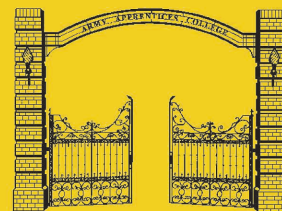


October 2009

Issue 46



OBAN



*Arborfield Old Boys Association News*

[www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk](http://www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk)



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## Notices

Please note that the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of either the Editor or of the Arborfield Old Boys Association and, therefore, no responsibility for these will be accepted. **All contributions and articles for inclusion in OBAN are most warmly welcomed although text in Microsoft Word format and photos/images in TIFF or high grade JPEG format are preferred. Photographs or diagrams must be of high resolution if they are to look acceptable - aim for something at least 500Kb 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](http://www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk)

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



It seems only a short time ago that the then Chairman of the AOBA, a certain Col PH Gibson, was writing these words in the newly resurrected *OBAN 1* – “*I hope that you will agree that this newsletter is worth supporting and will respond positively to it*”. I am sure that little did he know that now, for *OBAN 46*, he would be still so strongly involved with the layout and production of our magazine! And it came as something of a surprise to me, as your humble Editor, to find that the last issue turned out in full colour – my thanks to all who were involved in that effort.

In fact that very first issue dates back now to the early months of 1992, just nine pages in all, and in a pale blue monochrome. So it would appear that, thanks to John Northam's ‘little acorn’, *OBAN* has since become a ‘mighty oak’! On a personal basis, I ‘came on board’ in time for the publication of *OBAN 31*, so already I have the privilege to have been involved in a third of the total issues so far. But to quote my dear old Mum, “*it just seems like yistiddy*” – well, she is another ‘Scouser’ after all!

By the time you are reading this, summer 2009 will probably be fading, but not, I hope, the memories of another great Old Boys’ Reunion. As with last year, I will have been visiting the Chicago area over the Reunion weekend – my daughter’s presence in Illinois and the fact that her birthday is in late July – well, you can guess the rest! I do hope that everyone who attended had the usual wonderful time – I shall have to rely on reports and photographs of the occasion once more – and of course keep in touch through the pages that follow.

The editorial pending tray is still in good health – but please do not let that put off anyone who is thinking he may make a future contribution. Recruitment appears to be catching up with the younger old boys, who I am sure must have some tales to tell of their own exploits. Please keep sending me your letters, photographs and articles – after all, ‘**your OBAN needs YOU!**’

*Pete Gripton, 56B*

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**Front Cover Picture:**

**The Inspecting Officer makes a grand entrance ‘on parade’**

**Back Cover Picture:**

**Even our respected Chairman has to look up to this 6 foot 7 inch CSM!**



## OFFICERS' REPORTS

### Chairman's Message



What a superb Reunion we had for 2009! Over 200 members sat down for dinner, while there had been around 130 proudly 'on parade'. It was the turn of the 'Fifty-niners' to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but mention must also be made regarding the number of 'Forty-niners' that showed up - and especially the 'Thirty-niners' who were also in attendance. While it is true that there are fewer of us around, in typical ex-boy contrariness, we are happily drawing in more new members as we celebrate these special anniversaries, many of whom do return again and again.

A special 'thank you' from me to all who attended the AGM, it was indeed a packed occasion. But back to the Reunion - the WOs and Sgts Mess, as well as its members, hosted us tremendously well and, as always, made the parade ground an enjoyable recollection of times gone by - but with nobody locked up! There is no doubt that the curtains will one day be drawn over Rowcroft Barracks - so it is all the more important to enjoy our recollections while we still can.

*Brian Hutchins, 61B*

### From the Honorary Secretary



Well, from the many e-mails on the subject, I think it is fairly safe to believe that the 2009 Reunion was a great success. I certainly enjoyed it very much and, as always, found it great fun. It really is quite amazing that, when you are in your own Div's company, no matter how many times you repeat the same old story, it is always hilarious! I suppose that's what the Association is all about. At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter how one's individual career progressed - or whether you ended up as a Wall Street banker, it's all about feeling 'at one' with real friends who share a common bond and an experience that transcends time. The Reunion administration was not perfect of course, life is not like that and I will have to do some tweaking for the next one - but we are nearly there. Accommodation however will always be a problem and, as the 2010 Reunion promises to be well attended, we will have to strictly apply the 'first come, first served' rule. So please get your applications in early. Life here at Arborfield is starting to settle down, although the AOBA hot line, manned by Keith Evans, is as busy as ever. He really is 'a star' and we all owe him a great deal of gratitude. He is rapidly coming up to his concessionary subscription rate birthday, which is quite extraordinary, bearing in mind the way he leaps about! You can't keep a good man down.

*God Bless, Bill Cleasby, 61C*

### Recruiting and Membership



It's still all good news from the membership office, with 62 members having joined since the membership office opened in October 2008.. This includes 4 reactivations and one possible resignation.

The number of active members is now well over 850.

Please keep the calls coming if you know the whereabouts of an ex-boy who isn't a member of the association.

*Keith Evans 45A / Fred Mills 51B*

### Web Developer's Report



At the last Reunion, lots of guys asked about statistics for the website and forum, so I had a look. Our web-site receives on average 714 visitors per week from across the world, looking at some 2,358 pages. Of those, the most favourite are photos and reunion stories. The site is fully indexed in all the major search engines - Google being the most important, where at present we enjoy a Page Ranking of 4 on a scale of 1 to 10. This ranking - for a site Google considers to be a 'hobby site' - is outstanding and a testament to the variety it offers; so many thanks to all contributors.

As for the forum, this continues to be a success, again due entirely to its members, who at present amount to around 360, of which in the order of 45 visit each day. As of today, there are 1,269 topics covering over 12,300 posts. These are full and varied, ranging from stories of Arborfield life, through advice on all subjects thinkable to individual's holiday reports. So, if you have a question regarding what colours were in the School Colours - or how to stop wasps stinging - you will find the answer in the AOBA forum!

With your support - long may they both prosper.

*God Bless, David 'Tich' Schofield, 65A*

### Money Matters



There is very little to report since OBAN 45 was published. Life in the world of 'high finance' has been ticking along nicely, with many new members joining and quite a number of reactivation subscriptions being received.

Letters for those members who will be joining the 'eighty and over club' (Intake 44) will be sent out during October for action. I would be grateful for replies to be sent to me as soon as possible, as it will speed up the action that must be taken at my end!

I guess this will be the last OBAN before Christmas - so please have a happy one - and a hearty New Year.

*Mike Davis, 60B*



# Arborfield - and Beyond

by Brian Atkins, 43A

*(We left Brian in OBAN40 as newly qualified from 36 Arm Art course and posted off to the Far East. The story continues ..... Ed.)*

## The Far East – and flying bullets

I arrived in Malaya in 1951, on posting to the Command Workshop at Kuala Lumpur – known to one and all as ‘KL’. My employment was to be in charge of the ‘A’ (armoured) vehicles repair section. In the same camp as us was ‘B’ Sqn of the 13/18<sup>th</sup> Hussars. In a terrorist ambush, after which 120 bullet holes were found in the staff car, Sir Henry Gurney had been assassinated. His place as Governor was taken by General (later Field Marshall) Sir Gerald Templar and we were tasked with modifying a *Daimler* Armoured Car for him. We removed the 2-pounder gun and mounted a wooden barrel, complete with a double lounge seat, inside the armoured turret – it even had a writing desk inside too. He said there was no way that some half-baked terrorist was going to take a potshot at him!

While serving at KL, a *Saracen* APC (armoured personnel carrier) was brought in for repair. It had been sent across to Malaya for user trials and had blown its cylinder-head gasket. A signal was sent to UK for a replacement item but, when it arrived, we found that some brainless wonder in the RAOC, in order to conserve space, had folded it in half! Now, as any grease monkey will tell you, one does not fold copper/asbestos head gaskets in half, as it renders them completely useless. After much swearing and cursing, and wondering as to the storeman’s ancestry, we took the useless gasket down to ‘*The Street of Metal Workers*’ in KL town. Following some severe head scratching, one chap said he could do what we wanted and, sure enough, a couple of days later, he came to us with his own manufactured gasket. It even had the part number stamped on it and fitted perfectly! The *Saracen* later departed our repair section, completed its trials and never had a further engine problem.

I was later sent to join a Squadron of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Tank Regt (RTR) up on the Thai border, as there was nobody else in Malaya with sufficient tank knowledge. Up there, we were ‘housed’ in tented accommodation and, one night, some bandits up in the hills above us, decided to ‘have a go’. One flying bullet struck the

box at the base of my bed. The Squadron Leader (no, not the RAF type!) ordered our tanks to line up on the camp perimeter, where they let go with their 17-pounders and machine guns. Those bandits never bothered us again. When 3 RTR returned to Hong Kong, we were tasked with loading the tanks onto a Landing Craft, Tank (LTC). But the ship’s Captain brought his vessel too far in and, after the tanks were loaded, the craft was left sitting on the sand. So we took off the *Churchill* ARV, lowered the ramp and pushed the craft into deeper water. We were then able to reverse the ARV back on board.

I remember, one day, some of us went to see a firepower demonstration, being given to some local politicians. The Suffolks’ regimental mortar team managed to get twenty-six 3” mortars bombs in the air before the first one hit the ground. Then it was the turn of 13/18 Hussars, in one of their Armoured Cars. They were supposed to fire their BESA machine-gun in bursts, but somehow the trigger mechanism got stuck and the whole belt of 225 rounds went through. The finale was supposed to be the firing of the 2-pounder. Unfortunately, some faulty ammo had been issued and it started exploding closer and closer to the vehicle. Finally, one shell blew up in the weapon’s muzzle and split its barrel, which then resembled a peeled banana, right back as far as the turret. End of demonstration!

## Getting one’s bearings?

I was then posted to 12 Inf Wksp in Mentakab. One of the first jobs I had to supervise was during a large operation in the area, being run by the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles, who had just received a complete replacement of fully re-conditioned *Humber* Scout Cars. Within a very short period of time, all of these vehicles developed faults with their wheel bearings. When we got around to stripping them down, we found that they had all been packed with – would you believe it? – soft soap! We mounted a round-the-clock effort, removing the offending material, discarding bearings and seals, and then re-building. We achieved this relatively quickly and the Gurkhas were very grateful.

The Colonel of their Regiment was Lt Col Waldron MC. He didn’t live with the other officers, but stayed in the Sgts’ Mess! Each evening we would supply

him with a bottle each of Scotland’s finest and soda water, along with the three-week old English newspaper. I remember that a Test Match was being played in England around that time and several of us were listening to it on the old radio. The thing that stands forever in my memory was the commentator, Rex Alston, saying that Lindsay Hassett, the Australian captain, could wrap up the English innings and win the Ashes for the Aussies. At this, there came a roar from the Colonel – “*Don’t be a damned fool man! Willy Watson and Trevor Bailey will see this through and we will retain the Ashes*”. Well, they must have heard him, for they did see it through and we did keep the trophy! Later, both the Colonel and I were ‘mentioned in dispatches for distinguished service’ on the very same day – my birthday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. During this same period, I took the first batch of personnel from the workshop to a ‘change of air’ station up in the Cameron Highlands, where I first met my wife. At the time, she was a L/Cpl in the WRAC, stationed in Singapore. We were married, in December 1953, by the Rev Tracey K Jones (an American minister), in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Singapore.

We went to set up a camp just north of Ipoh. Given an area of jungle, we were told to clear it and set up the workshop. While erecting the Aldershot Shelter, one of the beams collapsed and hit me just above the right eye. I woke up in hospital to find three stitches in my brow – and that eye is still slightly lower than the left one all these years later! The time eventually came around for me to return to England. However, the Chief Clerk had neglected to inform the shipping people that I now had a wife! So I missed that particular ship and sailed on the next – very fortunate as it turned out, fate was very kind to me. The ship I had just missed was the ‘*Empire Windrush*’, which caught fire and sank off Malta. Thankfully, all but one survived, but the survivors had only the clothes they stood up in, everything else had ‘gone to the bottom’. Our ship picked them all up as we called into Valetta harbour, before continuing our journey home.

## Back in Blighty

On our return to England, I first had a spot of leave, before being posted to 67<sup>th</sup> Training Regt Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) at Hadrian’s Camp, just outside of

Carlisle. (*This was later to be the location of the fourth Army Apprentices' School. Ed.*) The function of this unit was as the training base for 'Cavalry types', as gunners, radio operators and drivers. When there was inclement weather, some of the trainee drivers would become smart-alecks and spend the day away from driving in the rain or snow. To bring this about, a pin would be pierced through the HT lead from the coil to the distributor, causing ignition failure. However, we quickly became aware of this ruse and, after a few had been charged and went on 'defaulters', they were also made to pay for a new HT lead. The malpractice soon stopped after that. All of the instructors came from Cavalry Regiments, generally where they had 'blotted their copybooks' – and Carlisle is where they ended up!

I recall one chap, Sgt 'Curly' Watson of 15/19<sup>th</sup> Hussars, arriving and I asked him what sin he had committed to arrive at our gate, he told us that he'd been a Troop Leader, patrolling the German border with *Daimler* Scout Cars. Over his radio he had received a message saying that, when his Troop reached a certain map reference, it would be confronted by a Troop of Russian T34 tanks. Upon being asked what action he would take, his reply was, "*Troop, let us pray. Our Father ..... etc*" Unbeknown to him, the Brigadier was listening in and nearly had a fit! Curly was sent for and asked to explain his remarks. He asked, "*What could I possibly do with four Bren guns against four 105mm tank guns?*" That's why he was now with the happy band at Carlisle. Another arrival was a sergeant from the 13/18<sup>th</sup>, who I had known in Malaya. When he brought his wife into the Mess however, there was a real 'scattering of the clans'. I was told that she had been 'a lady of the night' in Dusseldorf – and 'knew' several of the Mess members, if you get my drift! I was then sent down to Catterick to assist in forming a new unit. I was to be the only Regular soldier, all the rest being 'reservists', even the Officer Commanding. He had been brought back from Kenya, where he had been growing coffee. We were to be 73 Port Workshop and our sole task was that if a vehicle aboard a tank landing ship would not start, we had five minutes to either get it started – or tow it out and away from the bow, so that the remainder could get off.

### Wounded in the desert

After this ignominy, I was thankfully seconded to the Aden Protectorate Levies,

Scout Car Section, where the OC turned out to have been my Sqn Leader at Carlisle – Maj Jack Eggleton MC of the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars. The SSM was Jimmy Godden of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers and the SQMC was Reg Utton of the Life Guards, who was to become godfather to my daughter. (For the uninitiated, there are no sergeants in the Household Cavalry – so for 'Sergeant' read 'Corporal', a tradition that dates back to King Charles II.) The Yemeni had attacked across the border and taken the town of Dhala. A relief column was hastily set up, where I was 'tail-end Charlie', driving the unit *Scammell*, just in case anything broke down. Where we were situated, there were no real roads as such, all the driving was along wadi beds – and very hard on the vehicles. Just as the sun rose, one of the 'brown gentlemen', hiding along the sides of one wadi, decided to have a ping at us. With mine being the largest vehicle and thus the easiest target, it was inevitably me that copped it! I was wounded in seven places and immediately flown out by chopper to Aden Base Hospital. When we landed, I asked the ambulance driver to go around to our Squadron lines so that I could pass on a message to my wife that I was all right. Jimmy Godden didn't believe what I told him at first, until I showed him all the dressings I had on.

At the hospital, I managed to upset the apple cart, by walking in with my loaded *Sterling* machine gun plus six extra magazines, a loaded revolver and a box of extra cartridges! The staff were very put out, they must have thought it was Errol Flynn coming in! Then I upset them even more by saying that, as I wasn't ill and being a soldier, I was entitled to one bottle of beer every day! Eventually they gave in and I got my daily beer – much to the chagrin of the RAF types there alongside me.

### The Beverley incident

Worse was to follow! After returning to duty, I found that the mechanic with the Troop in Behan was coming down to the hospital, as he had burned himself. I went up to relieve him and, when the day came for me to return to Aden, I climbed on board a *Beverley* transport aircraft. It was supposed to have taken two 3-ton trucks but, as they couldn't be started, it was decided to come back for them later. We took off from a desert strip and climbed to 10,000 feet, only for both port engines to stop! It was decided to make a fast return and we went down pretty sharpish. The trouble is that, these planes, to land on

desert strips, have to use reverse thrust on all engines. But with two out of action, it was a no-no and we subsequently ran off the end of the strip. Both nose wheels broke off, we turned upside down, and skidded along for nearly a quarter of a mile. It was the first time I'd boarded a plane and not undone my seatbelt! But it wasn't really funny as we slid over rocks, watching the roof being buckled all along its length. One of the aircrew died I'm afraid. He was hit on the back of the head by a loose radio, swallowed his false teeth and choked to death – what a way to go.

Both of the pilots ended up with broken legs, but nobody else was seriously hurt. I later wrote an article about this unfortunate episode, explaining what had happened, which was published in the *Beverley* magazine. (*I think we may have already published that same tale in OBAN 38. Ed.*) My time in Aden was up and I flew home on a *Comet*. This was one of the first flights to take place after that famous aircraft had suffered a spate of falling out of the sky! Adding to my *Beverley* experience, I was none too confident with that flight – not until we landed safely at RAF Lyneham. With temperatures at Aden having been in excess of 100 degrees, it was a great shock to find a thick frost on the ground in Wiltshire!

### Off to Germany

I managed to have a spot of leave and stayed with my in-laws in Middlesbrough. I found out that I was heading off to join the Royal Scots Greys, then based at Catterick. I've often wondered which dreamboat was it that decided, in their ultimate wisdom, that I should first report to the REME Depot at Arborfield! The Greys had been a 'training regiment' but was now up to strength and due to take up residence in Munster, Germany. Upon arrival, I roomed with the SSM of 'C' Sqn, a guy named Les Crompton. Every evening we told each other that, "*We must go into town to see what it's like, so we'll be able to show the wives around*". However, fate had placed a Gasthaus (pub) just across the road from the Camp gates and we'd inevitably drop in there for a pint or three beforehand. So in fact I never got into Munster until the family arrived!

The 2I/C of 'C' Sqn at the time was Edward, Duke of Kent – I believe he's now a Field Marshall. He had joined as a subaltern direct from Sandhurst and soon learned what it was to be a Cavalry officer. When I later found that I was to be



discharged under a 'Reduction in Establishment' exercise, I moved from the Greys to 15 Inf Wksp at Paderborn, where I headed up a Forward Repair Section. This consisted of a 1-tonner fitted with radios, my own *Land/Rover*, again kitted out with radios, and four half-tracks with added bodies, allowing the crews to sleep in them. Upon receiving a call that a tank had broken down, I would go to do a recce to see what the problem was. As we repaired by 'major assembly replacement', I would call up the next available crew, tell them which assembly was required, wait for them to arrive, then stay with them until the next call. Amazingly, the Dutch always seemed to break down just outside

a pub – very convenient, or very clever, or both?

The change-time 'by the book' for a *Centurion* engine was fourteen hours, but we had that down to seven by the time I left. I had a mate who worked at *Rolls-Royce* and he nearly had a fit when I told him how we lined everything up. I'd stand on the gun barrel and line it all up by eye!

We never had a failure, despite the laid-down procedure going on about special gauges and all that. We never did use them – and got on fine without them. I remember that, when the *Conqueror* came into service, there was a lot of trouble with the water-pump on the auxiliary engine. If

a leak was detected, the tank was not to be moved until a replacement pump was fitted. One young officer disregarded this 'advice', even after warnings from his driver and Troop Sergeant. The main engine subsequently seized up – and he was duly billed for its replacement!

I'm going to close here, as if I included **all** my memories I could end up writing a book! In fact I have actually written three books and am currently working on a 'condensed' version of one of them.

*(This is the final part of Brian's story of his service, which he began in OBAN 40. Ed.)*

## Bugis Street

by Chas Pepper, 43B

### 1960, Singapore

Bugis Street was named after a fierce and highly feared tribe of sea pirates, whose name entered the English language as the child-frightening '*Boogey – or Bogey – Man*'. No such terrors were to be found in Bugis Street, as its attraction was that the people 'working' there were either transvestites, transsexuals, or trans-anything one could imagine, all dressed in local ethnic female garb. The street was one large café; tables on either side of the street, with a gangway up the centre and bars and shops along each edge.

The seats at the table where I sat were gradually being occupied, first a New Zealander, like myself on leave from Malaya; then a Norwegian ship's officer and, last of all, a flesh-and-blood woman who introduced herself as 'Suzie Wong'. This raised a certain amount of interest, as the name was that of the main character in a rather spicy novel (and later film), who teaches a callow Englishman the secrets of sex. 'Suzie' filled the last seat at our table and, when offered a drink, would accept only coffee. Conversation opened up between us all, but a curious thing was happening with our Kiwi colleague. Starting with a real NZ twang, this gradually transformed into a Black Country accent, almost Brummagen, which asked me whether I knew such-and-such a town where he had lived as a boy. He was homesick!

Opposite our table, on the other side of the street, were two RN ratings who, for some reason or another, started quarreling. Both began to push and shove each other; tables and chairs flew everywhere, women were screaming and there was a state of



panic all round. Then, as if on cue, a Police Land-Rover appeared, disgorging a number of rather small policemen, who quickly swarmed over the two much bigger Britishers and dragged them off to their paddy wagon. A silence had descended, as all the occupants of Bugis Street had retreated into their shops and pulled down the metal grilles, peering through them and waiting for order to return. This it swiftly did and 'business as usual' resumed its daily round.

