugh about that prospect!

Finally, for the record, those in attendance for the ’08 bash were: Roger Brooker, Roger Clarkson, Ron Daykin, John Dunn, Colin Fry, Pete Gripton, Gerry Hincks, John Houghton, Dave Howlett, Len Keetley, Pete Langridge, Dick Morris, Derek Newman, Tony Strong, Pete Swanston and Keith Smith. Thanks one and all, for making it another memorable occasion, which we hope to replicate again next year. P.s. – Roger got back safely. He is soon to get married – and Val, his ‘intended’, e-mailed her thanks for our transportation job – but said he’d gotten home rather early and nearly caught the best man just leaving!



Tony Domoney, 56B, e-mails:

Well, here I am again, writing from Windhoek, Namibia. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) dragged me out of retirement to join four colleagues (Canadian, Yankee, Dutch and Greek), contracted to assist the Civil Aviation Authority here. The project is initially for two months, however we have been ‘verbally’ requested to stay for 6 months, with the possibility of a one-year contract. How could I refuse, even at my ancient 67 years? One should never be too enthusiastic about one’s environment, I know, but my first impressions of Windhoek – the city, its people and environs – is that this is the cleanest and nicest place I have ever worked in, in Africa. The working conditions are very good and the welcome we have received has been quite lovely. No problems with getting anything or going anywhere, so I am happy – AND I get paid for the pleasure! The Country Club Hotel has been voted as the number one hotel in Namibia, and is about four-star, with nice airy rooms. Mine overlooks green lawns, the swimming pool and the nearby golf course. The cost of goods etc

seems to be far less than in my now Aussie homeland.

The Department of Civil Aviation is almost non-existent and our workload is enormous. Industry is reluctant to change and still wants to operate as of yesteryear. Never mind, I enjoy the challenge and in reality I can achieve a lot here. We, as the ICAO-UN Team, have met the Minister of Transport and Works, along with leading managers, secretaries etc. They are enthused of our presence and are offering full support. The Director of Civil Aviation is a lady, as bright as a button and very supportive. I have a small comfy office, with all admin facilities, which includes broadband and telephone. Two cars are to be supplied for our use. So much better than my Zimbabwe days, when all I got was a cockroach-infested dirty office, a piece of paper and broken pencil! To start with, I have been asked to visit all stations within Namibia and conduct Audits on Operations and Maintenance bases. Of course my role is to teach the Airworthiness Inspectors (one!) and advise Industry about the 21st-

century Aviation rules. (Lots of fun!)

I am looking forward to seeing the Skeleton Coast, the Namib Desert and Atlantic Ocean, not forgetting the flora and fauna of this interesting country. At this stage, I am well impressed with Namibia, enjoying the challenge and hopeful of an extended spell here. Africa is mainly in a mess, especially Zimbabwe, where my brother and his wife live. I am mindful of this and most fortunate to be in an African country that appears to be ‘sane’ and ‘progressive’. Namibia depends on tourism and resources for its economy. Certainly it caters well for both and I recommend anyone that you visit, if and when you can, without fear. Crime seems to be of the ‘minor’ variety, although naturally one takes the normal precautions.

(Readers who have regularly followed OBAN over the years will know of Tony’s love of both Africa and aviation, so he is now upholding his long-held tradition – I’m now going to call him ‘Biggles’, I think! Ed.)



Brian Atkins emails from Western Australia

Dear Editor, thanks for the E-mail received this morning, we are currently just plodding along gently, after a horrendous October & November. I went down with a very severe case of bronchitis, was laid up for a month, then another fortnight to get back to normal, but am OK now. We have just started our summer here and temperatures are expected to be in the high 20s this week, getting steadily warmer as we head toward Christmas. This year, as is normal with us, we do not have the traditional dinner, but instead 'pig out' on lobsters, king prawns and salads. We will think of you poor old 'poms', with rain, hail, sleet and snow - if I never see snow again it will be too soon!

(We think we get the picture Brian – but you forgot to mention the 'barbie'! Ed.)

David Michael Follett, 1941 - 2008

Dave came from a long line of military stock, so it was no surprise that by the age of nine, he was being hawked around to various military schools, to ensure that the family tradition was maintained. Somehow, he managed to escape enlistment at such a tender age, and instead passed his '11-plus' exam, going on to Maidstone Grammar School. He didn't really enjoy his time there, being in constant trouble with the school authorities! He always remarked that his school report said, *"has ability, but never uses it"*. This was confirmed in his penultimate year when, for reasons he could never recall, he resolved to do well at French - and duly came top of his class! The inevitable military influences finally won him over and, in 1957 when he left school, Dave signed up for a life in the Army for the next twelve years. He certainly enjoyed life at the Apprentices' School at Arborfield, as a member of 57A, admitting to 'no more than his share' of youthful misdemeanours! He went on to play both cricket and rugby for the School and passed every exam he sat, thus learning to become a qualified tradesman, as well as soldier. He remembered one particular 'Outward Bound' course in Snowdonia, which although physically taxing, he really enjoyed.

Following further trade training in the Regular Army, Dave was, like many of his counterparts, posted to BAOR, West Germany. There, he discovered that there was plenty of fun to be had after work! It was *"a period of no responsibility"*, he later said, *"almost like being freed from captivity"*. At the time, he thought Germany had recovered faster than the UK from the war; certainly its shops were brighter, its nightlife uninhibited and its beer lovely! He thought it was a very modern place. Dave was there for 18 months and, in that time, German beer and German food took his weight up from 7 to 10 stones! After conversion training back in England, he eventually returned to Germany with the Army Air Corps. Daily life was much the same as before, except that by now Dave had learnt to play the guitar. He and three friends formed a band and played three or four nights a week in local establishments, earning – and spending – three times as much as the Army were paying them for a full week's work! And, of course, they had lots of fun!

Aden, on the other hand, was not much fun for Dave. In those days, soldiers – well, him at least – were politically unaware. He could never understand why an Arab who was willing to sell you a cheap radio on Monday was equally willing to shoot you on Tuesday! He lost two good friends in tragic circumstances, but generally he got on with his job in his usual inconspicuous yet conscientious way. It was around



this time that Dave decided to leave the Army when his time was served; this he did after a further spell back in Germany. After demob, he did little for some months, eventually drifting into a job with *Grattan's Catalogue*. Then, he met and married Tricia - Dave was never in any doubt that she was 'The Woman behind the Man'. He always used to say that perhaps she must have seen that behind the lazy exterior, there was a bit of potential! The happy couple moved up north with his job – and settled in rural Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, where daughter Anna was born. They then decided that, when a suitable opportunity arose, they would return south. *Freeman's Catalogue* eventually presented that opportunity and, despite some early struggles with housing, life got much better. Dave had fair success in his career and

learnt some new skills along the way. For instance, when they bought their somewhat run-down house in Catford, in 1981 at a time when money was short and his renovating skills were limited, plumbing, brickwork, and carpentry were all quickly learned, with the appropriate tool in one hand and the *Reader's Digest Home Improvement Guide* in the other! He also learnt that, if you don't possess a particular skill, then someone else does. And to avoid paying an excessive amount for the use of this required skill, one could always place a 'small ad' in the newsagents near the job centre!

During latter years, Dave had suffered sickness for some considerable time; he had diabetes for over twenty years and had a triple heart bypass in 1996. Recently (belatedly and after a misdiagnosis), he was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. His daughter Anna made the journey from Australia to come and see her father, along with his granddaughters, Zoe and Eva. He got to hold all of them in his arms during his last weeks and there were lots of photos taken, which Anna will always cherish.

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.