The evening reached something of a climax when our Norwegian friend, under the influence of the ambience, a few

drinks and Suzie's *femme fatale* presence, began to boast of his virility. Suzie listened closely and, having heard enough and being well experienced on the subject, picked up her coffee spoon, saying "*This is you*", then her cup, adding "*This is me*".

The spoon was then rattled around in the cup from side to side while she started at him. The Kiwi and I just had to laugh and, fortunately, the braggart took it in good part, joined in the laughter, and ended with a rude remark that brought more tears to our eyes. By now the street was becoming too crowded; so we bade Suzie farewell and retired to a restaurant in a nearby alley, where our Nordic sailor upset us by throwing his gnawed chicken bones back into the communal meat bowl. He then annoyed the Chinese families present, by scattering the bones all over the floor – but that's another story!

It is said that Lew Kwan Yew, the founder of the State of Singapore and a very strict man, allowed Bugis Street to exist, as it funneled those of a certain disposition into one area, away from the population in general. But it certainly became a tourist attraction in its own right. The old Bugis Street has long been swept away and replaced by a retail area. "*Good riddance*", some may say, but it definitely had its moments and place in history!

*(Chas always manages to come up with the odd 'Tale of the Unexpected' doesn't he? Ed.)*

## 'Taffy' Edwards, 56B



The attached photo is of Miles Furnival Edwards, who joined the Apprentices' School as a member of 56B. 'Taffy', as he was universally known, was a simple lad, with no axe to grind, and seemingly a 'square peg in a round hole'. I had no personal connections with him except for one memorable bus-ride into Reading one Saturday afternoon. Taff got off the bus at 'The Butts', virtually the centre of town as I recall. Just where the bus dropped us off was a department store called 'Wellsteeds' (now long gone), with a pair of public toilets alongside. Taff, completely innocent and guileless, was sent by his 'mates' into the 'laddies' section – even though it was actually labelled 'ladies'! What happened next can only be guessed at by yours truly, as I was making my way as quickly as possible to the nearest hostelry! The photo was supplied by Len Keetley, who happens to live not far from Taff in Malvern – where he is now apparently a 'local character', as can be detected by close perusal of the photo! (*Pete Gripton*) When invited to recall anything about Taff, I received the following responses:

The very one who, on parade, told RSM Sallis that his unclean brass buttons were issued to him like that! (*Peter Langridge*)

I seem to remember him going on sick parade - in plimsolls and gaiters! (*Len Keetley*)

Taff had a hard time at Arborfield, but he gave it his best shot. His number is just '2' away from mine (*Tony Wilson*)

Taffy Edwards, I remember him well. He was in the next bedspace to me in HQ Coy - what a character, he couldn't do a thing right, poor chap. I always felt sorry for him. The last time I saw him was when I was driving into Salisbury Tech in 1973-4. He was then with, I think, 3 or 9 Inf Wksp and they were providing a static demonstration at the College. I didn't get chance to speak to him as I was late for classes, but I think he was wearing a Lance-jack's stripe at the time (*John Houghton*)

## Even More 'Yesterday Memories'

by David Howlett, 56B

Have you ever been frightened – I mean really frightened? When your wits are in top gear, or even overdrive? You don't know whether to keep very, very quiet, let out the loudest of screams, or just shout your head off. In the space of mere nanoseconds, you alternate from a hot sweat to a clammy chill, your throat is rasping dry - the brain is working overtime. What is it? Am I imagining all this? Is it really there? Can this honestly be happening? Now throw in total darkness, because it is evening and there are lots of noises - some you recognize and others you definitely don't! You are on your own (well nearly – read on) and you are trying to go to sleep. Oh yes, I've forgotten a minor point, you are deep in the Malaysian Jungle, in an area known as Kota Tinggi, Johore - well known to many soldiers, where the British Army

had its Jungle Warfare Training School.

But back to the beginning, as it says on the tin! In 1970, I was working as a SSgt at the Royal Signals & Radar Establishment (RSRE) in Malvern, affiliated to Number 3 Maintenance Advisory Group REME for military admin. I was lucky to be chosen to be the Radar Tiffy, to work alongside the RSRE scientists (boffins in my book) and EMI engineers who, in tandem with the former, were developing 'Cymbeline'. This was the new all-singing and dancing mortar locating radar. It boasted cutting-edge solid-state 'chip' technology and was to be the follow-on equipment to the existing in-service radar – 'Green Archer'. Prior to formal acceptance trials, that all new equipments go through and (hopefully) pass, there are a number of other trials normally undertaken on pre-production

models. I was to be involved in such - the 'Hot Wet Trial'. Now there were two global certainties for this trial, South America and Central Asia, but unfortunately, because of the secrecy of the equipment, these could not be considered. So we ended up being sent to the Australian Tropical Trials Unit at Innisfail in Queensland, on the eastern coast of Aussie, some way south of Cairns. We were there at the same time as the then new Combat Vehicles Reconnaissance, Tracked and Wheeled – CVR(T) Scimitar and CVR(W) Fox were being trialled at Scully, just down the road. My old 56B mate, SSgt John Houghton REME, was the Gun Tiffy on that trial.

However, some bright spark in MoD thought that the Cymbeline military team should all be acclimatised and fit for purpose for the forthcoming trial.



So our military contingent – two Gunner Radar Detachments and two REME Radar chaps (myself and a Cpl Young (?) Radar Tech) - was posted to 42 Commando in Singapore. There, for the next week or two, we were put through our paces every day with a PT routine that would make even the fittest cringe. An important factor in the tale is that I met a Marine Sergeant in the Sgts' Mess on arrival at the unit on my first night. I had just spent many hours flying out from UK via Cyprus, Oman, somewhere in the Indian Ocean and finally Singapore. I went into the Mess bar to have a 'night cap', before retiring to my cabin (as it was affectionately called in the Marine Messes). Here I met this guy who knew my brother, Tony, from 'D' Sqn SAS. Thinking back now, I don't know how that could have been, him being a Marine (Bootleg) – perhaps he was formally in the SBS and had met up with Tony on some sortie – whatever. Anyway, he asked me what I was doing in 42, and I told him. During the conversation, when he realized I was Tony's brother, he said, "So you are going up country to the Jungle Training area, have you got a hammock?" "No", I replied. "You've got to have a hammock", he responded. Needless to say, the next day I was a proud owner of a hammock!

Now, fast forward! We, the military contingent of the trial, are now in the jungle, on a MoD sponsored training and acclimatization exercise. We are led by the Directing Staff (DS) - a Captain (green beret) Gunner (OIC) who was, as a matter of interest, a Forward Controller in his Corps - a SAS Trooper and a Tracker. Our task and aim was to track through the jungle to the China Sea coast, from where we were to be picked up, taken back to 42, then flown across the water to the Queensland shoreline. It was the first night when my 'fear factor' experience took place. We had been tracking; first man cutting a path, followed by a patrol member, in front of the compass man who guided – 'left hand/right hand down a bit' - followed by the rest of the group. After a number of hours in the jungle, it was decided to make camp. The SAS Trooper showed us how to make a Gurkha 'basha'. This is a raised bed, made out of bamboo (which is in abundance in the jungle!), one's ground

sheet, and any other available flora from the area. Hopefully, sleeping on this creation will stop the 'creepy crawlies' getting to you during the night. I happened to mention that I had a hammock. "Done this before?" asked the Trooper. "No", I said, briefly telling the story as to how I had acquired my luxury item. Well, I was taken off to find two sturdy trees, close together, between which I was to tie my hammock. This turned out to be about twenty yards or so from the two detachments, which believe me is a long way in the jungle – to me anyway! "This should be just the job", he said. So, there was my hammock, tied up about four feet off the ground. Then we went back to the group's camp area to hear the Captain brief us. "It is best you spend your first night in the jungle on your own (very true in my case!). We'll be camped up the track about 200 yards away". Off the three went, leaving us to our own devices

Now, for those who have not been in the Malaysian Jungle - or any other jungle, I believe - in the main, it is an amalgam of rubber plants and small trees of about ten to twelve feet or so, with other trees of higher proportions. But there is a hell of a lot of it, so it is dense – very dense! Looking in any direction, it is difficult to see more than about five yards, if that. That is why I thought the group was a long way from me! However, the main feature that I noticed was 'Lights out'. At about 1730 hours every night, without fail, the lights literally 'go out' (mind you, because of the abundance of vegetation, there is a lack of natural light anyway). It is as if somebody walks into your life and just switches the lights off – total darkness at the flick of a switch. I was in my hammock by that time, quite happy with my ground sheet above me on a paracord stretcher, and the lot covered by my mosquito net - in effect, a small tent some four feet off the ground. Now I had, by chance, gone to bed with my machete (axe) – why I don't know. Well, for the first hour or so, I could hear the chit-chat from the lads some twenty yards or so away, but the main noise was from the jungle itself. Roaring, yelping, screams from things being eaten alive! Noises you couldn't describe – they scared the living daylight out of me! After a bit,

other than those natural jungle noises, the lads seemed to 'nod off' (safety in numbers I thought – the lucky sods) and there I was, on my own, not quite asleep and, just like the others, nodding off.

Then, I felt something scratching my bum. Think of it! I'm in a hammock, so my bum is about four feet or so off the jungle floor - AND SOMETHING IS SCRATCHING MY BUM! It's pitch black, there is the incessant background noise of the jungle, and you are on your own. What 'thing', around four-foot tall, could be scratching or smelling my undercarriage? A tiger, a large snake – Jesus! A cobra! I was in a complete panic. Go back to the first part of this article – that's just how I felt. Well, I don't know how long I thought, worried or flapped about the situation. I can remember that my conscience was wrestling painfully with my pride, of losing the respect of the rest of the lads, but more so of being saved from a dire situation. I decided, in the end, to be brave. David, I said to myself - hold the machete in your right hand, lift the mosquito net and groundsheet with the other hand – let out a big scream, and chop what was below you to death! I did just that, but all I chopped was the jungle floor! When the Trooper had tied up my hammock, whether in jest or not, he had not tied one end properly - in effect, it was a slipknot. Thus, I had been gradually descending to floor level whilst trying to sleep. Well, the noise and confusion woke up the two detachments and frightened them to death – and I am sure there was a muted professional chuckle from the DS staff some 200 yards up the track!

I somehow managed to re-tie my hammock properly, slid in, and even had a good night's kip. Needless to say, I felt a bit coy the next morning, when we were all having breakfast, and a remark was made by the DS - "Was there a problem last night, chaps?" "No comment", came the firm reply. We had another incident a couple of days later, but I think that should follow in another article of 'Yesteryear Memories' in due course!

*(We look forward to it! Dave reminded me that he had later served as a Captain in Radar Branch REME, which was affiliated to (but still called then) RSRE. Ed.)*

# It's Christmas Day, All Is Secure

*Submitted by Bill Wenborn, 41A*

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone  
In a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone;  
I had come down the chimney with presents to give  
And to see just who in this home did live

I looked all about, a strange sight I did see;  
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree;  
No stocking by the mantle, just boots filled with sand,  
On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.  
With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,  
A sober thought came through my mind

For this house was different, it was dark and dreary;  
I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.  
The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone;  
Curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home

The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder;  
Not how I pictured a lone British soldier.  
Was this the hero, of whom I'd just read,  
Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?

I realised the families that I saw this night  
Owed their lives to these soldiers, who were willing to fight;  
Soon round the world, the children would play  
And grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day

They all enjoy freedom each month of the year,  
Because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.  
I couldn't help wonder, how many alone,  
On a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home

The very thought brought a tear to my eye,  
I dropped to my knees and started to cry.  
The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,  
*"Santa, don't cry - this life is my choice.  
I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,  
My life is my God, my country, my Corps"*

The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep;  
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.  
I kept watch for hours, so silent and still,  
While we both sat and shivered from the cold night's chill.  
I didn't want to leave, on that cold dark night,  
This guardian of honour, so willing to fight

Then the soldier rolled over, and with a voice soft and pure,  
Whispered, *"Carry on Santa, it's Christmas Day, all is secure".*  
One look at my watch and I knew he was right,  
*"Merry Christmas my friend - and to all a good night"*

This poem was written by a peace-keeping soldier, stationed overseas. The following is his request, which I think is reasonable. It is on behalf of all British, Canadian, Australian and Commonwealth soldiers, sailors and airmen.

*"CHRISTMAS WILL BE COMING SOON AND SOME CREDIT IS DUE TO OUR BRITISH SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN, FOR OUR BEING ABLE TO CELEBRATE THESE FESTIVITIES. LET'S TRY, IN THIS SMALL WAY, TO PAY A TINY BIT BACK OF WHAT WE OWE!"*



# In Praise Of Mr McNally

by Ron Hague, 50B

My first encounter with RSM McNally (Scots Guards) was in HQ Company in 1950. We were being shown around the Carpenter's Shop, when one of my comrades (who shall remain nameless) walked past Colonel E L Percival HLI, in all his kilted splendour (he was a fine figure of a man), without saluting. Furthermore, he then proceeded to salute the RSM! The culprit was taken to one side and 're-educated'. In all the three years I was at the School, I came to form a great respect for our RSM, he had the ability to get the best from us boys. I can remember now being formed up on parade and waiting to hear the tread of his boots as he appeared to our left, with his stick parallel to the ground. He would then sort us out, in time for our diminutive Adjutant to come on parade.

Who could forget his 'cold weather drill' for getting warm? Marking time in unison, with outstretched arms coming together in a large and loud clap. This was repeated until one's arms were ready to drop off from sheer muscular fatigue – with the RSM himself darting about the parade to make sure there was no slacking. I bear witness to the fact that the RSM was once lost for words in the middle of a Passing-out Parade rehearsal. An Apprentice L/Cpl, whose name is lost to me but whose face will never be forgotten, was the cause of this. The boy took a wrong turning on parade and suddenly found himself occupying a large area of the Square all by himself. Spotted immediately by the great man, the question came like a rifle shot. "Where did you come from, boy?" And the

answer, heard by most of the parade, was "From Wolverhampton, Sir!" Myself and Pat Hennessy (also 50B) were appointed permanent parade markers under that same beady eye. As we were always last to leave any parade, we had to get our timing correct – stepping off as one, in time to meet and turn with another already marching marker. Being nearest to the saluting base – and the RSM – gave me great incentive to be 'on my toes'!

In June 1953, a squad of us was chosen to be Guard of Honour at Windsor Castle for 'Empire Youth Day'. Our rifle drill, already very precise, was honed to perfection by the RSM. I think the Guard must have been made up of the tallest and best-looking boys in 6 Div. (No comments, please!) We arrived at Windsor, highly groomed and polished. We left our No.4 DP rifles and white buckskin belts in the guardroom. The guard at that time was being provided by the RSM's own regiment, and I remember that Mr McNally was none too happy with the state of the guardroom – and said so in no uncertain terms.

We were given about an hour to wander around Windsor, before reporting back for duty. After a while it was considered by the bunch I was with, that a beer would be most welcome. This, despite the fact that some of us were under age and not allowed to drink! Somehow, I was nominated to be first through the pub door. Upon my tentative entrance, I espied the toe of a polished boot just around the corner. And, on peering round just a little further, my eyes took in a pace-stick and a suit of service dress, before finally coming

into contact with the steely stare of the RSM, as he looked me up and down! To use a term borrowed from the Royal Navy, I was out of there 'like a three badge racing snake', hastily explaining my reasons to the boys behind me. On our return to the Castle, the RSM sent for the Apprentice CSM – I believe it was Nick Webber – to find me. Upon reporting to him, I was scolded for leaving the pub just because he was in there – something like, "Never do that again, boy, I was very embarrassed!"

After a successful guard, we were conducted around the Royal Apartments and the Chapel of the Knights of Windsor – or was it the Order of the Garter? I have forgotten! After passing out from the School soon afterwards, I met RSM McNally only once more. He looked much older by then, but was pleased to see one of his 'old boys'. His bearing was still that of a Guardsman. I took great pleasure in that meeting and will always remember the man with the greatest respect and fondness.

*(The article above was first published in OBAN 16, at the beginning of 1999. It is just one of the many tributes that have been paid to RSM McNally, who served the Apprentices' School so well between 1941 and 1956. This archive article came from 'Big Ron' Hague, who I remember as a fellow civilian instructor at SEME Bordon, before his sad death some time ago. I do hope that it inspires more readers to keep up the good work towards OBAN's future. If you have a tale to tell – then tell it! Ed.)*

## Classified Ads

### Spotted in a variety of newspapers:

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**FOR SALE** - Small herd of cows – never bred. Also 1 gay bull for sale

Joining Nudist Colony! Hence **MUST SELL** Hotpoint washer/drier, £100

Wedding Dress **FOR SALE** - Worn once, by mistake. Call Stephanie

**FOR SALE BY OWNER** - Complete set - Encyclopaedia Britannica, 45 volumes, in excellent condition. £200 or best offer. No longer needed, got married last month and wife knows everything

# Ex-Brats Get Together 'Down Under'

by Greg Peck, 53B

Early this morning Maggie and I saw Alan (60B) and Sheila Cook off at Brizzie (Brisbane) Airport. That was after three-and-a-half pretty full on and hectic days of zotting about all over SE Queensland, trying to catch up with all of the FEOFA (Far East Old Farts Association) blokes and their better halves. The Cooks were visiting from their home in Canada. We had a tight schedule but it all went off very well indeed. I have to say that Alan and Sheila were a delight to have as company, no pretensions at all, just honest to goodness 'folks' who exemplify the sort of couple that so many of our ilk become as the years mellow us. They were made welcome wherever they went and responded fulsomely, it couldn't have gone better! They arrived right on time on the Thursday and we drove them home, provided lunch and something cold and wet to wash it down with, before settling in for a lamp-swinging session. Later that evening we had a main meal of knackwurst, kartoffelsalat and side salad, followed by Maggie's famous trifle. Then we went to our eldest lad's place for the tour of 'Peckingham Palace' that Gregory and Tammy seem to think obligatory, as they like to get to meet all of our visitors connected with my Army days.

Toowoomba and the Millie's (George, 49B, and Marion) was our first port of call on Friday and we had a really great day with them, lunching at our favourite hotel. This was followed by a detour on the way back home to call on Vera and Reg Harper, (51A) they too were at their sparkling best and, like George and Marion, entertained us royally. Their home is situated in a picturesque surround and the wildlife abounds. Early to rise next morning and a trip to Mooloolaba for a look at Underwater World, along with a waterways tour of the Mooloolo River and canal complexes. Afterwards we drove on another 50 or so kilometres and called in on the Hutchinsons in Cooroy. Phil (53A)

and Lynne have avian visitors every day and they were soon clamouring for attention, as we sat and enjoyed some finger food and a beer or two on the back verandah. We rounded off the Cooroy trip



with a very nice feed at the Cooroy RSL Club where Phil is Club secretary and Lynne is treasurer of the Ladies auxiliary - always a warm and hearty welcome from their friends when you drop in there. Just another top day really, Alan and Sheila loved it.

On Sunday we had arranged to meet up with Roy (42C) and Kay Ashman, as



well as Jim (52A) and Jennie McGuire, outside the Carrara markets. Jim and Jennie were on time, but no sign of Roy and Kay. So, 15 minutes after rendezvous time, we went in, planning to call on the missing duo on the way home, to ensure they were OK. No sooner had we gone in than I came face to face with Roy, who had been waiting outside the other entry point! Kay wasn't with him, having had a bad fall a couple of days previously and

feeling uncomfortable with her bruising from that. Lots of souvenirs bought by Alan and Sheila, a simple lunch and a beer or two at one of the cafes that abound in the market, with plenty of chit-chat and leg-pulling. A great little meet up by any criteria and proof positive, were any needed, that we ex-Brats are an exclusive breed and invariably compatible when we gather together. It goes without saying that we got the pick of the wenches too!

We did a tour of the Gold Coast on the way home from the market, getting caught in a monster traffic snarl-up that saw the four-lane Pacific Highway at a standstill in some places. Fortunately we knew an alternative route and soon took off on that.

Then it was back home for evening repast and time to start packing for the very early trip to the Airport this morning. Even that went well, as we beat the rush hour and on the way home, thanked our lucky stars we had got Alan and Sheila away so smartly, as the northbound lanes were choc-a-bloc and at a standstill in many places as we headed southwards for home. Once the road-works and bridge duplication are finished this July or thereabouts, this sort of problem should be a thing of the past, barring any sort of major accident of course. We had some wettish weather about while they were with us but, by some sort of miracle, we were elsewhere whenever it came on to rain, never missed it by much - but we did miss it!

In NZ, where Alan and Sheila were off to next, Jim and Jennie McGuire provided them with a contact number for the REME Association there. Jim Culley of 44B, who has just contacted me from the Bay of Plenty area, has asked if they want to spend a day or two at his place. See what I mean about us ex-Brats? Worth breeding from we are! We are looking forward to meeting up with Jim Culley ourselves when he comes to Brizzie in March.

## 2010 REUNION - AMENDED DATES

The dates for the 2010 Reunion have had to be changed. New dates: 30 JULY TO 1 AUGUST



# Craftsman Guest Editorial

*by Colonel D H Egan, Commandant SEME*

I took charge as Commandant SEME just over 12 months ago, having not seen much of the Bordon site since completing my RYO's Equipment Course in 1981. Initial impressions, from a distance, were that not much had changed. How wrong I was - SEME is buzzing! We are training more soldiers than ever before, with an average Phase 2 and 3 population of well over 1,500. This says much about the success of our recruiters and the attraction of a REME career that offers real operational challenge, transferable technical qualifications and some fun. To take maximum advantage of this enviable situation, SEME must be alive to changing requirements and agile enough to deal with them. Specifically, providing maintainer training for a growing number of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs), often at short notice, has been a real test. So far it's a test we have passed, although in future I would like to see UOR training delivered in a distributed format. My task is to ensure that we continue to be both successful across the board and efficient at the same time.

Training the requisite number of soldiers and marines for the Front Line Commands is my priority but in parallel, and equally important, is my 'Duty of Care' to our trainees, which I see as an integral part of command. The Corps has an excellent record in this regard, due largely to the high quality, dedicated officers and soldiers who fill the supervisory care and training appointments. These are demanding but rewarding jobs that can often open up new career opportunities, unavailable to those without a training organisation track record. I would urge anyone in a position of influence to encourage suitable young men and women of our Corps to volunteer for a tour 'out of trade', in either a Duty of Care or instructional role. Today at SEME, only a small percentage of the instructional staff is military, with over 90% of technical training being delivered by Vosper Thorneycroft (VT) contract staff, but this is set to change under the Defence Training Review (DTR) – more on this topic later. The professional relationship with VT is excellent and their dedicated staff, many of whom are ex-military, take a genuine interest in the success of our young soldiers. My performance, and that of SEME in discharging Duty of Care and training

responsibilities is now subject to independent scrutiny by a number of organisations, the most high profile of which is OFSTED. Their inspectors can schedule a snap inspection at just 12 hours notice and then spend a number of days confirming that our supervisory care and training regimes are fit for purpose. Preparing for such an event has been a learning experience for all concerned but, after a thorough self-assessment, I believe we are now well placed to receive the inspectors.

DEME (A)'s Training Vision recognised the need for our training to change to meet the operational requirement. DTR promises much in terms of Training Transformation, but we cannot afford to wait. Indeed, our training is evolving constantly and a notable example has been the in-house development of a limited e-learning capability. Originally called 'SEME Net', this is now planned to migrate to a more widely available 'REME Net'. Whilst currently restricted to Phase 2 soldiers on the Common Foundation Module, the aspiration is, ultimately, for continuation training and even some equipment training to be available via the internet. This capability is still some years off but will be a part of any future 'blended learning solution'. *'What is blended learning?'* you might well ask. Traditionally, we have brought soldiers back to the Schools for career and equipment courses, but this will change. In addition to residential courses, more use will be made of 'work-based learning', using work books and computer-based techniques, to deliver the right training at the right time. The VM basic course is currently the focus for transformation and a pilot for the new generation of courses could be run later this year. Whilst meeting the operational need has primacy, we will not neglect the importance of training accreditation in terms of recruiting and retention.

Running SEME at or near capacity brings with it a range of challenges, but my top priority is in dealing with the long-standing problem of SNUT (Soldiers Not Under Training). A small 'header tank' of soldiers awaiting training is important, to ensure that courses start with a full complement, but over many years the total has grown steadily. To drive the SNUT figures down, I have directed a number of measures to be taken at SEME to

complement Army Recruiting & Training Division efforts to better synchronise the recruiting and training pipeline. I am being more robust with soldiers who, despite best efforts, prove unable to cope with the demands of their trade training - and I am prepared to take more risk with those few soldiers who don't quite reach the standard in a non-critical subject. Finally, I have established a local C and C&E driver-training contract through the Defence School of Transport and this has proved so successful that capacity in Bordon could soon be increased. Drivers can be trained locally in less than half the historical Leconfield norm of about 10-12 weeks. Partly as a result of this initiative, I anticipate SEME exceeding its training targets this year for VM 'B' by 26 soldiers (+6%) and for VM 'A' by 12 soldiers (+10%).

No article by Commandant SEME would be complete without some reference to DTR. The programme is still on track to achieve contract signature in about 18 months from now, but with no move to St Athan anticipated before 2015. From the outset, DTR offered the Corps a real opportunity to transform its technical training, to acquire modern working and living accommodation and to redress the civilian/military instructor imbalance. As with all major projects, DTR has faced a number of challenges and it is vital to ensure that, in overcoming these challenges, the original benefits for the Corps are not unacceptably compromised. SEME and SEAE are supporting HQ DCEME and HQ DEME(A) in ensuring that the Corps' and the Army's best interests are maintained.

Casual observers may think that some of SEME's infrastructure appears a little 'tired', but real improvements have been made recently, particularly to the Single Living Accommodation, and the welfare facilities here are second to none. Add to this the opportunities for sport, adventurous training and a temporary respite from 'op tours' and a posting to Bordon in an instructional or supervisory role, or as a student, is an attractive proposition.

*(My thanks go to Col Egan and Craftsman magazine for permission to use this article from the May 2009 magazine. Ed.)*

## A View From Behind My Eyes - Part 2

by Keith Tilly, 51A

(Continuing the tale started by Keith in OBAN45)

When I left Arborfield, I must have been the forerunner of 'Confused.com', because I had no particular talent and, worse, no ambition. That's OK though, because there comes a time when you meet someone who inspires you to grab for the stars. My hero was Pete Waite. I was a Corporal in Singapore District Workshop when he was posted in, direct from his Art Tels course. One day I approached him with a technical question. His reply was what inspired me to work very hard and get myself on a Tiffy course. He said, *"Anything you want to know is in those Blue Binders called EMERs. I've done my course, so I'm retired. I'll be in the Library if anyone wants me!"* That's for me, I thought. A couple of years' graft and the rest of my days in clover! Once, during an important exercise, in which we were learning how



to survive a nuclear attack, I made a small error of judgement. I was a Staff Sergeant at the time, proudly standing by my *Land-Rover* in the middle of nowhere, dressed in my nuclear deterrent kit. The outside temperature was a cool 18 degrees, inside my kit it was oven at Regulo 7. The visiting dignitaries included the then Col Metcalfe, who asked me what I would do in the event of a nuclear attack. I couldn't think of much without laughing, so I said,

*"Well, Sir, I would turn to the right, salute and melt!"* If I had realised that the esteemed Colonel didn't share my sense of humour perhaps ... never mind, I just got an icy stare. I expect you all remember your advisory card: *'On sensing a flash, drop to the floor!'* Really? Oh, yes, dear, this is to avoid the oncoming 700 mph wind, beta, delta and gamma rays, and the Headquarters Building passing overhead. After it's all gone by, pat your vehicle down with anti-contamination powder. That should do it!

Talking of Artificer Courses, which I wasn't, how many of you remember the Command Tasks? The group I was with included some really smart chaps. One of these was an ECE Mech, whose name escapes me, last name Parker I think. One of his tasks was to get some troops over a barbed-wire fence, aided by a ladder and a short plank of wood. During the course of

*Please support*

### The REME Association Shop

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



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



his valiant attempt, one of his group fell onto the fence. The umpiring officer stepped forward and said, *"I want you to imagine that this fence is highly electrified, so that man is dead!"* To which Parker replied, *"No he isn't, Sir, because I want you to imagine he is wearing thick protective rubber clothing!"* Nothing short of brilliant, the mind of a budding Artificer. My own individual task didn't go entirely to plan. I had five men, a barrel of precious instruments and a wounded soldier, to get across a ravine. Never mind the mechanics of it all, suffice it to say that the wounded soldier duly fell into the ravine, together with the barrel of instruments, followed swiftly by two of the chaps who had been carrying the stretcher. I was left stranded in the middle, feeling a bit forlorn. The umpire said, *"Sergeant, you have ten minutes left. You must try to retrieve the situation, so say something"*. I uttered the immortal words, *"Right, men, you can see what's happened here. We have lost the instruments, the wounded soldier and two of our men. So, it's every man for himself. Save yourselves in the best way you can!"* At least the umpire laughed out loud, good chap.

I suppose the big surprise was that I passed. It was a lucky time, when there was a shortage of applicants for Tels Tiffies. During the Regimental Training phase, I have a feeling that my performance drove up the use of Valium by the staff. I just didn't get it - the language for example. Do you know what a 'Rottle' is? Well, I'll tell ya. It's the bleedin' fing what yer shoot the enemy wiv. And, when you are done, yer clean yer rottle wiv '4 bee 2', doncha? I have to say though, the Regimental staff have a wonderful turn of phrase. My turnout was not optimal, apparently. Our Regimental Sergeant, 'Robbo', once stood in front of me speechless. He then took quite a few paces backwards, until he was about 30 metres away. Then his voice rang out, *"WILL SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT IT IS, 'COS IT AIN'T BLEEDIN' HUMAN!"* That's the thanks you get for trying.

### Bumps in the road

I made it though, eventually. Of course, as the Americans would say, there were 'bumps in the road'. Talking of roads, which I was, reminds me of Minden. If we went on exercise in convoy, I was at the front and supposed to navigate. Walter Raleigh navigates, I just ask the way. In any case, I had Sgt Manning, *navigator extraordinaire*, who could usually get us safely to any location

- I just turned the wheel. One day, though, the tables were turned on me by Major Hayward, my OC. He had heard that my skills needed honing, so he ordered me to navigate to an exercise location at night, without Sgt Manning anywhere near. I am telling you the absolute truth here, and there are those I'm sure who can remember the incident. We were deep into the night, I had my torch focussed on the map and knew exactly ..... but hang on, what's this? I had the unpleasant duty to have to go to the rear of the convoy and single out the Major's Land-Rover. *"Sir, you are never going to believe this, but the Germans have built a farmhouse right across the road we are supposed to be on - and in just a day!"* Thankfully, he saw the funny side of it. The German farmer didn't, because he sued the *Britischen Streitkräfte* for causing his cows to yield less milk!

I expect the intrepid reader is also wondering what prompted Maj Hayward to question my navigation skills. No? Well, I'm going to tell you in any case. I was told that a special exercise was to be carried out, to test the Tels Workshop 'field capability'. Maj Hayward did the briefing and it was magnificent. He stood in front of a huge wall-sized map of Germany and pointed at things with a cane, very impressive. The idea was that I would take four *Commers* and a couple of *Land-Rovers* to a quarry. Once there, I was to camouflage the vehicles, so that they couldn't be seen from the air. After one full day, we would be photographed from the air and a helicopter would deliver 72 hours work - to be completed in a straight 72 hours. During the night, we were to suffer a night attack. Oh! Great, this is what soldiering is all about. My *trauen soldaten* got everything prepared and off we went, arriving at the quarry during the scheduled day. We 'cammed up' and waited for the expected photo shoot, workload and night attack. But nothing - just nothing - happened.

We had four days of nice sunshine, during which we saw what looked like a plane in the distance. God, I thought, the cameras these days must be brilliant to photograph us from that distance. At night, we heard some gunfire from a distance and, the next day, spotted a distant helicopter with a slung load, forlornly circling around before disappearing. My camouflage was obviously utterly brilliant. There would be a ton of praise waiting for us when we get back! We arrived back in Minden, to some rather funny looks from the chaps

who had stayed behind. Maj Hayward appeared, looking like an abstract painting of 'Blind Fury'. He took me into his office and asked, *"Where the hell have you been for the last four days? I've got some explaining to do to the CREME!"* *"Exactly as you asked, Sir"*, I replied. *"We got to the quarry OK and were cammed up brilliantly, nobody found us at all."* *"Show me the quarry on this map"*, came the Major's response. *"Certainly, sir, here it is"*. *"Well, Tilly, let me tell you that your disappearance was only partly due to the camouflage. Being in THE WRONG BLEEDING QUARRY might just have contributed a little!"* I accepted that, but then again, on my small map the two quarries were only a tiny bit apart (in reality, 4Km). At this stage, I was beginning to think that my Confidential Report wasn't going to make great reading.

### With the AMLF

There are moments of genius that allow each one of us to attain the state of grace that we are entitled to at least once in a lifetime. Mine occurred during my stint with 8 Inf Workhouse, as part of AMLF. Remember that? The 'Allied Multi-Lateral Force'. This is the group that can be posted anywhere at any time - Norway, maybe, or even Turkey - always with the same kit. The only posting where you can simultaneously have frostbite and sunburn. The ASM was a chap called Strachan, a Vehicles Artificer and Scot - deadly combination. We had a sort of 'hate hate' relationship. He told me that I was unsuited to the Army and should leave at the earliest opportunity, adding that I had no management or military skills. It's nice to be wanted. Funny thing was, though, when any inter-platoon competitions took place, my lot always won. Well, nobody said you couldn't use taxis on an orienteering competition! In any case, the taxi drivers knew the shortcuts.

The genius bit? We had gone to Germany on exercise. Can't remember where, but it was about 3 inches in and 2 inches to the right on the map. One evening, a few of us were sitting in a tent, enjoying a beer or two. ASM Strachan confided in us that the one thing he would like to take back to the UK was a 3-litre bottle of *Asbach* brandy. These were enormous bottles that looked very decorative. He couldn't think of anywhere to hide the bottle and get it past Customs. *"Why don't you roll it in your sleeping bag?"* said I, *"then put your sleeping bag*

into your kitbag. The Customs will never bother to search everyone's kitbag, especially with the mass of kit we have with us." Great idea! So that is what he did. Once over the Channel, I made sure my vehicle was in front of his and I noted where he was in the queue. The Customs guy leaned close to my window. "Anything to declare?" "No, but you see the fourth vehicle after me? The bloke in there thinks he can fool anyone. Just take a look in his sleeping bag!" Genius or what? Of course it's how you play it, isn't it? Anyone with any sense would just laugh and own up. Not Mr Strachan though, all bluster. "I have absolutely no idea how that got in there!" Oh the joy of it all.

Oh, and another thing. ASM Strachan was always very nervous about my performance during visits by senior officers, so he liked to make sure I knew my stuff. Once we were to be inspected by 'A Grand Title', something like the 'DQ Meat & Two Veg'. Strachan said, "Do you know who is visiting us today?" "Certainly, it's the GPMG!" "You fool, Tilly, that's a gun!" "It never is.....", said I. You get the picture. Which reminds me, I served under two Officers in Colchester. One was Major Bish, with whom I got on famously, because he loved sport and I was a fairly good athlete. The other was Major Watkin-Rees, with whom I had a few disastrous times, as he was a stickler for procedures. He liked to time every activity and organise things to the 'nth degree'. I had been entrusted with the testing of a new type of Tels Testing platform, mounted on a massive trailer. Off we went on an exercise. The Major told us that we would be worked to exhaustion and that we would have a 'crash out' at some time or other. When this took place, we were to pack everything up in double quick time and leave the location. He stressed the need for camouflage and said it was the first priority. During the day, various spares were distributed, amongst which was a pile of compo rations in boxes. W-R asked me to pack all the boxes onto my trailer, as it had tons of spare room. He checked and rechecked what we were doing during the day and, by around midnight, we were still at it. It seemed that no sooner had I fallen asleep that we got the 'crash out' call.

Dawn was just breaking and all the lads worked feverishly to load the trailer. "What about the cam net?" asked one of my intrepid troops. I had no idea how to fit the damned thing. It was an awkward

shape, tightly packed in a bag. "Forget it", said I, "nobody will be around at dawn". Famous last words! As we pulled out of the wood, an Umpire was right there. He called me over and said, "You have been spotted and bombed by Canberras. You are out of the exercise for 48 hours!" Panic struck, I said, "Can't you overlook this, mate? I'm going to be shot by the OC!" No, the swine wouldn't budge. I saw a puff of dust running toward my vehicle. It was W-R. 'Raving mad' is a mild description of his mood as off he had to go. But where were all the rations? On my trailer. Yummy! Whilst we feasted on all sorts of goodies, and had chocolate and nice sweeties for snacks, poor old W-R and the rest of the guys had lamb stew for breakfast, dinner and tea! To add insult to injury, we had a lovely rest as well. It's fairly safe to say that my popularity with W-R ranked with that of rabies in a dog's home.

#### Ten days' notice?

Throughout my service, the many and varied batterings of the English language never ceased to amaze me. The examples that follow are all true, recorded very quickly after I had heard them. No names, no pack drill. But suffice to say that it was at various levels in the hierarchical pile. During my tour in Hong Kong in 1972, Sgt Danny Yule's mother-in-law sadly died and his wife had to return to the UK. I told Danny to go home because, as I remember it, he had four children to care for. I told him not to worry, but that I might have to call him back if China invaded. The CSM at the time (first name Reg) approached me and told me that Danny was required for guard duty. I told Reg the story, but he insisted that Danny should submit a leave pass. This I did on his behalf. Arguments ensued as time went on, because Danny had no leave left and the situation in the UK had still not resolved itself. Finally, an exasperated Reg demanded Danny's return to duty. But I stood my ground and said, "Look, Reg, I'm his ASM and I'm telling you he won't return until his family matters are resolved. Can't you understand that his mother-in-law has died?" To which came the following reply (honest!): "Well then, in future, in cases of death, I want ten days' prior notice!" 'Nuff said'.

Here are some other examples:

"OK, I want the gearbox taken out of that vehicle so I can examine it in situ."

"We are going to carry out some static road tests."

"The jobs on all twelve vehicles have

been completed, although three of them aren't finished yet and two are BER."

"The trouble with this unit is that there are too many Cowboys and not enough Indians."

"I want that list put in condescending order."

"When there is a decision to make, the OC is always standing on the fence."

"What colour are those blue labels? Are they bluey blue, or just plain blue?"

"I'll tell you what: It feels about as much like Christmas as I've had hot dinners."

"Don't worry if you get bypassed for promotion this time. Just remember that in this life, if one door closes another one shuts."

During my service in Minden, the REME contingent shared the Sgts' Mess with the Royal Signals. The Signals RSM ran the Mess and I was voted PMC. At Christmas, I organised the annual Mess Draw, with which I am sure most of you are familiar. The RSM designated me to greet the Signals OC and his Lady, and escort them to a pre-arranged seat. I had to rehearse the whole thing; wait at the entrance to the Mess and deliver the magic words of greeting when the two arrived. Of course, I had other duties during the time leading up to the event, one of which was to prepare the traditional bowl of punch with the Cookhouse Sergeant. We both decided that the base for the punch would be some fruit, marinated in brandy, followed by copious quantities of white wine and a little lemonade. Naturally, lots of tasting went on throughout the day, to make sure all was well. I should have had a clue, when the Cook Sergeant fell over and had to be carried away! Still, I had my duty to think about. Came the hour and I was ready. There was a bit of a delay, during which time the atmosphere got very smoky and my head was spinning a bit, plus everything had started to look very funny. Eventually the illustrious couple appeared and I stood up, gave a glance toward the packed Mess and turned to the Major. "Good evening, Sir. If you can find a seat in there for you and your wife, you are a better man than I am, Gunga Din!" As I live and breathe, that is absolutely true. I think the Major's name was Cordon. In any event, he laughed - but the RSM didn't! Drat, I was the PMC no longer. However, I sat at the table with Mrs Cordon and kept her in stitches all night long, so at least some good came of it.



Lastly, before you are all bored to death, let me mention my Long Service & Good Conduct presentation. The aforementioned CREME, Col GD Clarke, told me he would be attending the presentation, not because he was required to do so, but because he just couldn't believe it was happening! I had a couple of medal ribbon things, but had lost the

medals, so I had to rush around and borrow some from my mates. Nobody noticed they weren't mine and they actually looked quite smart. There were four of us lined up and the citations were read out, before the actual presentation. Afterwards, Col Clarke congratulated me and said that my citation had been very impressive. So it should have been. All

the others had citations written by their OCs, but Maj Hayward had been too busy to write mine - so he asked me to do it myself. Brilliant it was!

*(It's the way that he tells 'em! Thanks for your articles, Keith, supplied with a liberal dose of ex-boy humour! Ed.)*

## The Major Just Can't Quit The Gurkhas

*The following extract is a newspaper article, contributed by John Worland, 52B:*

When 1<sup>st</sup> Btn 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles are posted to Hong Kong in April, 68-year-old Maj Henry Bond will go with them. He will fly with BOAC and pay his own fare and accommodation. And he will follow if they are later sent on to Brunei or Nepal, or back to England – or whatever. For Maj Bond, whose fellow officers affectionately call 'Bondo', has become famous throughout the regiment as 'the man who can't give up the Gurkhas'. He joined them at Kuala Lumpur in Malaya in 1948, after they had saved his life, when his own company of Ceylon Pioneers was near to mutiny. He officially retired from the Army at almost the same time. Yet he has been with the Gurkhas ever since as a civilian – unpaid, unofficial and, in the words of his CO, "damned useful".

Maj Bond said in the Officers' Mess, at the battalion's present quarters at Church Crookham, Hants: "The Army is my life and always will be. I suppose at

*my age I should be thinking of settling down somewhere, but I would miss the men. The Gurkhas are great company and I like to potter around, doing little odd jobs, to help when I can. Fortunately, I have my own money, so I am able to follow then around the world".* Maj Bond spent much of the last war fighting in the Far East, before returning to England for a short period. Then he went back to the Far East and finally took command of a company of Ceylon Pioneers in KL – "a bit of a rabble", he said.

He was sent to the Gurkhas for his last few weeks of official Army service, but stayed on after retirement. And when the guerrilla emergency blew up in Malaya, he served as Transport Officer. For this he was awarded the MBE – he has moved around the world with the Gurkhas ever since. His CO, Lt Col Ian Elliot, said, "We are very proud of Bondo and the men have great respect for him. They call him 'Bajay', which means grandfather".

John Worland adds:

I was at Church Crookham with 27 GW Wksp, between 1959 and 1961. When I was in Kluang, Malaya, with 13 Inf Wksp in 1957/8, Major Brooke-Bond's Land Rover could be seen having a 'Service' in the local garage or driving around the streets of Kluang with his armed Gurkha escort. If I remember correctly, Kluang Town was in a 'White Area', but outside the town limits it was a 'Black Area', which meant that we all had to go armed and travel in escorted convoys, if we were on some sort of duty. Here are two questions:

There was a Gurkha Sgt (Havildar) who had a Victoria Cross and was in 2/6 or 2/7 Gurkha Btn down the road from Kluang. What was his name?

Joanna Lumley's Dad was a Gurkha Officer and I think he was the Adjutant with either 1/7 or 2/7 at Kluang. Does anybody know?

If somebody has answers to these questions, I have another story for another day!

## Cricket, Lovely Cricket!

An American visitor to Melbourne was taken to see a cricket match at the MCG. He sat in silence for awhile, then turned to his Aussie friend and asked for an explanation of the rules of engagement. It went something like this:

*"It's all quite simple, really. There are two sides, ours and theirs, one out in the field and the other one in. Each man in the side that's in goes out, and when he's out, he comes back in, and the next man's then in until he's also out. Then, when they've all been in, and are all out, the side that's been in the field comes in, while the side that's been in goes out, and tries to get out those coming in. Of course, sometimes you get men still in and not out. Then, when both sides have been both in and out, including the not-outs, that's the end of the game. It's very simple".*

## Snippets From Craftsman Magazine

### Ammo cost

The cost of ammunition used by UK forces on operations in Afghanistan has been revealed as £178m for 2007-08. This is made up of £57m on guided weapons, missiles and bombs, with the rest on general ammunition and shells. The figure for 2006-07 was £116m, according to figures released to parliament.

### Mess Dress funding

Senior NCOs will stay in pocket if they are promoted, after MoD announced that new Sergeants are eligible for cash to buy mess dress uniform. In a statement, the Department said both acting and full holders of the rank would now qualify for a special one-off grant to buy and keep their kit in order. The cash is only available to Regular troops and based on the cost of the uniform. The money became available from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

### All-terrain vehicles

A fleet of new all-terrain vehicles has been ordered by MoD to move vital equipment to troops on the front line in Afghanistan. Derbyshire-based Enhanced Protection Systems Ltd (EPS) has been awarded a £7m contract to supply around 75 'Springer' vehicles. The new 'dune buggy' vehicle is specifically designed for rugged desert conditions – which means that it is well-matched to the operational environment in Afghanistan. Springer will have a crew of two and the ability to carry a combat load of 1 tonne. Its role is focussed on moving combat supplies from helicopter landing sites into the forward operating bases. It is expected that delivery will take place this summer.

## Dick Morris – Further Tributes From Some Old Pals

Since my obituary for Dick Morris appeared in OBAN 45, the following have been received:

**Dave Howlett, 56B, writes:** Really sad news regarding Dick - God bless him. He was a man you just had to like, never had a bad word for anybody - and in all the years I knew him, I have never seen or heard him lose his temper or raise his voice. Quiet by nature, Dick always seemed to have that happy smile on his face. One memory, during the 'do' he organised at Redditch in 2003 - in the afternoon, a group of us went for a stroll around the grounds, which included a golf course. Whilst walking, this group of irate golfers came up to us and complained – *"Had we not heard their shout 'fore'?"* - we had walked across their green! To which I replied, *"Hello, I'm Major David Howlett (offering to shake hands), I've just purchased the hotel and golf course - pleased to meet you"*. Silence and sheepish smiles all round from the golfers!

**Pete Swanston, 56B, adds:** I am shocked to hear about Dick - he looked one of the fittest of us at the last reunion. I didn't know him well in Boys' School and our paths didn't cross after that. However, Gay and I always had a good chat with him and Sue at the 56B reunions. I will remember Dick for the reunion at Redditch, we all met up on the terrace overlooking the golf course, drinking cold beer on a hot sunny afternoon - it was great.

**Tony Mitchell (ex-Chepstow) writes:** That's very sad news about Dickie. When

we first got to Chep, I had hardly ever been out of the Tamar Valley, so couldn't understand what most people were on about! Dickie, coming from the big city of Plymouth, virtually acted as my interpreter. I kid you not, those first few months would have been much more difficult for me without that help.

**Brian Mockford, 56B, adds his memories – some clouded:** Dick and I were posted to 12 Regt RA at Delmenhorst, where we joined another 11 Radar Techs, who were already looking after three 4Mk7 Radar sets. As the new boys, we were not allowed near the radars, so we were deployed to the Stores and to anywhere else where cleaning was needed! We swapped about from the Stores to assist the 'black-hand gang' (*I think Brian means A&G Section? Ed.*). Our German language skills improved rapidly, having to provide 'putze-wolle' etc to the German work force. It was probably because of the language stuff that we got on quite well with the local Germans. I had married before our posting and, after about six months, Sylvia joined me and we moved into a Married Quarter at 21 Ruben Strasse, Delmenhorst, only 300 yards from the notorious 'Ice Café'. It was here that Dick met Inge, who was a barmaid at that establishment. Over the next year we were introduced to Inge's sister (Helge) and brothers (I can only remember the name of Rudi). I was a witness at Dick's wedding to Inge, then we lost touch around 1963 - Dick moving on to 15 ABOD (rear), at Grobbendonk, Belgium, while I was posted to 21 Locating Regt at Fallingb. We met up again in Hohne in 1973, where I seem to

recall that Dick didn't want the 'power and glory' of the Artificer career path. After that, we didn't meet again until the early 2000s at the 56B reunions. After the Army, Dick had worked for BAE (?) as a Radar engineer, contributing to the design of an air-borne radar for helicopters, as an emergency requirement for the first Gulf War. I understand that Inge died from heart failure at some time in the 1990s.

**John Houghton, 56B, recalls:** Dick (or 'Rich', as he was sometimes called) and I were in the same intake (56B) and the same Company ('C') in boys' school, but initially I didn't know him all that well. He joined us from Chepstow (I think in 1957) and we were different trades, I an Apprentice Gunfighter and he an Apprentice Radar Technician ('chips' with everything). So, with different education classes too, our paths didn't cross very often. I think it was either in 3 or 4 Division that we were both placed in the same barrack room. There were half-a-dozen of our intake, sharing the room with members of 56A (Mackie, McGorran, Brewer and gang). I remember Dick had a bedspace towards the end of the room, with the nearby double fire doors leading out onto the Square. On occasion, weather permitting, Dick would open the doors and assemble his drum kit. (I can't remember where he stored it, but it certainly wasn't in his bedspace, because there was too much of it). He'd then indulge in a 'session', which, with a gathering admiring crowd, was something to behold and something I will always remember. He was a quiet, unassuming guy with a sharp wit .... God rest in peace, Dick.

## Change Of Job

by Keith Smith, 56B

As previously stated in 'A Rude Awakening' (see OBAN 43), I received a posting to Guided Weapons, shortly after arriving back in Germany from Singapore. I was destined for the missile firing range on the island of Anglesey, off the coast of North Wales. So it was back to 'boxing up' all our worldly possessions and getting ready to ship my family back to the UK. Our initial accommodation in the UK was provided by my in-laws, who lived at Farley Hill, just a short hop from Arborfield, as I had not been allocated a married quarter at this time.

I had two weeks leave before I had to report for duty on Anglesey, so I spent most of the time sorting out the family and buying a car - a yellow 'Mini', with a straight-through exhaust pipe, a real little goer! Those two weeks were soon up, so I fed and watered the Mini and I set off, very early one morning, into the unknown, to look for Anglesey. There were hardly any motorways in those days of course, and it took about seven hours to get there and I arrived just after lunch. Upon arrival I knocked on the Guardroom door and explained that I was a new arrival and asked for directions to the Sgt's Mess. The

duty Sgt replied, *"No can do, the camp is closed for a fortnight, so I suggest that you turn around and go back home for two weeks"* (or words to that effect). So, I thought to myself, *"I can cope with that"* and, after a bite to eat in the NAAFI, I started off for home, arriving back in Farley Hill about 10 o'clock at night. Two weeks later I was on the road to Anglesey again and this time they let me in!

On reporting for duty on the first day, I was shown around the missile complex and was introduced to my new colleagues, both Army and Civilian. The complex



consisted of: the long-range Radar set with back-to-back aerials, a Height Finder, a computer vehicle and a display and control vehicle, all situated in a secure compound. I was then taken to see the CO. In his office there was the CO, a Staff Sgt and myself. The CO informed us that he had a new job for the two of us. I thought to myself, *"What next? I've only just got here"*. He explained that a new vehicle was being built for the Army and it would be placed into the complex and connected to all the existing vehicles. It was going to act like a large junction box and it would record all the actions carried out in the other vehicles. It would do this using various recording devices, such as cameras fitted over the display tubes, video recorders and an analogue-to-digital data and event recorder, which provided the record on punched paper tape. Real state of the art stuff! Transistors and the like - and here was I, a born and bred thermionic valve man! What had I let myself in for?

He went on to explain that the Staff Sgt and I would go to the civilian factory, where the vehicle was situated, and there we would assist in building it! We would be involved with the job for about eighteen

months. I did point out that I had only two years left until my demob, but this didn't seem to be a problem. The main contractor was *Cossor Electronics* in Harlow, Essex, and the vehicle was housed inside the main factory. There were two other contractors involved in the project, *AEI* in Harlow and *Ferranti* in Bracknell, Berks. Not only were we working in *Cossors*, but we also had to spend time with the other two contractors. As my family was still living with my in-laws, at Farley Hill, it was back in the *Mini* for the long journey down the A5.

And so I spent the next sixteen months living in 'digs' at Harlow, just going home for the weekends, but all in all it worked out pretty well. During this time, I was allocated a married quarter. One very early morning, my brother-in-law and I, with a spin-dryer balanced on the back seat of the *Mini*, set off for Anglesey, took over the quarter, unloaded the spin-dryer and returned home late at night. We stopped on the way back for a meal in a Chinese restaurant, where I had 'a Chinese' but my brother-in-law decided on a curry. Now I warned him that you should never have a curry in a Chinese restaurant, but he wouldn't listen. It was

so hot that, not only did it take his breath away, but he also lost his voice and his eyes watered all the rest of the way home! I think he did it to get out of his share of the driving!

At the end of the sixteen months the work was completed and the vehicle was to put on a low-loader to be delivered to site. My family and I now prepared to travel up to Anglesey. The *Mini* had to go "*Aaaagh*", so I exchanged it for a two-tone *Hillman Minx* and off we set. While my family settled into the quarter, both the Staff Sgt and I were very busy setting to work on the vehicle. After sorting out a few minor problems, we soon had it 'up and running'. It went on line and I must say I was proud of the way it had all turned out. I must also say that the time spent working in 'Civvy Street' for all those months was the best training course I could have in preparation for leaving the Army. The time spent at *Ferranti* also lined me up for a job and I actually stayed there for another twenty-seven years!

*(Dear Ed, I nearly said "but that's another story", but thought better of it!)*

*(Yeah - because I'd then have asked you for it! Ed.)*

## People, Places And Events

by Malcolm 'Mal' Tanner, 58B

In the spring of 2007, Dave Roberts (57A) contacted me to ask if I was attending the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1957 Intakes. I reminded him that I was actually 58B - we knew each other from working in Iran during the 70s, a period I shall expand upon in the future! We arranged to meet and had our own private reunion - the result of which caused me to join the AOB. At a later date I had occasion to visit the REME Museum, where I obtained a beret for wearing at REME Association and other Veterans events. I also picked up several copies of OBAN back numbers and, as I read through them, memories of people, places and events came flooding back. I decided there and then that I should also make an effort and contribute some articles recalling different phases of my military career - so here goes!

### Taking the Queen's Shilling

It was early in the New Year of 1958 - I was fourteen and in my last year at school. Thoughts about leaving and finding a job were still in the distance, when an Army Recruiting and Careers



Team, with a large display vehicle, visited the school. They were recruiting for Army Apprentice Schools, looking for boys between 15 and 17 years old, to serve a three-year apprenticeship in the Army and, if successful, go on to serve in the Regular Army. In the 1950s, we were all too aware of the Armed Forces. 'The War' had not

been that long over - and the Korean War had just ended. At eighteen years of age, we were all expecting to do two years of National Service. At bus stops and railway stations all over the country, there were always young men in uniform, coming and going on leave, or being posted to various parts of the far-flung Empire. The Army was not an alien life form to us boys - more a fact of life.

We all duly visited the Army display and then returned to normal school life. Shortly afterwards, one of my classmates announced that he had 'joined up' and was going to the AAS at Harrogate. A few weeks later, he was home on leave in his uniform - we were all suitably impressed. Shortly afterwards, my father showed me a newspaper advert for Army Apprentices and asked if I was interested. "*See the world and learn a trade*", he said. I shrugged and said that I might be interested, but then thought no more about it. At about this time, with the end of my school career in sight, I had begun to consider what to do when I left. I hadn't really considered 'a career' as such, but thought that 'something in engineering'

would be my lot – an apprenticeship maybe, if I were lucky. Most of these went to boys from Technical College – but I would deal with that when it happened.

Coming home from school a few days later, you can imagine how astonished I was to see an Army *Land-Rover* parked outside the house! Inside, I found my mother waiting for me, accompanied by a Sergeant from the Parachute Regiment, resplendent in the red and gold chevrons of a member of the recruiting staff, and decoratively attired with a red sash and a chest full of gleaming medals. It turned out that my father had called the Recruiting Office in Redhill, Surrey, and ‘volunteered’ me! Before I knew it, I had filled in the application form and signed it. I initially put down ‘Vehicle Mechanic’ (VM) as my first choice of trade, but the sergeant persuaded me to change, as he said VMs were ‘ten a penny’ – no offence to all those splendid tradesmen I went on to serve with! He advised me to ‘aim higher’, so I put down ‘Draughtsman, RE’ – as I had enjoyed technical drawing at school. That was now my first choice, followed in order by Electrician REME, Fitter REME and VM REME.

### Carry on Tanner!

On April 7<sup>th</sup> 1958, I received a letter from the Army Recruiting Centre in Brighton, with a travel warrant, and instructions to report there on the 11<sup>th</sup> for an interview and a medical. I hastily arranged leave of absence from school, informing them that I was attending a job interview and, on the day, set off from my home in Horley in Surrey. Handing in the travel warrant to the ticket clerk, in exchange for a return ticket, made me feel quite important! I felt slightly apprehensive as I approached the Recruiting Centre in Queens Road, as I had travelled alone and was still only fourteen. I think it was my own choice to travel alone and it was obviously the correct choice when I saw that no-one else had parents with them. Plucking up courage, I entered – to what seemed a scene out of one of those ‘*Carry On*’ films about National Service!

I was directed to a large room, containing a number of cubicles, each with a person dressed in a white coat. I was instructed to ‘join the queue’, of men, youths and boys, and to take off my shirt. When invited, I entered each cubicle in turn, where I breathed in, breathed out, bent over, touched my toes, coughed, stared at eye charts and colour charts etc.

My ears were both peered and whispered into, while my chest was tapped and listened to. Having been certified ‘fit’, I was then sent to another room where, if memory serves me correctly, I completed an aptitude test – matching square pegs and round holes, reading and comparing lists, checking errors and working out sequences – you know the sort of thing. When I was finished, I was given a day’s pay at boy’s rate – which worked out at



five shillings in real money. That would buy you five pints in those days, so would equate to about thirteen quid today, I suppose. It was a lot of cash for a young lad let loose on the streets of Brighton! I was told to go and have some lunch, then report to the Drill Hall down the street, where I would take an entrance exam. After a tasty portion of fish’n’chips, I duly reported in to the Drill Hall, a cavernous barn of a place used by the local TA. Located up a cul-de-sac, it was near the Clock Tower in the town centre. It was kitted out with rows of desks and chairs and, along with other hopefuls, I sat down in readiness for the test.

At school, I was not academically gifted, so was not involved in taking GCE exams; I was studying for RSA certificates in English and Maths instead. I had no real idea what the Army exam would be like, so couldn’t do any swotting-up beforehand. It seemed to consist mainly of arithmetic – simple algebra, equations, some basic geometry etc. There were diagrams with lots of symbols to be put in place and in order, probably designed to see if I could read and write and understand a question really. Exam over and it was home, then

back to school. The rest of the term passed by in a flash and the task of finding a job began in earnest. First of all we had to ‘sign on’ at the Labour Exchange (the early Job Centre), which was in Redhill High Street. Then it was off on job interviews, at various factories offering apprenticeships around the Redhill and Crawley area. I finally finished school on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1958, my fifteenth birthday.

A few days later, an official looking envelope arrived in the post, marked ‘OHMS’ – the first of many I was to receive in the years to come. The letter inside informed me that I had been accepted for training as an Electrician REME, at the Army Apprentices’ School, Arborfield, in Berkshire. I was instructed to report to the Brighton Army Recruiting Centre (again!) to enlist. And so, on August 19<sup>th</sup>, I was shown into an office where sat a gentleman in uniform – a Lieutenant Colonel no less – with a large portrait of the Queen hanging on the wall behind him. He put me at my ease and congratulated me upon my acceptance by the Army. I then signed Army Form B271A, enlisting me to: *‘serve Her Majesty, provided Her Majesty shall so long require my services, for a period up to the age of eighteen from my date of attestation; and thereafter for a period of nine years with the Colours and three years with the Reserve’*.

Just previous to this time, service was normally ‘eight and four’. Shortly after I enlisted, it changed to a 22-year engagement, with an option to terminate after six, nine, twelve years and so on. This came to light when I asked to be discharged at the end of my nine years – and I was reminded that I had not put in my ‘option’ in time. When I produced my AF B271A, the regimental office at SEME (where I was then serving) was most put out, but I won my case. But that was for the future. Now, after signing my attestation form, I swore the Oath of Allegiance and was actually given a shilling coin – ‘The Queen’s Shilling’ – and I was now ‘a soldier of the regular forces and subject to Military Law’. I was given a day’s pay, a movement order (which I still have) and a rail warrant. The instructions were that ‘Apprentice Tradesman (A/T) Tanner should report to AAS Arborfield on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1958’ to begin his Army career.

*(Mal’s boys’ school days will be covered in further issues I’m sure! Ed.)*



## New Members

|                |     |              |     |                |     |
|----------------|-----|--------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| Hampton E I    | 42B | Warner A J   | 49? | Gillam E I     | 53B |
| Elliott A J    | 57A | Millar D A A | 57A | Allen A D      | 59B |
| Simpson D R    | 59B | Birch B D    | 60A | Smith N S      | 60C |
| Strong J B     | 60C | Watson C C   | 60C | Richardson A M | 60? |
| Houghton T H B | 62C | Langford E I | 62C | Beere J        | 64A |
| Planner D      | 64A | Westwood F   | 66A | Paddon D R     | 66B |
| Gunn J D       | 66C | White M W    | 66C | Walton D       | 67C |
| Huntly D S     | 68C | Baker J      | 71A | Dawson J A     | 75C |
| Fraser D K     | 78C | Frost J P    | 99A |                |     |

## Rejoining Members

|             |     |                |     |
|-------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| May I       | 49A | Weedon W D     | 54B |
| Kitchin C H | 57A | Thompson R C A | 58A |

## Benevolence

Please remember that the AOBA maintains a **Benevolence Fund**, for the benefit of any Old Boy who may be in distress or going through hard times. If you know of any case where the Fund can be of assistance, please contact the Honorary Secretary at the earliest possible opportunity.

### Just check the percentages .....

This comes from two teachers with a combined total of 70 years of experience, from a strictly mathematical viewpoint.

*What makes 100%? What does it mean to give MORE than 100%? Ever wonder about those people who say they are giving more than 100%? We have all been to those meetings, where someone wants you to give over 100%. How can one ever achieve 110%? So what makes up 100% in life?*

Here's a little mathematical formula that might help you answer these questions:

If 'A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z' is represented as '1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26', then:

HARD WORK =  $8 + 1 + 18 + 4 + 23 + 15 + 18 + 11 = 98\%$   
and KNOWLEDGE =  $11 + 14 + 15 + 23 + 12 + 5 + 4 + 7 + 5 = 96\%$

But, ATTITUDE =  $1 + 20 + 20 + 9 + 20 + 21 + 4 + 5 = 100\%$   
and BULLSHIT =  $2 + 21 + 12 + 12 + 19 + 8 + 9 + 20 = 103\%$

AND, look how far ass kissing will take you -  
ASS KISSING =  $1 + 19 + 19 + 11 + 9 + 19 + 19 + 9 + 14 + 7 = 118\%$

So one can conclude, with mathematical certainty, that while Hard Work and Knowledge will get you close, and Attitude will get you there, it's the Bullshit and Ass Kissing that will put you over the top!

# Arborfield Old Boys Reunion 2009

by Mike Muir, 59A

Being a fairly new recruit to the Association - and even newer to the task of being our year coordinator - it was with some trepidation that I set out for Arborfield to attend my first ever reunion. So you can imagine my horror, just before the parade on Saturday morning, when the group of 59ers I was chatting with, was approached by David 'Titch' Schofield. We were informed that it was the usual practice for someone from the 'anniversary year' to write the notes about the reunion for the *OBA Newsletter*. As I was the slowest to react and take a step backwards, I was left with little alternative but to smile at Titch and say "OK"! Since this is my first attempt to add to any publication, I trust that you will bear with me if I start to ramble or commit too many *faux pas*.

Since we were informed that we should not arrive at Arborfield before 1700hrs, I had decided to travel south down the M5, so that I could visit an old apprentice friend who was unable to attend the week-end reunion. Also, I would thereby avoid the pleasure of the M25 on a Friday tea-time! I still met plenty of traffic, but there were no serious holdups and I managed to reach Warminster by mid-afternoon. We had a very pleasant visit and I was suitably revived by the rest and a good chat, over a refreshing cup of tea. On leaving Warminster, however, the fun and games began. My friend had informed me that I should reach Arborfield in a little over an hour, so I felt I had plenty of time before my rendezvous with another member of my division in the car park at 1830hrs. To my concern, it took me just under two hours to arrive and I had about five minutes to spare - but I was still the first to arrive.

While waiting in the car park, I stood outside the car to enjoy a cup of coffee that I had brought with me. Just about everyone who arrived commented on how heavy the traffic was, just about all over the country, but at least everyone made it eventually - if somewhat later than expected. When my fellow division member arrived, serenity returned and we sailed through booking in, moved into our rooms, freshened up and were then raring to go for the evening function. Once we were in the Mess, after a wander round the camp to try to get our bearings, I found it quite disconcerting how few people I recognized straight off and I was very pleased that we were all wearing name badges so I could avoid too many

mistaken identities. I don't know if others felt the same as me, but it certainly didn't seem to detract from the pleasure of the evening - and from the reports the next morning, the drinking went on perhaps a little longer than it should have done.

Saturday morning dawned bright and



clear, with a good weather forecast, and the day could really not have been better. After a leisurely breakfast, we all had plenty of time to get ourselves sorted out before going to the Mess for coffee. The breakfast was a real pleasure and really set us up for the day, which I personally found to be quite emotionally tiring. Once everyone had gathered in the Mess, the call was made for us all to make our way over to Rowcroft Barracks. Transport was available for our less able comrades, but the majority of us preferred to walk across the bridge to get our legs moving. As we all gathered behind the old Junior Company block, there was much hilarity and joking, and this is where we met WOII (RQMS) McDavid and his assistant, C/Sgt Gannon, who were standing in for the RSM. They did a wonderful job in sorting the 135 members on parade into two sections and then keeping control of the whole parade, without once losing their sense of humour. Even when someone's mobile phone rang during the inspection!

We were delighted to have Colonel Alistair Duncan, Chief of Staff DEMA (A), to take the salute and, after his inspection, where he took a great deal of time to speak to a great number of those on parade, he complemented the parade on their turn-out. We assumed it was a bit 'tongue-in-cheek' when he compared us favourably with the serving soldiers doing public duties in London! During the parade it became very hot and we were glad of the water which was available, while most of us who didn't have any headwear caught the sun. Following the inspection, we marched past and then carried on down to the Memorial

Garden, where the Drum Head service was held. In all honesty, at times I wasn't sure if we were marching or doing the 'soft-shoe shuffle', but the typical military humour prevailed and, I think, everyone enjoyed themselves. The service was very nostalgic and I know I caught my breath once or twice - but still well worth the effort of attending. Before we all left the Memorial Garden, we gathered for the Reunion photograph. This led to many somewhat ribald comments, as the photographer seemed to have trouble with his camera while he was up in the hoist! From the parade, we made our way back to the Mess for a nice cold beer and a BBQ lunch, which was well up to the remembered standards.

After the lunch we had a couple of hours when we could please ourselves, while most guys spent time going round the Corps Museum. As part of the museum building now comprises a version of the old Apprentice School Guardroom, I found it somewhat surreal to sit and have a cup of tea on the veranda! Next on the agenda was a light tea, before the business part of the week-end, in the form of the Annual General Meeting. The meeting was well controlled and so didn't drag on, which allowed us plenty of time to shower and change before the Reunion Dinner. As always on these occasions, when the 207 members and guests sat down to dinner, the music was splendid, the wine flowed and the meal was superb. For various reasons, this was the first time that I have ever been seated at the 'top table' and I felt it a great privilege to be there amongst so many of my peers, who have achieved so much. After the meal, we were given an up-date on the Corps by the Corps ASM, which put into perspective the proposed move to St Athan over the next few years. The dinner finished about on schedule but the lights in the Mess were kept swinging well into the early hours.

No report on the Reunion Weekend would be complete without a tremendous word of thanks to the whole AOBA Committee, without whose tireless work the Reunion would not be possible. The organization was, as always, first class and was a credit to all involved. As I am sat at home now, I keep thinking back to the past week-end and I am already looking forward to next year, when I hope to meet up with even more old friends.





REUNION 2009  
PHOTOGRAPH  
ALBUM











Reunion 2009 - Photographs kindly provided by  
Max Warwick







# 100 Per Cent Attendance Of Intake 59B

*by Maurice Hope, 59B*

That certainly sounds like a good heading for any intake in its 50th year! Sadly, as we all know, statistics don't always tell the whole truth. We must make a concerted effort over the next twelve months, to get more of our intake signed up to the Association (if we can track any down), as we only have five old boys on the books - but we did manage to get all of them in attendance! We had Barry Williams, Don Allen and myself from 'A' Coy, plus our A/T/RSM Chris Jeffery from 'B' Coy and Tom Pearce from 'C' Coy - although he spent most of his time in Junior Coy.

We have all come across old mates at these reunions and been greeted with the old line 'you haven't changed a bit', but it always sounds a bit bizarre when you haven't met for 47 years. You now wear glasses, what remains of your hair has totally changed colour, your barrel chest is now no more than sunken treasure - and you change your teeth every five years so they don't rattle when you speak! We were one of those Divs that had its numbers decimated, when half of the intake was re-deployed to AAS Carlisle when that establishment opened, so that dropped our numbers down to less than 60 when we did eventually pass out in 1962.

Although Barry, Tom and myself did meet up at what was supposed to be the 'very last' parade on our own square in 2004, we had not met up with Chris, who was a member at the time, or Don, who has only joined us in the last year. Like so many ex-boys on completion of their service, Don had turned the page on his Army days and confined it to history. But, luckily for us, on reaching that age when you start to reminisce, he has come back into the fold. Although all our intake members were present, sadly we never all got together once over the weekend - a photo memento would have been a nice thing. The reasons being that Barry and Don live locally so to speak, and Chris presumably was accommodated in the Officers' Mess, I myself was in the Sgts' Mess Annex and I believe Tom must have been in the transit block.

We were nowhere near together on the parade either, as Don couldn't make it. While the remainder, being of various shapes and heights, when obeying ye olde 'tallest on the right, shortest on the left', meant that we were nowhere in sight when we did the 'Slow Shoe Shuffle' that this

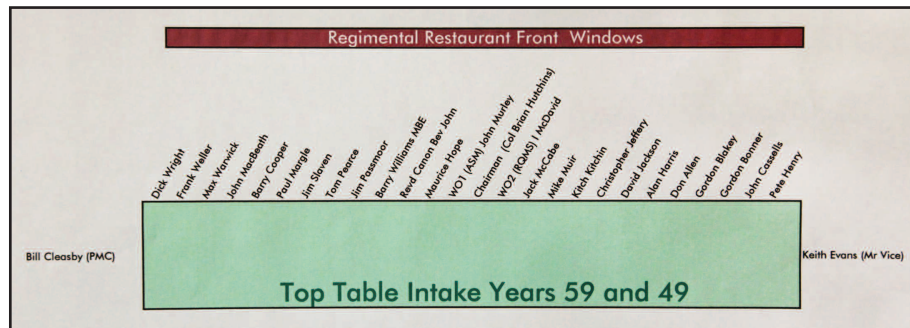
was convinced that at some time I must have crossed 'Uncle Bill' and he was getting his revenge on me, by nominating me to give a speech without giving me any prior warning. But thankfully the butterflies disappeared when it became clear that our guest speaker was to be the

Corps ASM. Although the night was a great success, one has to wonder why the quintet that was playing hadn't been issued beforehand with miners' pit-lamps! I swear that at one point

they disappeared from sight in the darkness and must have been playing by memory - but all credit to them for soldiering on.

Reunions are always an enjoyable occasion, especially when it is your 50th, but what made it for me was at the barbecue, meeting up once again with Don's wife Pat, who like Don, I had not come across again for 47 years. During our time at AAS, Don and myself had been, I suppose, as close to being brothers as you could expect to get. And so, some six months or so after we had passed out, and I was languishing in Sennelager with 123 Coy Tank Transporter Coy Workshops, I was delighted to get a visit from Don and his then young girlfriend. We spent an enjoyable day out at some old Neolithic ruins somewhere on the outskirts of Paderborn - and that was the first and last time we had met. As Don and myself could then have only been 19, Pat must have been only about 17. Now, all these years later, when we ex-boys look every day of our 65 years (and some days feel considerably older!) - why was it that, 47 years after first meeting her, plus the 17 years that she must have been then - she still looks only about 40. Funny how we all age differently!

Irrespective of what is in store in the future for our reunion venues, both Don and I have pledged to make this an annual get-together and stay in touch in between times. Which, I think, says it all and confirms all that is good about our Association's ethos. A brilliant weekend, not to be forgotten.



year passed as a march-past. Not to worry, as we would no doubt all be together on the top table, as there were so few of us? But alas this was not to be either, because, like stardust, we were sprinkled amongst the other well attended 59ers.

I must admit to having a few moments of panic when I checked the seating plan, to discover that I was in centre table between the Corps ASM and the 'Vicar'. I







## 2009 REUNION ROLL-CALL



|     |                   |     |                     |     |                     |
|-----|-------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 39A | Steve Stephenson  | 51B | Fred Mills          | 57A | Jim Woollam         |
| 39A | Bill Smith        | 51B | Graham Goodwin      | 57A | Les Fountain        |
| 39B | Arthur Sainsbury  | 51B | Arthur Fenlon       | 57A | Mike O'Driscoll     |
| 39C | John Wintle       | 51B | George Fleck        | 57A | Jim Gardner         |
| 39C | Les Dangerfield   | 51B | Keith Tilly         | 57A | Joe Upritchard      |
| 42A | Lawrence Nixon    | 51B | Bill Butler         | 57A | Brad Cockwell       |
| 42B | Mike Funnell      | 51B | Alan Morton MBE     | 57A | Brian Glossop       |
| 42C | Mike Allcock      | 51B | John Dennett        | 57A | Barry Baxter        |
| 43A | Tony Guy          | 52A | Trevor Stubberfield | 57A | Roger Traves        |
| 43A | George Wooley     | 52A | Frank Bass          | 57B | Tez Cahill          |
| 43A | Stan Bates        | 52A | Percy Thrower       | 57B | Keith Allcock       |
| 43A | Mitch Mitchell    | 52A | Terry Reddin        | 57B | Mike Heslop         |
| 43A | Jim Macdonald     | 52A | Bob Condon          | 57B | Peter Church        |
| 43B | George Dixon      | 52A | Eddie Hind          | 57B | Mike Carn           |
| 43C | John Horwood      | 52B | Eggy Egleton        | 57B | John Morgan         |
| 44A | Alex Bax          | 52B | Kaye Gilpin         | 57B | John Glasspool      |
| 44A | Pat Patterson     | 52B | Richard Barnett     | 58- | Frank Rigley        |
| 44A | Len Poulton       | 53A | David Higman        | 58A | Paul Wiggins        |
| 44A | Ken Jenner        | 53A | Derek Scanlon       | 58A | Dave Wayland        |
| 44A | Colin Williams    | 53A | Carl Hayhurst       | 58A | Marshall Day        |
| 44A | Rod Crowder       | 53B | Dennis Elshaw       | 58A | John Kelsey         |
| 44B | David Ferns       | 53B | Arthur Hodgkins     | 58A | Paul Hudson         |
| 44B | Derek Kirkpatrick | 53B | Michael Costanzo    | 58A | Barry Lucas-Carter  |
| 44B | Dave Higgs        | 53C | Graham Chilton      | 58B | Craig Featherston   |
| 45A | George Oliver     | 54A | Len Symonds         | 58B | Alan Maloney        |
| 45A | Don Hipkin        | 54A | Ben Hebden          | 58B | Mal Tanner          |
| 45A | Keith Evans       | 54A | Allan Delbridge     | 58B | Andy Cameron        |
| 45A | Eddie Broomfield  | 54B | Dick Glister        | 59A | Mike Muir           |
| 45B | Dick Manning      | 54B | Mick Toogood        | 59A | Kitch Kitchin       |
| 45B | Lew Dickinson     | 54B | Roy Durston         | 59A | Jim Passmoor        |
| 46A | George Harold     | 54B | Mike Roberts        | 59A | Barry Cooper        |
| 46A | Roger Millard     | 54B | Denis Farrell       | 59A | Paul Margle         |
| 46B | Roy Jones         | 54B | Derek Palmer        | 59B | Don Allen           |
| 46B | Neville Kay       | 54B | Brian Edminson      | 59B | Christopher Jeffery |
| 46B | John Smithson     | 54B | Clive Swatton       | 59B | Tom Pearce          |
| 47A | Erinton Keen      | 54B | Clive Soord         | 59B | Maurice Hope        |
| 47A | Gerry Malone      | 54B | Mick Owen           | 59B | Barry Williams MBE  |
| 47A | Larry Le Var      | 55A | Bill Weedon         | 59C | Jim Slaven          |
| 47B | Dudley Wood       | 55A | David Naylor        | 59C | David Jackson       |
| 48A | George Byrne      | 55A | Guy Alway           | 59C | Alan Harris         |
| 48B | Ray Derrick       | 55A | John Lee            | 59C | Jack McCabe         |
| 48B | John Porch        | 55A | Tony Church         | 60A | Sid Webb            |
| 49A | Gordon Blakey     | 55B | Doug Taylor         | 60A | Terence Fleming     |
| 49B | Gordon Bonner     | 55B | John FitzPatrick    | 60A | Trevor Guest        |
| 49B | Pete Henry        | 55B | John Harte          | 60A | Garry Middleton     |
| 49B | Dick Wright       | 55B | John Reynolds       | 60B | Mike Davis MBE      |
| 49B | John Cassells     | 55B | Geoff Knox          | 60C | Chas Buckett        |
| 49B | Max Warwick       | 55B | Sam Beatson         | 60C | Bob Skinner         |
| 49B | John Macbeath     | 55B | Steve Shaw          | 60C | Jim McIntyre        |
| 49B | Frank Weller      | 56A | Andy O'Neil         | 60C | Keith Thrower       |
| 50A | Tony Hughes       | 56B | Jim Scurr           | 60C | Bill Coxon          |
| 50B | Arthur Ward       | 56B | Ken Dawe            | 60C | John Crowther       |
| 50B | John Walker       | 56B | Larry Jarvis        | 60C | Ted Stanford        |
| 50B | Mike Webb-Morris  | 56B | Brian Mockford      | 60C | Trevor Taylor       |
|     |                   | 57A | Tom Webber          |     |                     |
|     |                   | 57A | Bob Sleep           |     |                     |
|     |                   | 57A | Bill Tudman         |     |                     |
|     |                   | 57A | Bob Roberts         |     |                     |
|     |                   | 57A | Jim Elliott         |     |                     |
|     |                   | 57A | George Vince        |     |                     |



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|     |                  |     |                      |     |                 |
|-----|------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|-----------------|
| 61A | Alistair White   | 64C | Alec Powell          | 66C | Alina Wicks     |
| 61A | Chris Rhodes     | 65A | David Schofield      | 66C | Bill Everett    |
| 61B | Brian Hutchins   | 65A | David Read           | 66C | Egon Taska      |
| 61B | Laurie Blakley   | 65B | Dave Brock           | 67A | Dave Cleaver    |
| 61C | Bill Cleasby MBE | 65C | George Henderson MBE | 67A | Nigel Wickenden |
| 62A | Ian Tilson       | 65C | Bernie Humphreys     | 67C | Derrick Walton  |
| 62A | Alex Burt        | 65C | Phil Russell         | 69A | Robby Ware      |
| 62A | John Swarbrick   | 66A | Frank Westwood       | 69C | Dave Staniland  |
| 62B | Geoff Currie     | 66A | Bev John             | 69C | Mark Plimmer    |
| 62C | Mike Cheeseman   | 66B | Rob Southcott        | 69C | Dave Mills      |
| 62C | Terry O'Sullivan | 66B | Herbie Coles         | 69C | Mike Wherton    |
| 62C | Terry Houghton   | 66B | Don McCulloch        | 69C | Wattie Walker   |
| 63B | Roy Robson       | 66B | John Wright          | 70- | Alf Spencer     |
| 63B | Clive Gardner    | 66B | Chris Peerless       | 70B | John Andrusiak  |
| 64A | Bert Dodd        | 66B | Andy Dickson         | 71C | Phil Graham     |
| 64A | Don Planner      | 66B | Ray Younger          | 76A | Paul Wood       |
| 64A | Johno Owen       | 66C | Lyle Shore           | 77C | Bryan Mansfield |
| 64A | Peter Howes      | 66C | John Nicholls        | 77C | Dave Merrick    |
| 64A | Bob Castell      | 66C | Brian Greenhorn      | 77C | Steven Thornes  |
| 64A | Jeff Bendall     | 66C | Frank McKenna        | 77C | Kim Pullen      |
| 64C | Ray Stevens      | 66C | Michael White        | 78C | Gazza Chapman   |
| 64C | Peter Chetwynd   | 66C | Byron Hooper         | PS  | Mike Mullett    |

## APOLOGIES

|     |                 |     |               |     |                 |
|-----|-----------------|-----|---------------|-----|-----------------|
| 39A | Bob Dougall     | 47B | Robin Loader  | 60C | John Langdon    |
| 39A | Peter Spargo    | 48B | Stan Guscini  | 61B | Ray Doughty     |
| 39A | Bert Kelly      | 50B | Charley Ayre  | 62C | Mel Clarke      |
| 42C | Mike McGuire    | 52A | John Williams | 64A | Tony House      |
| 43A | John Dutton     | 53B | Mick Harold   | 65C | Dave Cosway     |
| 43A | Les Scapens     | 56B | Russell Dodds | 67A | Lofty Ballard   |
| 44A | Alan Richardson | 56B | Pete Gripton  | 68B | Rick Lavis      |
| 45A | Eddie Johnston  | 57A | Chris Kemp    | PS  | Hugh McCutcheon |

## The Flight Of Youth

There are gains for all our losses,  
 There are balms for all our pain:  
 But when youth, the dream, departs,  
 It takes something from our hearts –  
 And it never comes again

We are stronger and are better  
 Under manhood's sterner reign:  
 Still we feel that something sweet  
 Followed youth, with flying feet -  
 And will never come again

Something beautiful is vanished  
 And we sigh for it in vain:  
 We behold it everywhere,  
 On the earth and in the air –  
 But it never comes again

*(Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903) wrote these poignant lines, regretting the youth that passes us all by far, too quickly. Ed.)*

# One Long Apprenticeship!

by Lemmy Holmes, 54A

Looking back over these fifty-four years since I first saw those famous AAS Arborfield gates, and wanting to tell the tale, I could not help but to choose the above title. It seems that my life has actually been 'one long apprenticeship', mainly in electronics, but covering a wide spectrum of allied subjects. The mundane effects of the Apprentices' School; the discipline; getting used to the uniforms; the kit inspections; experiencing the tender treatment of such individuals as RSM McNally and Fred Silvers etc, have already been well covered by other writers, and need no repetition. In this article, I would like to show how my training, and what I learned at the AAS, led me down a particular path, and how technological developments over the last fifty years have affected me.

## Choosing a trade

My first real apprenticeship, when arriving at AAS (on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1954), was not my choice. I was informed that my aptitude was ideally suited to the trade of Telecommunications Mechanic. Besides being hardly able to pronounce the name, I was scared of electricity and I had actually put Draughtsman and Surveyor as my main choices of trade. So I wasn't very pleased, but being only just turned fifteen and quite shy and over-awed by officialdom, I did not make my feelings

heard. However, once we started on the basics, I took to it like the proverbial duck and was already building my first crystal set before we left 'HQ' Company. I went from E squad to 'B' Coy during 1954, continuing my interests even on leave,



**B Company Colleagues. D4 Barrack Room. 1955**  
L to R: 'Biz' Biswell, 'Doug' ??, Frank ??, 'Fritz' ??, 'Jock' Carruthers, Bill Weston, 'Dilly' Dillon, 'Mick' Seward

building a simple one-valve radio and a test oscillator to practice Morse.

In our Education classes at the AAS, I was inspired by the teaching of Physics by Sgt Causton and English by Sgt Marson (?), both of the Education Corps, and was able to get some GCEs, which I had never had the chance to take at school. At boys' school, I was never the soldier but always the student,

enthusiastic to learn about any new electronic concept and ponder on its future possibilities.

We were at the start of the *Rock'n'Roll* era and everyone was mad on it, trying to afford to buy the latest records by Elvis, Little Richard and Bill Haley. About this time, I had heard of the new devices that could record

sound, reel-to-reel tape recorders, and thought how great it would be to be able to record music from the radio for free! I saved every shilling and, with a bit of help from my Dad, I bought a *Truvox* kit and built a recorder, dragging the 40-pound

cabinet on the train back to Arborfield after summer leave. It created quite a stir, being the only recorder in the AAS. Barrack room mates had never heard their own voices before, and there were some outlandish dialects to record - Keith Skews from Cornwall,

Scorer from South Shields, Linsky from Heckmonwike in Yorkshire. Amazing how they all eventually adjusted their accents and ended up with the general 'south-east' Army dialect. But the most impressive use of the tape recorder was being able to record from borrowed records or from the radio. *Radio Luxemburg (208 Medium Wave? Ed.)* was then the only source of 'decent' music and I could also record *'The Goon Show'*, then play it back every night for a week until the next one! (*Well done Eccles! Ed.*)

By 1955 we were into our Tels training. In those days, 'radio' consisted of large glass thermionic valves, heavy transformers, high voltages and lots of heat, the adage being 'tune for maximum smoke'. It was an intense learning experience for me, under the expert tutelage of civilian instructors such as W 'Bill' Clarke Riddiford, who was the personification of 'Professor Brainstorm', the eccentric Heath Robinson character. Bill always managed to make electronics an exciting subject to learn, with his wartime anecdotes and humour, plus a wealth of knowledge and experience. (*How well I remember his excellent teaching book - 'Radio Reference Riddiford' - and so wish I still had a copy! Ed.*) I believe he had worked on the secret



**Members of G1 Barrack Room, E Squad, HQ Company, 54A, March 1954**

L to R: (Rear Row) Keith Skews, Linsky, Farrell, Maung Thwin, A/Cpl Sharp, Kibby, 'Lemmy' Holmes (Front Row) Kin Nyunt, Smith 016, Smith 026, A/Cpl Langley, Sein Pe, Metcalf, Roberts



wartime development of the 'Magnetron', which enabled Britain to be first with high-powered Radar. Later, Johnny Betts was our instructor. He was a rather quiet ex-RAF chap, an expert in sign language and had a lot of Radar experience. His teaching was excellent and again full of humour and tales of the recent World War.

Both these men of the wartime generation inspired us with their enthusiasm and made learning a pleasure. Our little class of about sixteen Apprentice Tels Mechs were quite competitive and vied with each other to get the best marks in our weekly tests. I remember we even plotted graphs of our individual marks; 'the two Holmes, 'Scotty' and myself, 'Lemmy', (many thought mistakenly we were brothers), were usually around the top of the graph as the year progressed. Others I remember in the class were Mike Alan, 'Ginger' Kincaid, Ron Goetze and Roy Langford. We were offered the chance of building our own 4-valve superhet radio in kit form during work hours and, as if that wasn't enough, some of us joined the Radio Club and met in the evenings in a disused classroom behind the Tels Workshop. There, we could build other projects or sit in with the licensed radio amateurs and communicate with the world on short wave. I remember our call sign was 'G3 IHH' (Italy, Honolulu, Honolulu). My fascination with communication receivers continued for many years after that and I can still drool over a multi-valve double-superhet! About the same time (1955), we got the first inkling of a new gadget called a 'transistor', which we were told could amplify like a valve but, as the old-timers muttered, "*would never replace the valve, as it's only good for amplifying sound and U/S for radios*". It could also be destroyed by the slightest of heat, so soldering it into anything was a dangerous procedure.

As you have probably gathered already, I wasn't 'the typical Apprentice'. I didn't like most sport, except for hockey, and wasn't 'bullshit' - but kept my head above water. At weekends, I usually stayed in and spent the time drawing, my main hobby, usually of fantastic machines (a la Heath Robinson); or writing barrack-room poems, much to the delight of my

colleagues when I read them out after lights-out with a torch under the bed clothes! (Please don't ask me to repeat any - they wouldn't be acceptable here!) I was keen on photography too, and although I only had an old *Kodak* 120 box-camera, I often look back at the photos I took with it, some of which I hope will have appeared in these pages.

### Changing trade

Some time during 1955, a decision must have been made that, for the first time, Radar was to be taught at AAS. Tels Mechs of the 54A intake were given a trade-test and a number was selected to form the new class of Radar Mechs. Our instructor was to be Johnny Betts, who had considerable experience of Radar, and a new classroom was allocated behind the Tels Shop. The hardware for the new trade was duly delivered in the form of one *3Mk7* Radar set and a *Lister* generator. From then on, it was 'goodbye' to radio and 'hello' to *Blumlein* modulators, TR cells, magnetrons and waveguides. After we had struggled to start the generator and learned to switch on the *3Mk7*, we would learn about 'auto-follow' circuitry and 'long-tailed pairs'. It was all completely



**1 Radar Ex-AAS Course, 5 Battalion, 1957**  
L to R: (Rear Row) Smith, Ron Goetze, 'Sexy' Trill, 'Ginge' Kincaid, 'Al' Penny, 'Roy' Langford, (Front Row) 'Scotty' Holmes, 'Lemmy' Holmes, 'Dave' Cawkwell, Brian Hornsey, 'Eddie' Edwards

new and we were soon seen by the Tels Mechs as a race apart. It was certainly a challenge, absorbing the new concepts. I remember receiving the biggest electric shock I ever had, when I took a fuse out of a 400-volt regulated power supply with it switched on! I was so impressed with the distance it threw me, that I took great interest after that in regulated power supplies and designed and built several for my own use. So it was, that when

Passing-out Parade came round in late 1956, our little class wore the 'R' insignia and were posted to 5 Battalion, Arborfield.

At 5 Battalion our lives changed considerably. We were given the title of '1 Radar ex-AAS' course and continued with our training on *4Mk6*, *4Mk7* and ECE equipment, such as Synchros, Amplidynes and Magslips. The biggest eye-opener for me was the other occupants of the camp. They were National Servicemen, mainly ex-public-school and university graduates, who had been deferred to complete their degrees. Some were in their mid-twenties and very worldly-wise, although quite new to Army life - and looked like boys' school 'Jeeps', wearing their berets like flying saucers and gaiters like drainpipes! By a quirk of fate, I alone was allocated a barrack-room with these paragons of the British elite, while all the rest of my course were billeted together and could carry on as before. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Listening to my new barrack-room mates and their debating skills, use of language and general confidence was a real education and I count that as an important part of my 'apprenticeship'. To observe a discussion between a lad who 'had his shoes made to measure in London' with two others who had degrees in Zoology and Theology, was like listening-in to another world. Yet in the wisdom of the War Office, they were all training as Radar Mechanics, as was I. With their superior confidence, they were also quite prepared to enter into a learned debate with the Sergeant Major on parade, as to the merits and demerits of having short haircuts! As can be imagined, this caused some problems. The CSM's powers of expression were not up to it, so he expressed his displeasure by having some of the miscreants marched off for an immediate haircut, and weekend leave cancelled for the rest. There followed, over the next few days, what can only be described as a 'mini mutiny'. At one point, the whole barrack-block was hanging out of the windows, shouting, "*Hate! Hate!*" in unison, as the Orderly Sergeant tried to maintain some form of order. The whole episode was eventually calmed down somehow and 'reasonable' haircuts appeared.

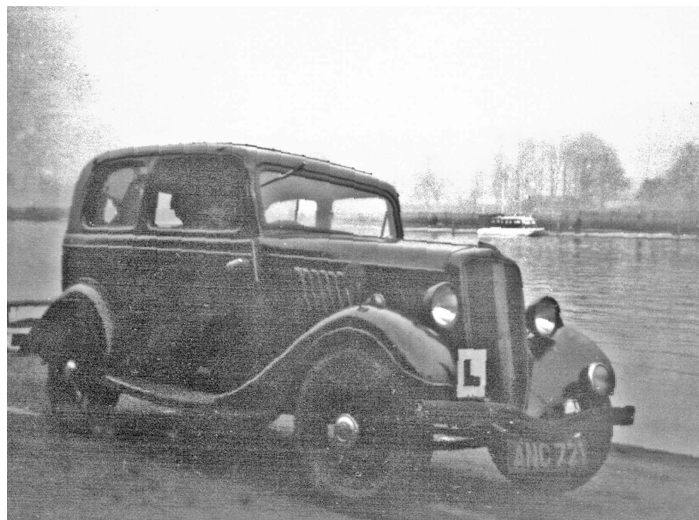


**'Corporal' Missile at 5 Battalion, 1957**

Then a further selection was made from our small ex-boys course. This time it was to train on the 'Corporal' missile radar equipment, which we had noticed occupying a separate compound in the camp. (See picture overleaf). Three of us were selected – 'Scotty' Holmes, Roy Langford and myself. The remainder of the ex-AAS course continued on the standard Radars, 4Mk6 and 4Mk7, and I lost touch with them after that – but would love to know what happened to them all. In June 1957 I got married, rather young you might think, aged only 18, but we have just had our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

The three of us, after another course on the new *Corporal* gear, were posted to the School of Artillery, at Larkhill, on Salisbury Plain. I had bought my first car at that point, a 1934 *Ford 8* for £40, so I used it for all three of us to travel to the new camp, complete with all our kit and three kitbags.

windswept camp in what seemed the middle of nowhere - I thought we had



**First Car, a 1934 'Ford 8', 1957**

done well even to find the place! My first priority at Larkhill was to try and find some accommodation for myself and wife. Married quarters were out of the question, so it would have to be private accommodation. I eventually got a little caravan in Amesbury, which stood on its own little plot and had its own services

and a garage! It cost £3 15s a week - that sounds cheap now, but as my weekly wage at that time was only about £7, it was a fairly large chunk of it. I was told I wasn't entitled to Marriage Allowance, being under 21, however we managed somehow and could even run the car, with petrol at 4s.3d (21p) per gallon.

So, during the winter of 1957 into 1958, my 'apprenticeship' continued in the Guided Weapons Wing of the School of Artillery. A new Radar to study was based on the wartime US Army SCR584, based on a large trailer, with a separate parabolic aerial on its own trailer. To make up the full guidance system, two new trailers had been added by the US developers - the

'Doppler Set' to measure the speed of the missile and the 'Computer Set' to work out when to cut the rocket motor. Electronic developments, in this more modern equipment, had by now got to miniature valves and a few specialised transistors. We Radar Mechs maintained the Radar Set and the Doppler Set, while ECE Mechs, notably Sgt Dick Silvester, keeping to the traditional 'division of labour', dealt with the Computer Set, despite the fact that it was also full of electronics and not gear-wheels, like the old No.11 Predictor had been. The

missile itself had other REME Mechs to maintain its electronics, notably Sgt Bill Belcher, who helped me to get accommodation later. The REME O/C was a Major Needham. It was all under the auspices of the Royal Artillery, who provided the radar operators and administered the GW Wing.

## Defeat

Between the grey monotony of sky  
And darker grey monotony of sea,  
A solitary seagull passes by,  
Beating the air and screaming plaintively.

And even so – between grey yesterdays,  
Before your coming waked my dreaming heart;  
And darker grey tomorrows, when our ways,  
Must lie forever half a world apart.

I take my way on wings that feebly beat  
Against the adverse winds of circumstance;  
My heart, rebellious at this last defeat,  
Screaming defiance at the gods of chance.

*(This uplifting verse of defiance was written by Constance Woodrow (1899-1937), a lady who was born in England, but lived most of her life in Canada. It sums up those feelings one has that, sometimes, everything is against you; but that the right thing to do is keep on fighting. Ed.)*





### **Occupants of "Noah's", Benbecula, Hebrides, 1959**

*L to R: McGibbon, 'Dick' Sylvester, Roy Langford, Brian Dennis, 'Scotty' Holmes, Hayes Beech, ?????, Rooney, Arnold Wiklinson, Mick Motton, Bill Fairless, 'Jonah' Jones*

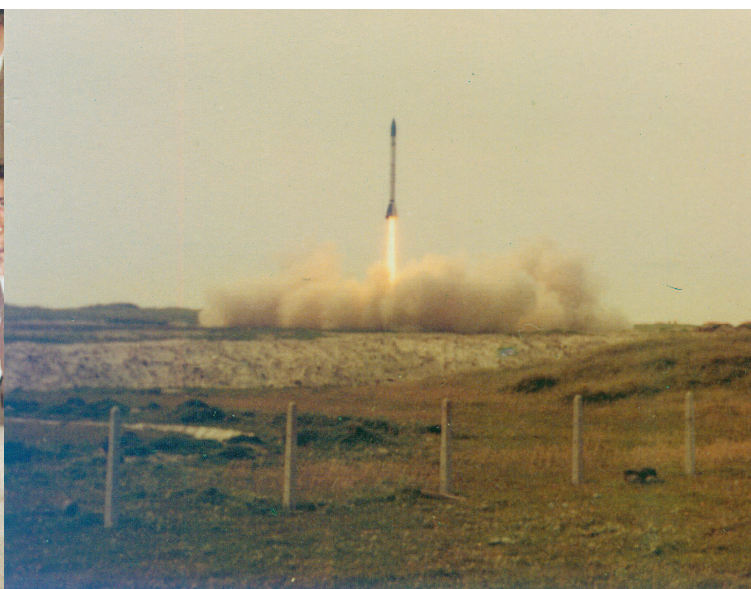
### **Off to the Hebrides**

Plans were afoot in 1958 to enlarge our repertoire. In 1959, the whole GW Wing, complete with radars, missiles and staff, was to be sent to a new range, being built

constantly adjusted, as the floor sank into the bog and all the balls ended up at one end of the table! The accommodation wasn't sufficient to begin with and we had 36 men in our barrack-room, in double

the boggy ground and slowly sank. The billiard table in the hastily contrived NAAFI had to be

expected such weather conditions and we had not brought any swimming costumes, so we swam in the nude, much to the disgust of a few locals who happened to pass by on their way to church. The local Gaelic speaking community did not approve of anything recreational on Sundays and complaints were made to the CO when we organised a camp hockey match.



### **'Corporal' blast-off, 1959**



### **Missile Erector, 1959**

on South Uist in the Outer Hebrides. The idea was to test fire a few missiles and was a considerable logistics challenge, involving landing craft and ferry journeys.

When we arrived on South Uist, the workshops we were to occupy were still under construction and, for some weeks, we were working in a large building with no roof. The weather was quite horrendous, with what seemed continuous horizontal rain and gale force winds, which required portable buildings to be tied down with cables. Our accommodation was on the adjoining island of Benbecula, in a disused RAF camp, where the barrack rooms floated on

bunks, with other REME from all over the place, including the Base Workshops at Old Dalby. We called our room 'Noah's'.

During that first Hebrides firing season (one of many), our first child was born back in England and I had a short break of leave, travelling the picturesque route home via the outer islands ferry to Mallaig, then on the last of the steam trains to Glasgow. As the weather warmed up, the Hebrides experienced a very rare heatwave and, at the weekends, the whole camp took advantage of it down on the nearby deserted beach. Nobody had



### **RAGWR Group, Hebrides, 1961**

*Too many to list here, but you may recognize some of them!*

There was a small group of Navy divers billeted with us, whose job was to recover bits of missile that fell into the sea. In their spare time, they dived on the wreck of the 'S.S. Politician' near Eriskay, the famous 'Whisky Galore' ship that foundered during the American prohibition era. The divers brought back several cases of whisky, which were distributed around the messes. The stuff we got was, I'm afraid, undrinkable, as the seawater had got through the corks. Over the next four years, I was still involved in the *Corporal* project, each summer



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**Guidance Area, South Uist, 1961**

making the trip to the Hebrides with the GW Wing for test firings. By then, the conditions and organisation had improved considerably, although there were still some difficulties for the drivers negotiating the single-track island roads with vehicles like the electrically propelled missile erector - where you had to press buttons to steer it! The Recovery Mechs and their *Scammell* had quite a busy time.

Returning by air from Benbecula, after the 1962 firing season, the REME contingent had a bit of a shock, when the RAF *Valetta* had an engine fire on take-off. Fortunately, the pilot made a very tight turn and landed back on the same runway, and we made an extremely rapid exit! We then had another night in camp, before another aircraft could come and get us the day afterwards. That must have been an omen, as it proved to be the last of my Hebridean rocketry and my 'apprenticeship' entered a new phase.

**A world of computing**

In September 1962 I was given a new job, to be responsible for the maintenance of a new computer project that had been going on at the School of Artillery. This really was a change! An *Elliott 803* Computer,

normally a large office-based mainframe that would fill about four wardrobes, had been fitted into two trailers for assessment as a 'mobile' digital computer for the Artillery. This was my first experience of computers and, with no formal course to help, I found the new concepts quite difficult to grasp. Instead of signals going in at one end and coming out of the other, they seemed to just go round in circles forever! The *803* Computer was a 'serial' machine, where the 'bits' whizzed round one behind the other and had to be picked off at the right moment using time-delay lines. The memory, or 'store', was an 8K ferrite-bead and the program was read in from paper-tape. This computer did use transistors; thousands of them on huge printed-circuit boards. But they were germanium and very sensitive to temperature. Both trailers had to be air-conditioned with large 'sill-units' to get rid of the heat. Despite that, the transistors were constantly blowing and it was apparent that you couldn't put an office computer into a four-wheel trailer, than call it 'mobile' and expect it to work!

In 1963 further tests were arranged for the *803* Computer, to show that 'a digital computer could be used for other military tasks'. Keith 'Dizzy' Evans and myself, along with a generator attendant, were despatched with the two trailers full of gear to the *Elliott* factory at Rochester. There, a Logic Unit had been developed, which could decode Morse signals from a meteorological balloon. The Met data was used for gun-settings in a RA gun battery. The idea was that the Logic Unit could decode the Morse and the computer could use the data to adjust the gunnery program, before printing out the settings for the guns. This was the beginning of multi-transistor logic elements,

encapsulated into a block about the size of a matchbox - the forerunner of the modern 'chip'. We used an old AR88 receiver to receive the balloon signals, on 27MHz. I monitored the signals and wrote down the Morse letters, which represented variations of temperature, humidity and pressure, as the balloon rose - so we could check if the computer got it right! It was an interesting experiment but not very reliable. It did show that digital computers in general might be quite handy for a variety of military jobs.

**Newspaper Cutting, 1959****Scammell and 4 Mk7 Radar**

Our guidance area on South Uist was about half a mile from the firing point where we parked the Radar, Doppler, Computer and other equipment. The missile was taken to the firing point on the erector and fuelled. The countdown began, organised by 'Range-Safety', a building about a mile distant. An aircraft was sent out before each firing, to check that the danger area of the Atlantic was clear of shipping, sometimes having to 'buzz' Russian trawlers, who were thought to be listening in on our transmissions. There were some spectacular firings; especially at night, when the glow lit up the sky, visible over the whole chain of islands. Way out in the Atlantic, on the Isle of St Kilda, a small detachment of REME, RAF and other 'odd bods'







circuits, so that new ideas could be made quickly in small batches and tested. Small innovations like 'hands-free' communication from a Police car, now quite common with mobile phones, were in use quite early with our own designs.

One other interesting job was drawing maps, showing the coverage of radio transmitters all over the County, so that we could site our transmitters in the best places. With my map reading expertise, learned in Education Classes at the AAS, I was able to 'see' the relief on an Ordnance Survey map and estimate where a transmitted signal would be able to reach. Eventually, by about 1995, the Ordnance

Survey made their data available digitally and computer programs could be written to use this data and display a transmitter's expected coverage around undulating countryside. Computers got bigger and faster in memory terms and we had the hard-drives with massive storage and of course colour displays. I kept up with it all until about 1991, when computers became standardised with the *Windows* systems, but then lost interest in delving into the innards and just concentrated on the programming. And that was about it as far as employment was concerned. I retired as a Draftsman in 1998, after 33 years service in the Radio Department. By that time, we had seen the end of 'real'

public service, with the privatisation of everything.

So my extensive 'apprenticeship' in electronics seems to have covered a fair bit of the whole field. It has been a fascinating experience, watching the evolution of the subject. From those far off days in Arborfield, listening to *Radio Luxemburg* on a crystal set and wondering what there was yet to be learnt; to the present day, where everybody's life is almost completely dependent on electronics in all its forms. I owe a whole lot of it to the inspirational training administered by the Army Apprentices School.

## Best Technical Junior Soldier (Harrogate) Award - 13 August 2009

Junior Soldier Culley, of Intake 21, is shown receiving the AOBA award on his last day at AFC Harrogate. The AOBA Craftsman Statuette is awarded twice yearly (Aug/Dec) to the best Technical Junior Soldier of his or her intake. The Graduation Day for JS Culley marked the successful completion of 42 weeks of training. After some well-earned leave, he will be joined SEAE in Arborfield in September to start his career as an Aircraft Technician.





## Coincidence?

**It may only be a coincidence, but just consider ....**

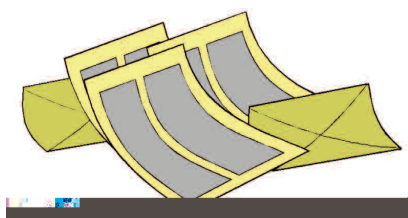
2007 was the Chinese *'Year of the Chicken'* – the Bird Flu pandemic devastated parts of Asia

2008 was the Chinese *'Year of the Horse'* – an Equine Influenza decimated Australian racing

2009 is the Chinese *'Year of the Pig'* – the Swine Flu Pandemic is spreading fast all around the globe

**Has anyone noticed this? It gets worse, because next year .....**

2010 will be the Chinese *'Year of the Cock'* – the mind boggles at what could possibly go wrong!



## OBAN LETTERS

### David Sly-Jex, 53B emailed as follows:

As discussed, I attach an article about my time in the AAS and REME, followed by a short bit about how I landed up. I'm afraid I didn't have a good record either in the AAS or REME, with more than one trip behind bars, many reductions in rank and two failed commission attempts - hardly a great advertisement! I enjoyed talking to you recently, and decided to buy a copy of

*'The Arborfield Apprentice'*. Congratulations! I have skipped through it rather quickly to date, but enough to see both how it deals with the story, as well as giving an insight into how difficult it must have been to elicit accurate information - a major task. Incidentally, the hockey team photo shown on page 221, although located in the 1960 - 64 chapter, will have to have

been taken between 1954 - 1956, as that is when I represented the School and I am on that photo! Also shown is the lovely ASM Lilley, who was such a staunch supporter, as well as being a great person. Sadly, I had forgotten him until I saw the picture.

*(David contacted me, having recently joined the AOA as a 'new old boy'. Welcome aboard David – and I hope to publish your article soon. Ed.)*

## Chas Pepper, 43B, writes once more:

I rather liked the 'Youth and Age' poem in *OBAN45*. Poor old George Arnold – if he had reversed things and gone with older women, who knew what they were doing, and partook of a little *new* wine – then he might have been around for a little longer! Ah well, a merry life and a short one. I have enclosed a little 'technical' tale that you may wish to publish in due course.

*(Thanks Chas – but you'll see there is already an article by yourself elsewhere in this issue, so next time perhaps? Ed.)*

## Tony Domoney, 56B, e-mails:

I am still here in Namibia, signing another 12-month contract as of 1st June. I have now hit the heady height of Head of Airworthiness and am the representative of Namibia in a Southern African development programme. There are lots of interesting issues that keep the old brain cells alive. I have recently passed a tough medical, so am well pleased. Much looking forward to the 56B reunion in October - I will be there, God willing. Cheers for now and please keep me posted.

## Eggy Egleton, 52B, reminisces:

Looking back through some old OBAN articles, I was reminded of certain parts of my life, such as being in the Army Cadets, prior to joining the AAS in 1952. I started in the Royal Artillery at Cowley, Middlesex, where we were trained on Bofors A-A guns. I was 'No.4' in the crew, facing the rear on the left-hand jack and loader. Even in those days, camps closed down, and we were transferred to the drill-hall in Uxbridge. We became RASC Para and trained by jumping off the office inside the drill-hall, being instructed by TA Sergeants. We were not allowed to jump if under seventeen-and-a-half. I took Cert. 'A' Parts 1 and 2 at the Middlesex Regiment Depot, Mill Hill, tested by Regular NCOs and Officers. I also took Cert. 'T', that was 'vehicle repairs', training at the local Ford garage. I used to watch the vehicles

## Greg Peck, 53B, sends news from the Antipodes:

I am pleased to announce that Jim Culley of '44 vintage and now a Kiwi, has made contact and been wined, dined and shown around amongst our little band of warriors. He is physically well and seems to be coping with his very recent bereavement as well as can be expected. Despite his seniority, we managed to 'ace' him with Roy Ashman, who enlisted in 1942, to Jim's 1944. Not bad, as it meant he only had to bow, grovel and be jipped just the once! Jim had just the two full days with us, but despite that we got around to see everyone except the Harpers, who were away in Sydney. Hopefully we can sort that out when Jim returns in August of this year, assuming he is willing to risk my driving again! Jim is presently back with his daughters up on the Sunshine Coast, which has seen more rain this year than I can recall since moving here from South

## Terry Crampton, 63A, e-mailed:

Just to clarify - I am a member and did have an article in OBAN some time ago. Time seems to have clouded my memory unfortunately! I was in 63A, joining when I was a little over 15. One of the photos I have is of 'A' squad, Junior Company official photo - seeing my old Sergeant (Heeley) brought back many memories of this young green A/T being balled at by



**Left to right: Roy Ashman, Jim McGuire, Greg Peck and Jim Culley.**

Australia in 1993. I expect that will make him feel quite at home, eh? You will notice (see photo) that we are making great inroads with our 'Haka' drills, still haven't got the timing quite right though, so Jim McGuire has ordered some extra drills for us.

him! I find it quite surprising that there are very few people from 1963 that write in. The other couple of pictures I have are just of me outside the billets. In one, I am combing my hair (posing) with a horse-whip in my teeth - I used to ride the School horses, probably in preference to sport!

*(Terry – Apologies for late inclusion of your e-mail, it somehow got lost in the ether! But now is the chance to redress the balance, send in an article and copies of your photographs! Ed.)*

being tested by fording the local river. I also rose to the dizzy heights of Cadet Sergeant. The RSM, who was a Regular attached to the TA, lived in a flat in the drill-hall and taught us the basics of drilling a squad and issuing words of command. We fired 0.22" rifles, 0.303" short Lee Enfield rifles, Brens and Stens, which I think were Mk5, as they had a wooden butt and pistol grip. I later used Stens in the Army – but never ones like those!

Another article reminded me of being a founder member of 24 Corps Troop Workshop, consisting of just 10 Craftsmen, one L/Cpl and an Officer. The camp at Sutton Veny was derelict and the bullets full of used rounds. We had the job of cleaning out the place ready for reservists during the Suez flap. Lots of them arrived as WOs, SSgts and Sgts – but then on the next parade they

were all down to Corporals! Some were TA, who had been transferred to the reserve against their wishes. We eleven received three jabs each, all standing in a line – and only one needle used. The doctor was a civilian, who had to be lifted out of his car by the Lance-Jack in the Medical Centre. His (the doc's) hand was shaking and he had to jab hard to get a steady needle. Several of us got 'jab fever' and were confined to bed. We became over-staffed in Tels Mechs and I was asked if I minded being sent to the Depot, as I didn't want to be a Tels Mech anyway! So it was back to the Depot at Arborfield – and that's another story!

*(I must apologise to Eggy for publishing this so long after he'd written it – I found it tucked inside some other documents! But better late than never Eggy – still worth publication. Ed.)*



**John Hernon, 60B, e-mails:**

I was always led to believe that God was an Englishman and that, having been born British, one had won first prize in the lottery of life - but of late some doubts are creeping in. Congratulations to the Gurkhas' recent series of well deserved victories in the mother of parliaments. Now one hopes that Ms Lumley will turn her attention to the dispossessed British squaddies, who have done their ten years with the Colours, got the tin gongs for Malaysia and Borneo - and sod all else pension-wise, not even the right to wear the PJM. *"You can speak of gin and beer when you're quartered safe back"*, as Mr. Kipling said. But don't ask for rights like the little brown brothers, 'cause maybe God ain't an Englishman after all - and the only pension you're likely to get will have to come from the National Lottery, my son, and not Mr Brown's coffers.

**Keith Tilly, 51A, e-mails:**

I have read my article in OBAN45, thanks for publishing it. I hope there was sufficient content to provide a laugh for the readers. There are so many things I remember - I jot each event down as it comes to mind. Unfortunately, I am as yet unable to remember anything I did that was useful! I did try, though. I suppose it can all be summed up by my encounter with a particularly humourless RAOC Captain:

Lost as ever on an exercise, my convoy stumbled into an RAOC mob, hidden deep in the undergrowth of a German wood (somewhere in Germany, that's as close as I can tell you!). I told 'El Capitan' that I was looking for the REME contingent. After a five-minute briefing on the way out of the wood and the route to the REME lot, off we sped. I followed the directions exactly as I remembered them. After dark, with all lights blazing, we crashed through the undergrowth into the 'REME area' and, with a sigh of satisfaction, I got out to announce my (late) arrival. Imagine my surprise when the first person I bumped into was the same Captain, so after all that struggling, we were back with the RAOC! Anyway, I tried to be serious but couldn't stop laughing, and El Capitan accused me of being drunk and wanted me arrested. I said something along the lines of, *"Look, mate, I'm not drunk, just lost!"*

**Brian 'Slim' Stone, 54A, replies:**

Reading that item in the latest issue of *OBAN*, regarding the 'compo' packs, certainly brings back some memories! One I am sure that many old boys will appreciate is what happened during one of the NATO exercises, circa 1959, on the Soltau training area. It was customary to have a REME presence on the 'tank crossing point' of the main Hamburg/Soltau Road, with one *Cent* ARV plus a 'Knocker' *Scammell*. We of the 4<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards LAD arrived 'in situ' on this cold wet night, to find one frozen and starving 'Red Cap' L/Cpl, complete with motorcycle and little else. He told us he had been there 'for days' and had run out of food.

Well, what could we do but offer him some much-needed repast? It was the first time I had ever seen anyone so thoroughly devour a tin of 'mutton jock' - cold! Another favourite memory of the old compo was the introduction, in the early Sixties, of 'Chicken Supreme'. What a supper that made, along with a tin of peas, reclining under the stars of the Radfan!

**John Worland, 52B, asks for help**

*Reference the 'Blakamati Cowboys' / 1<sup>st</sup> Singapore Regt RA*

Pulau Blakang Mati is an island off Singapore, now called 'Sentosa', and is about one degree north of the Equator. I was in Malaya from November 1956 (Ipoh) to March 1958 (Kluang) with 13 Inf Wksp. I came back to the UK and joined 27 Guided Weapons Wksp, then left REME in 1962.

During my time in Malaya and then with 27 GW, there were 'stories' about the 'Blakamati Cowboys'. Did they have 25-pdrs and/or 3.7" A/A guns? Is there anybody knows any details and would like to write in with his or her stories?

A couple of names that may jog the memory: Sgts Harry Walmsley (not ex-boy) and 'Wally' Wallis (ex-boy?), both ex-'Blakamati Cowboys' and also 27 GW Wksp.

**Tony Guy, 43A, e-mails:**

I took the accompanying photo, of the Windmill café, in 1950, when I was with 721 Car Company RASC. Because I was the recovery man for the Company, I visited the YMCA dozens of times. There was a plaque inside that stated the café was opened about 1946, if my memory is correct. You will notice a great change externally between the two pictures (OBAN44 and this one!).

**Alan 'Algy' Morton, 51B, e-mailed the following:**

Dear Editor, many thanks for all your hard work with OBAN, it is much appreciated. I have just sent this email (with photograph) to some old mates and I wondered if you might like to put it in a future OBAN, if and when you get a slow news edition! A word of explanation may be essential - in our next village, we have the Ravensden Friendly Club (RFC) for the over-60s and I am currently the secretary. We meet once a month on a Tuesday afternoon and last month our theme was 'An Easter Parade' with a decorated hat competition. I couldn't resist wearing my blazer with a newly acquired AAS Badge, of which I am very proud, but the hat was a last minute concoction - so I was no prizewinner, naturally. (Nor did the raffle tickets come up!).





## Bob Henn, 62C, e-mailed:

Once again I found myself unable to attend the reunion, and I offer my apologies to all those who did. I'll say nothing about the next one, wherever it may be, but 'third time lucky' I hope! I did manage to bring the whole family to the Corps Weekend, and I pass on my compliments and thanks to the organisers for a fine show. I was especially grateful for the young soldiers who cheerfully carried my grandchildren back and forth over the bridge, some 'janker' that one. I will keep in touch, as I have an idea for an article to go in *OBAN*. I shall call it '*The Reluctant Apprentice*'.

## Fred Hayward, 45A, writes:

Having belatedly received my copy of *OBAN45* (to my shame, I overlooked my year's subscription), I have just read with interest the excerpt from *Craftsman* regarding the new 24-hour ration packs. As one of the 'older ones', you may be interested in my own experience. In 1951, with LAD HQ 28 Infantry Brigade, I moved from Hong Kong to Korea, where I first experienced the delights of American food. In those first chaotic days, we were exclusively on American rations, which also included a daily issue of *Lucky Strike* (or similar) cigarettes, very welcome to smokers! Later, we had the 'best of both worlds', British components and American fresh food. We all ate far too well, as American logistics

## Maurice 'Mo' Hope, 59B, responds:

Allow me to comment on the editor's note about the troopship '*Nevasa*', on page 18 of *OBAN 45*. The name *Nevasa* rang a few bells in the old grey cells, as I recall doing some family research and finding that my own father had sailed to India aboard a vessel of that name. It appears that the *HMT Nevasa* you referred to must have been the second troopship of that name and, as you say, was built in 1955.

The 'first' *HMT Nevasa*, as some very, very old sweats or family historians will know, was in fact built in 1912 by *Barclay, Curle & Co*, in Glasgow, and was 9,071 gross tons. It too was built for the *British India Steam Navigation Co* and had her maiden voyage from London to East Africa and Calcutta in March 1913. In August 1914 she was converted to a

troopship and, from 1915 to 1918, was fitted with a 660-bed hospital. In 1918 she was used as a North Atlantic troopship, ferrying US troops and later repatriating Allied Forces. From 1919 she resumed her commercial service to and from the UK and Calcutta. In 1925 she was rebuilt as a permanent troopship, with a capacity for 1,000 men. Between 1939 and 1945, she trooped steadily and was used between the UK, India, Basra and Madagascar, as well as for the Normandy Landings. She again resumed her commercial role in 1946 but was used mainly as a troopship, before being laid up on the River Blackwater, near Malden, Essex, in 1948. She was eventually taken to Bowness on the Solway Firth, where she was finally broken up.

couldn't cope with a nine-man unit, so we were regularly supplied with 25-pound packs of frozen steak and, often, a huge fresh turkey. Our poor National Service ACC cook had no idea how to deal with the latter, so we told him to abide by the Catering Corps Handbook - "*if it's brown, it's cooked; if it's black, it's burnt!*" Our issued bully-beef was in great demand by the Yanks, so this was swapped for some of their more tasty fare. Incidentally, the nearby American units weren't allowed an alcohol issue, so we sold them bottles of Japanese '*Asahi*' beer, which we could buy for 1s/3d (old money) and for which they were quite happy to pay \$2. And quite often, we were invited across to help

them drink it!

After leaving service in 1955, I was recalled a year later 'on reserve', and landed in Port Said on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1956. Don James, a fellow Artificer, and I each worked a 12-hour shift, supervising the unloading of vehicles from the arriving landing-crafts. Some of these vehicles included 24-hour ration packs destined for units that would never arrive due to the cease-fire. Se we as a unit (25 Port Wksp) always had a reservoir to supplement the official rations. Adjacent to us, in Port Said's fishing harbour, were the Royal Navy's minesweepers, who were on fresh rations - so, again, swapping was order of the day. The enclosed leaflet from one of

our 24-hour packs shows the variety of choice, which I think compared quite favourably with the American versions sampled some five years earlier. Although I can't recall a preferred variety - I do remember swapping a number of these with the Navy - for a whole leg of lamb!

Hope this is of interest, Fred (now fully paid up!). P.S. I found Keith Tilly's article in *OBAN45* the funniest thing I've read in years - can't wait for the follow-up!

*This carton contains your food for the next*

# 86,400

*seconds of your life!*

Spare 45 of these seconds now to read the simple instructions below. They are for your own benefit.

### 1. MEAL BAGS

Curb your curiosity to open all the Meal bags at once. The meals are wrapped in separate packets to protect them from the weather and for ease of stowing in your pack. If you must know immediately what they all contain look at the contents list overleaf.

Open each bag as you require it—NOT before.

### 2. BREWING-UP

There is sufficient tea, sugar and milk in the pack to make three pints of "Sergeant Major's" tea. Remember that if you squeeze half the tube of Milk into your first brew that the other two brews will be correspondingly less milky. Be economical and use a third of the tube to each pint.

After a few months in a hot climate condensed milk (tubed or lined) develops a "brownish off" appearance. The chemists call this change "caramelisation." The milk is no worse for this slight off-colouring and you can consume it with confidence. The only other alternative to condensed milk is powdered milk which is very unpopular.

To open the tube pierce the end of the nozzle

with the point of your can opener. Be careful not to damage the threads on the neck of the nozzle.

### 3. COOKING

The meat, puddings, vegetables and spaghetti can be eaten hot or cold, but you will find them much more appetising if you take the trouble to heat them. This is best done as follows:—

Pierce the top of the can.

Place the can in a mess tin of water so that the can is three-quarters submerged.

Boil for 15 minutes as a minimum but for 25 minutes if you can spare the time.

### 4. "CAPS"

There are two items in the pack with replaceable caps—the salt dispenser and the milk tube.

If you don't replace these caps the salt will get damp and refuse to run and the milk will come to a sticky end in your pocket or pack.

So, if the cap fits . . . replace it.

### 5. LITTER

There are 37 separate pieces of potential litter in every ration pack. Litter gives away your position to the enemy, particularly in jungle warfare. Bury your litter before moving on.

## Contents List

### 24 HOUR RATION

There are four types of ration. Type "A", Type "B", Type "C", and Type "D". The contents of each pack differ and you should get a different pack each day.

| TYPE "A"                                                                                                                              | TYPE "B"                                                                                                                       | TYPE "C"                                                                                                                     | TYPE "D"                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Breakfast Packet</b><br>Oatmeal Block<br>Chopped Bacon<br>Jam<br>Tea and Sugar<br>Biscuits                                         | <b>Breakfast Packet</b><br>Oatmeal Block<br>Bacon and Beans<br>Marmalade<br>Tea and Sugar<br>Biscuits                          | <b>Breakfast Packet</b><br>Oatmeal Block<br>Sausage and Beans<br>Jam<br>Tea and Sugar<br>Biscuits                            | <b>Breakfast Packet</b><br>Oatmeal Block<br>Ham and Eggs<br>Jam<br>Tea and Sugar<br>Biscuits                                       |
| <b>Snack Packet</b><br>Milk Chocolate<br>Clear Gums<br>Spangles<br>Mare Bar<br>Biscuits, Sweet<br>Tea and Sugar                       | <b>Snack Packet</b><br>Milk Chocolate<br>Clear Gums<br>Toff-o-Luxe<br>Bolted Sweets<br>Biscuits, Sweet<br>Tea and Sugar        | <b>Snack Packet</b><br>Milk Chocolate<br>Clear Gums<br>Bolted Sweets<br>Nurs and Narkins<br>Biscuits, Sweet<br>Tea and Sugar | <b>Snack Packet</b><br>Milk Chocolate<br>Clear Gums<br>Spangles<br>Mare Bar<br>Biscuits, Sweet<br>Tea and Sugar                    |
| <b>Main Meal Packet</b><br>Corned Beef<br>Vegetable Salad in Mayonnaise<br>Mixed Fruit Pudding<br>Cheese<br>Biscuits<br>Tea and Sugar | <b>Main Meal Packet</b><br>Ham and Beef<br>Spaghetti in Tomato Sauce<br>Treacle Pudding<br>Cheese<br>Biscuits<br>Tea and Sugar | <b>Main Meal Packet</b><br>Liver and Bacon<br>Beans in Tomato<br>Rice Pudding<br>Cheese<br>Biscuits<br>Tea and Sugar         | <b>Main Meal Packet</b><br>Steak and Kidney Pie<br>Diced Mixed Vegetables<br>Ginger Pudding<br>Cheese<br>Biscuits<br>Tea and Sugar |

**SUNDRIES PACKET**

*(This has the same content in all packs)*

|                          |                            |              |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Condensed Milk (in Tube) | Chewing Gum (four tablets) | Toilet Paper |
| Salt in Dispenser        | Matches                    | Can-opener   |
|                          | Paraldehyde Tablet         |              |

**Complete contents list overleaf** ➔

**• READ BEFORE YOU FEED •**

(118) W4,600/7104 0124 2-55 17W



## Jim Macdonald, 43A, writes 'just a thought':

21<sup>st</sup> July 2009: There must have been crowds at the Gates of Heaven on this day 93 years ago. The whistles blew along the lines and men went 'over the top' as the Battle of the Somme began. Before too long, some 20,000 British soldiers lay dead, another 35,000 were wounded and 2,000 simply disappeared. In November of that same year the offensive was called off, but not before 625,000 British and French were killed, wounded or missing, while German losses totalled some 450,000. And the extent of the Allied advance was just six miles.

The day afterwards, a British newspaper headline read, '*Great Day on the Somme*'. The Press seemed to have forgotten the grieving wives, mothers, fathers and children, as whole Battalions were mown down on the battlefield. A second battle started the next day, with doctors and nurses tending the injured and helpless for many years afterwards. The last 'soldier of the Somme' attended this year's Cenotaph ceremony, but sadly died a little time later. The patriotism of the British people, particularly of the Armed Forces, drove them forward in order to keep the United Kingdom free to follow their way of life - they simply gave their all. I wonder if they are now turning in their graves, because what they died for is being slowly overrun by the tide of supposed 'progress' and invasion by the EU?

*(Jim was responding to the publication of his 'battlefield tour' tale in OBAN 45. Ed.)*

## Pete Drake, 57A, e-mails from 'down under':

I have sent you some photos taken in the early sixties at 94 Locating Regt, Celle, I'm sure you'll be able to put names to some of the faces. When I returned home after posting them, 'lo and behold' - there was *OBAN45* in the mailbox, great reading by the way. I have made contact with both Brian Atkins and Mike Addison. Mike has moved house, but his address must be on file, as he was reading his *OBAN* when I phoned him! You can imagine his surprise when I introduced myself, he already knew my name, as he was reading the letters in the *OBAN*! He tells me he has provided a couple of articles for publication in the past, also that he speaks with Brian now and again. As for Brian,



I contacted him a few weeks ago, it seems we have a large number of mutual friends and I must have been in his company at some time or other. Not had a word from Tony (Domoney), don't know if he has been in Perth or not, but he is sure to send out an e-mail in the near future for sure. I may try and get together with Brian, Mike and Fred (Ordynski) closer to Reunion time, take some photos and send them with a report to you. Keep up the good work as Editor!

## George Vince, 57A, e-mailed:

Yep, I can! His name is Jack Batey and this was taken during, or on the way back from, the 1963 German Grand Prix at the Nurburgring. We all went in my blue Mini, stocked up with a two-man bivvy tent and a box of 'compo'. Hey, did we know how to enjoy ourselves - or what? Jack was a Radar Mech, but I don't think he had the honour of being an ex-boy. From what I can remember he was a direct entry. His main claim to fame was that he had a VW van, which had a bed in the back upon which, I think it is true to say, he 'laid' the bulk of the young ladies in the Celle area! There are a few tales involving Jack, which I will recount to you at some time!

*(George was responding to the photograph sent in by Pete Drake - see his accompanying letter. I couldn't identify the guy on the left, so I copied it to George, with the above reply. The three bods are now identified as (l-r) Jack, George and Pete. Ed.)*

## Brian Baxter, Technical Historian at the REME Museum, e-mails:

Dear Editor, many thanks for sending me the preview of Trevor O'Callaghan's item (see this *OBAN*). I know Trevor through many Museum contacts over the years and have read many accounts of his service, especially at Chertsey. His technical know-how is immaculate and there are few people around with so broad an experience on tanks and the intricacies of their design.

I am still looking for stuff on ARVs in particular, but one item shown to me was most interesting and I would like to find more details. When we landed at Suez during the altercation with Egypt in the 1950s, one of the *Centurion*

ARVs used was fitted with the machine gun turret from a *Saracen* or *Ferret* over one of the tank's hatches. I am not sure which unit operated the vehicle, nor whether it was a 'one off' or done to all the ARVs in the unit. It would be interesting to find out. I wonder too, if there have been other 'odd mods' around the world. We know of at least two experimental 'recovery' *Ferrets*.

Another of my long quests is to find more info on the building of the armoured *Bedford* RLs, first used in Malaya in the late 1950s. We know that the conversions were done in 41 Base Workshop in Singapore and it seems likely that the bodies were shipped out

from UK in flat packs. We do not know if they were designed in Malaya/Singapore or in UK. The Museum has only one photo of them being erected in the workshop and no other details. We do have an example down in Bordon, but it needs a lot of work doing to it.

If there are any *OBAN* readers who might be able to come up with info on my quests, or any other data about unusual vehicles or equipment, especially 'REME made', I would be pleased to hear from them.

*(Over to you OBAN readers! Ed.)*

## Trevor O'Callaghan, 42C, responds:

Ref 'Tugging at the readers' heart-strings', OBAN Issue 44

The following may help in what I remember from my association with the *Centurion* tank - I have also added information on some modifications. I am relying on my memory going back 60 years, but I also have a book, detailing the *Centurion* tanks to the last update, which was the Mk13. I cannot be certain of what happened to the early *Centurion* tanks. A decision was made (not certain of the date) that all front-line *Centurion* tanks and variants would have unified threads on the main structures (the original threads were British standards) and have all the modifications finally incorporated on the Mk13. This included up-armouring and several other structural changes. (Maybe someone will know if this was finally achieved.)

I first encountered the *Centurion* tank when I was attached to 4th RTR at Quassasin, Egypt 1948, where the tanks were on desert trials. Later, when I was serving with REME Inspectorate at Shandur, Egypt, the Mk3 with the gun stabiliser arrived for desert trials. In 1950, when I was attached to 6th RTR in Germany, the regiment was re-equipped with the *Centurion* Mk3. We trained the Dutch Army, which was also being re-equipped with *Centurion* tanks.

When I was discharged from the army in 1953, I went to work at Chobham which was then known as Fighting Vehicle Research and Development Establishment (FVRDE). One of my first jobs at FVRDE was the development of *Centurions* after the Mk3 and *Centurions* for export. It must be remembered that one of the country's biggest exports in that period was the *Centurion* tank and the value was quoted as 'vehicle exports'. Most Western countries either had the complete tank, gun stabiliser, fume extractor and 105mm gun, or adopted many production and design techniques used on the *Centurion* tank. It must be remembered that techniques in tank design, production, materials, welding etc that could not be incorporated in wartime, could now be incorporated. For example, it was known that the early *Centurions* suffered brittle fracture of welds at low temperatures. A tank was produced by mild-steel welding, but required heat treatment and a special welding technique.

With the improvement with armour plate and welding, this problem was overcome. (The problem of brittle fracture of welds was experienced by all armies in the last war).

The casting and heat treatment of 105mm guns was greatly improved and, with the thermal sleeve, this reduced gun barrel bending. Also, the fitting of the gun barrel fume extractor greatly improved the clearing of fumes and smoke from the turret. (Gun barrel bending and fume extraction of fumes was becoming a major problem in the war, but is very rarely referred to). Improvement in gun stabilisation and ammunition had improved gun accuracy and missile penetration. The rear sloping plate on later *Centurions* gave room for the rear fuel tank. (As shown in the photograph in OBAN 44). The production of the fuel tank was the first attempt to weld a fuel tank. This proved very difficult, not only the welding but in treating the fuel tank for rust proofing. A rubber bag fuel tank was developed but I believe this was only offered for export.

A *Meteor* Mk1Vc engine was developed (the standard engine was the MK1Vb). It was easily recognised by the generator being mounted on the fan bulkhead and driven by a shaft. The electrical load was increasing and the requirement was for a higher output generator for the main engine and auxiliary engine. The belt drive on the main engine was at its limit. There were numerous other modifications to the engine. I believe this engine was offered for export only. In an analysis of tank actions of the last war, disablement of tanks not by enemy action played a significant role in the outcome of the battle. Also a recovery and repair organisation was essential. This required a *Centurion* ARV and it would appear this requirement was lost on Army planners. To overcome the immediate problem, a *Centurion* 'Aldershot' ARV, as described in the article, was produced. I worked on several variants of *Centurion* at FVRDE.

The Army extended the temperature range of operation from -40 to 53 degrees centigrade. This resulted in numerous materials and fuel, oils and greases for extreme temperatures had to be evaluated.

This also included the electrical equipment and connectors. Coefficient of contraction at low temperatures on

materials produces difficult problems. It must be remembered that the *Meteor* engine was a development of the *Merlin* aircraft engine that had been developed using high lead content petrol. The military specified fuel was MT80 motor octane with high lead content. The commercial market was starting to use research octane, which is about fifteen octanes higher than motor octane. Research octane is not so demanding in testing compared to motor octane. Also, petrol with low lead or no lead content was being required for future engines. From work on the test bed with six cylinder engines, the problems of running on research octane and low lead was gradually being overcome.

During the first *Centurion* tank action in Korea, three tanks were disabled by tracks jamming. I remember the first tank exercise in a forest in Germany; twelve tanks had jammed tracks due to running over tree stumps. Considerable work was carried out to reduce all problems of disablement. One problem that was very difficult to solve was the disablement of the *Centurion* by fire on the engine deck. In this period, napalm bombs were being used and it was discovered that armoured vehicles (friend and foe) could be disabled by fire and then destroyed. A radio-controlled *Centurion* was used for investigations into fire disablement. Also, immunity trials improved the immunity of the top decks. Considerable knowledge was gained and future vehicles did benefit

The position of the *Centurion* oil-bath air-cleaners was a problem. It was realised that if napalm could be shattered into tiny fragments, the fire was less intense. Therefore the engine top decks were redesigned, not only to reduce the effect of fire, but also for immunity. The air-cleaners could not be re-positioned and it was not possible to take an air supply from the turret. This would have negated the gun fume extractor. Small changes were made to the engine air supply but it was not the final solution. From the experience of operating *Comet* tanks in the desert with oil-bath air-cleaners, this showed that the oil-bath air-cleaner had reached the limit of its performance. The cyclone air-cleaner was developed too late for the *Centurion*. From my own experience of operating *Comet* tanks in the desert, air-cleaner and fuel filter maintenance was critical in getting an acceptable life from the engine.



On trials for tank immunity, the bottom plate was found to be vulnerable and the unified threaded bolt heads sheared under shock loads. The clamp loads of the bolts and nuts and relaxation of bolt loads was a problem. There was considerable work on improving the bolt and nut. The bolts holding the final-drive to the hull had to be increased in size. The bolt and nut-locking devices, spring washers etc was improved to retain tension. The lessons learned were not lost when the change to metric sizes was made. One area has always puzzled me and I never got a satisfactory reply. If the bottom plate was in the shape of a shallow 'V' as on the Chieftain, to give a better resistance to explosive damage, why, on

the Challenger tank, did the bottom plate revert to a flat plate.

The Army asked if it was possible to have an auxiliary main engine starting system. It was decided to try a cartridge starter as used on some aircraft engines. The cartridge was fired and there was 'quite a bang' but nothing happened. The engine was obviously damaged. When the engine was stripped, the two quill-shafts driving the camshafts from the wheel case had twisted like a corkscrew. The running gear was improved to reduce vibration and improve the life of tracks, road wheels, bearings etc. This improvement had to be achieved without increasing the rolling resistance of the tank.

I have given some of the modifications to the *Centurion* going back to 1948 and have begun to remember many more problems and modifications. I learned a lot about tank design and operation with the *Centurion*, which I carried forward for the rest of my career. I have photographs of the *Centurion* from desert trials to my time with the 6th RTR, including a photograph of a Centurion Aldershot ARV. If anyone would like copies, please let me know. Also I would loan out my book on *Centurion* MK1 to MK13.

*(Our thanks go to Trevor for sharing his obvious knowledge and experience – to paraphrase 'Del Boy' from 'Only fools and horses' – 'You know it makes Cents'! Ed.)*

## The 0.303" Round

"0.303 British" is the commercial name of the 0.311" calibre rifle and machine-gun cartridge, first developed in Britain in the 1880s as a blackpowder round, later adapted to use cordite and then smokeless powder propellant. It was the standard British and Commonwealth military cartridge from 1889 until the 1950s, when it was replaced by the 7.62 x 51mm NATO round, and in the 1980s by the 5.56 x 45mm NATO in most roles. It is still popular, due to the large number of surplus military rifles chambered for the round, which have been released to the civilian market, some of which have subsequently been modified for sporting use.

The difference between the 0.303" (7.7 mm) name and the 0.311" (7.9 mm) bullet size is due to the cartridge being named after the size of the bore, measured between 'the lands', which is 0.303", following the older blackpowder practice, rather than being named for the overall size of the bore, which is 0.311" nominal. Although bores for many 0.303" surplus military rifles can often be found ranging from around 0.309" up to 0.318". For surplus military rifles with bores of 0.313" or larger, achieving accuracy with other than handloaded 0.303" rounds, using slightly oversize bullets, is often difficult.

### Mark I (Mk1) Solid Case

The Cartridge, SA Ball, Magazine Rifle, Mk1 Solid Case, 0.303" was first introduced with the *Lee-Metford* rifle in 1889. In its original form, the round was a 215-grain (13.9g) round-nosed cupro-nickel jacketed bullet, propelled by 71.5

grains (4.63g) of RFG2 Blackpowder, giving it a muzzle velocity of 1,830 ft/s (560m/s) and a chamber pressure of about 38,000 PSI (260 MPa). Blackpowder is not very dense, and the charge had to be pressed into a solid pellet in order to fit inside the round. The rimmed cartridge made it easy to extract spent rounds from the chamber, although it did make them somewhat harder to stack in a magazine, because the protruding rims would cause a jam if they were loaded incorrectly due to a double feed - that is, the rim of the cartridge being fed by the bolt snagging the subsequent cartridge rim.

### Mark 1, 2 Cordite

Cordite was used as a propellant from 1891 and the first adopted cordite cartridge, the Cartridge SA Ball, Magazine Rifle Cordite Mk 1, used the same bullet but delivered 1970 ft/s (600m/s) at a chamber pressure of about 35,000 PSI (240 MPa). Small changes to the bullet jacket resulted in the Mk II of both the black powder and cordite versions, the Mk2 and Mk2C respectively. Nitrocellulose was first used as a propellant in 1894, but the higher temperatures and chemical activity were enough to make it unsuitable for use in the *Lee-Metford*, and so the newer *Lee-Enfield* was introduced to address these problems. Although not officially adopted until 1916, nitrocellulose rounds were widely used during World War I, although cordite-loaded rounds were still produced for use in the tropics, where it was considered to be more stable.

### Marks 3, 4, 5, 6

The round-nosed bullet was found to be unsatisfactory when used in combat, particularly when compared to the dum-dum rounds issued in limited numbers in 1897 during the Chitral and Tirah expeditions of 1897/98, on the North West Frontier of India. This led to the introduction of the Cartridge SA Ball 0.303 inch Cordite Mk3, basically the original 215-grain (13.9g) bullet with the jacketing cut back to expose the lead in the nose. Similar hollow-point bullets were used in the Mk4 and 5 rounds, the primary production versions. These highly effective soft-nosed and hollow-point bullets were later prohibited by the St Petersburg Declaration and the Hague Convention; and in 1903 they were withdrawn from active service and were afterwards to be used for target practice only, until stocks ran out. To replace them, the Mk6 round was introduced in 1904, using a round nose bullet similar to the Mk2, but with a thinner jacket. It was generally agreed to be unsatisfactory.

### Mark 7

In 1905, *Mauser* changed bullet design completely with the introduction of their spitzer rounds, the first of the classic design now referred to universally as 'bullet shaped'. In addition to being pointed, the round was also much lighter in order to deliver a higher muzzle velocity. It was found that, as velocity increased, the bullets suddenly became much more deadly.

In 1910, the British took the opportunity to replace their Mk6 rounds with a more modern design. The Mk7

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(Mk VII) used a 174-grain (11.3g) pointed bullet with a flat-base, which gave a muzzle velocity of 2,440ft/s (740m/s). The Mk7 was different to earlier 0.303" bullet designs or spitzer projectiles in general. Although the Mk7 round looks like a conventional fully-metal jacketed bullet, this appearance is deceptive: its designers deliberately made the front third of the interior of the Mk7 bullet out of aluminium or wood pulp, instead of lead. This shifted the centre of gravity of the bullet towards the rear, making it 'tail heavy'. Although the bullet was stable in flight, due to the gyroscopic forces imposed on it by the rifling of the barrel, it behaved very differently upon hitting the target. As soon as the bullet hit the target and decelerated, its heavier lead base caused it to yaw violently and deform, thereby inflicting more severe gunshot wounds than a standard spitzer design. In spite of this, the bullet was 'legal' according to the terms of the Hague Convention.

The Mk7 (and later Mk8) rounds have versions utilizing nitrocellulose propellants. The nitrocellulose versions - first introduced in World War I - were designated with a 'Z' suffix, indicated after the type (e.g. Mk VII Z) and in headstamps. Perhaps the most famous single 0.303" British round ever fired was

on April 21, 1918, during the Great War, when Manfred von Richthofen, the famed Red Baron flying ace, was mortally wounded by a single Mk7 round. The shot was most likely fired from the ground, though there were three possible contenders: a *Vickers* machine gun on the ground, a pursuing fighter with a machine gun, and riflemen on the ground.

### Mark 8

In 1938 the Mk8 round was approved, to obtain greater range from the *Vickers* machine gun. The primary change was the addition of a boat-tail and slightly more propellant, giving a muzzle velocity of 2,550ft/s (780m/s). Chamber pressure was higher, at 40,000 – 42,000 lbf/in<sup>2</sup> (approximately 280 MPa). It was described as being for 'All suitably sighted 0.303" small arms and machine guns' but caused significant bore erosion in weapons previously using cordite, due to the channelling effect of the boat tail. As such, it was prohibited from general use with rifles and light machine guns.

### Tracer, Armour-piercing and Incendiary

Tracer and armour-piercing cartridges were introduced during 1915; explosive bullets of the *Pomeroy* design as Mk VII.Y in 1916. Several incendiaries were privately developed from 1914 to counter

the Zeppelin threat, but none were approved until the *Brock* design late in 1916 as BIK Mk VII K - Wing Cmdr Brock, RNVR, was a member of the Brock fireworks-making family. These rounds were extensively developed over the years and saw several Mark numbers. The last tracer round introduced into British service was the G Mk8 in 1945, the last armour-piercing round was the W Mk1Z in 1945, and the last incendiary round was the B Mk7 in 1942. Explosive bullets were not produced in the UK after 1933, due to the relatively small amount of explosive that could be contained in the bullet and limiting their effectiveness; their role being successfully fulfilled by the use of Mk6 and 7 incendiary bullets.

In 1935 the 0.303" O Mk1 Observing round was introduced for use in machine guns. The bullet to this round was designed to break up with a puff of smoke on impact. The later Mk6 and 7 incendiary rounds could also be used in this role if required. During World War I, British factories alone produced 7,000,000,000 rounds of 0.303" ammunition. Factories in other countries added greatly to this total.

*(The above article was donated by 'Craftyman' – to whom we are indebted for his research. Ed.)*

## Thanks Max!

On behalf of all members, sincere thanks to Max Warwick of 49B for sending such a varied selection of Reunion photographs, from which I have chosen those that appear in this Issue of OBAN. (Ed.)

## The Bathtub Test

During a visit to the mental asylum, a visitor asked the Director, "How do you determine whether or not a potential patient should be institutionalized?"

"Well it's quite straightforward really", answered the Director, "we fill up a bathtub to the brim with water, then offer the choice of a teaspoon, teacup or bucket, and ask him or her to empty the bathtub as quickly as possible".

"Ah, I understand", replied the visitor, "a normal person would use the bucket, because it's bigger than either the spoon or the teacup".

"Actually, no", said the Director, "a normal person would simply pull the plug – would you like a bed near the window?"

## Returned OBANs

**5 copies of OBAN 45 were returned as undeliverable; 3 have been sorted out but 2 are still outstanding.**

R WALKER Intake 57A  
Member No 2506  
Lived in Witney, Oxford

P BAIDEN, Intake 63C  
Member No 2182  
Lived in Southampton

Any assistance would be appreciated



## The Final Inspection

The soldier stood and faced his God, which must always come to pass.  
He hoped his shoes were shining just as brightly as his brass.

*“Step forward now, you soldier, how shall I deal with you?  
Have you always turned the other cheek? To My Church have you been true?”*

The soldier squared his shoulders and said, *“No, Lord, I guess I ain’t.  
Because those of us who carry guns can’t always be a Saint.*

*I’ve had to work most Sundays and at times my talk was tough;  
Sometimes I’ve been violent, because the world is awfully rough.*

*But, I never took a penny that wasn’t mine to keep;  
Though I worked a lot of overtime when the bills got just too steep.*

*And I never passed a cry for help, though at times I shook with fear;  
And sometimes, God, forgive me, I’ve wept unmanly tears.*

*I know I don’t deserve a place among the people here;  
They never wanted me around, except to calm their fears.*

*If you’ve a place for me here, Lord, it needn’t be so grand;  
I never expected or had too much - but if you don’t, I’ll understand”.*

There was a silence all around the throne, where the Saints had often trod,  
As the soldier waited quietly for the judgment of his God.

*“Step forward now, you soldier, you’ve borne your burdens well;  
Walk peacefully on Heaven’s streets, you’ve done your time in Hell”.*

(Presented as a tribute to all who have served in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces, author unknown, by Jim Gardner, 57A. Ed.)

## The Army Apprentice National Memorial

### *An appeal for funds*

Calling all ex-boys who were graduates of the Army Apprentices’ Schools, located at Arborfield, Carlisle, Chepstow and Harrogate.

A steering committee has been formed to raise funds, design and build a National Memorial, dedicated to all those boys who passed through the system in the last seventy years.

The Memorial is to be located at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alreswas, Staffordshire.

Contributions to the fund should be sent to: Major Mike Davis MBE,  
Rosebank, New Buildings, Sandford, Crediton, Devon EX 17 4 PP  
– cheques made payable to AOBA Account No.2.

***Published on behalf of Major (Ret’d) Gordon Bonner, 49B,  
Secretary to the Steering Committee.***

## Accommodation in Arborfield

*Dave & Barbara Woodward welcome you to*  
**The Swan Inn**



Eversley Road, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 9PQ  
 Telephone: 0118 976 0475 Facsimile: 0118 976 0908  
[www.go.to/theswan](http://www.go.to/theswan)

Dave and Barbara Woodward look forward to welcoming members of the AOBA to the Swan Inn

The Swan Inn, in Arborfield village, has rooms to let in the annex next-door to the pub.

The available accommodation is:

One double room and one twin room, both £55 per night (including breakfast)  
 One single room at £35 per night (also including breakfast)

## Deaths Notified Since Reunion 2008

| Name                   | Intake | Date of Death  | Remarks                                                               |
|------------------------|--------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alan "Taffy" Pritchard | 42C    | 3 May 2009     | Died from Cancer                                                      |
| George Owen            | 53B    | 21 May 2009    | No further details but believed to have been at Southport, Lancashire |
| Michael Green          | 57A    | 19 August 2009 | In Honeybourne, Worcestershire from a sudden heart attack             |
| Brian Mitchell         | 60A    | 2006?          | No confirmation. Can anyone help?                                     |
| Roger Cornhill         |        |                | Intake unknown. Non-active member. Has anyone any details, please?    |

### Michael Green, 57A

Michael passed away in the afternoon of Wednesday 19th August in Honeybourne, Worcestershire, where his family live. He died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. He leaves two daughters, Susie and Emma Green, ex-wife Gaynor Green and partner Catherine Srdic. Mike will be officially remembered as 'one of us' at our next AOBA Reunion at Arborfield in July 2010, when traditionally we lay crosses in the Memorial Garden for all those ex-Apprentice boys who have passed away during the past year. We last saw Mike enjoying himself at our 50th anniversary in July 2007. I'm sure all 57ers will agree with me when I say that he will be dearly missed and our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and partner.

*Roger 'Trixie' Traves, 57A*



## 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 plus £1.00 p&p.



## LAPEL BADGE

Finally we have an attractive enamelled badge at £3.00 plus £1.00 p&p from either the Museum Shop or the AOBA office.



