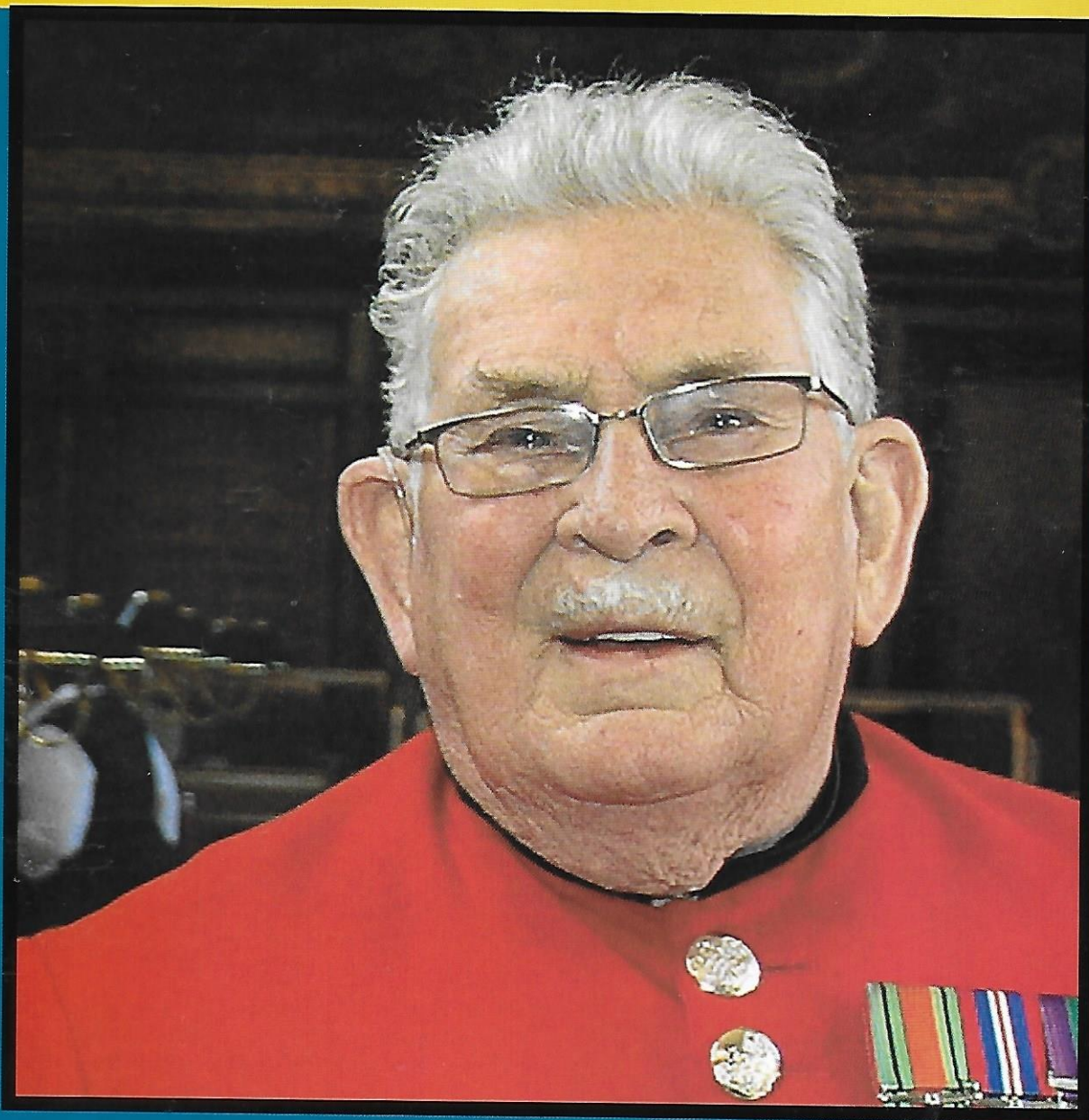
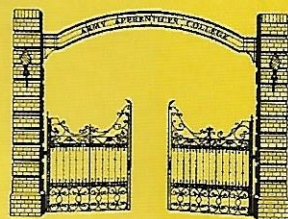


May 2010

Issue 48



O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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Notices

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

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Layout by P & D Support Services, Andover
Printed in Great Britain by Bulpitt Print Ltd.
East Portway, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3SJ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



At last, towards the end of May, the recent days have seen temperatures starting to lift, following what seems to have been a particularly long, cold winter! As has been the family custom for over 35 years now, my wife and I spent Easter week up in Barmouth (or Abermaw), a seaside town based at the southern extreme of Snowdonia. We started going up there in 1975 and the beauty of North Wales has drawn us back there ever since. Just behind the town, a road and track lead onto the 'Panorama Walk', with stunning views across the river estuary, surely one of the loveliest landscapes in the United Kingdom. I always find myself counting my blessings when I'm at Barmouth – perhaps you guys out there could write about your own favourite beauty spots or holiday haunts?

The 'miracles of modern science' have once again been in evidence recently, when Peter Gibson took control of my computer and uploaded (or downloaded, I'm never too sure!) all the relevant files and photographs that should appear before your very eyes as OBAN Issue 48. The very fact that you are reading this should prove how successful we have been. Hopefully this will reach you all in good time to enable you to book your places at the 2010 Annual Reunion. It is good to see that recruiting appears to be going well, especially amongst those ex-boys from the 1960 intakes who will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary this year – congratulations to you all.

Rather surprisingly, the 'postbag' has been very light for this issue. I would urge you all to consider writing or e-mailing a few lines 'to the Editor', I am sure there are subjects or topics that we can all share, without the effort of a major article. We do need that type of input in order to keep OBAN going in the future – it's in your hands! And no – you are not allowed to use 'volcanic ash' as an excuse. I look forward to hearing from you.

Pete Gripton, 56B

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Cover photographs

The front cover is of George Hougez, resplendent in his Chelsea Pensioner's uniform, courtesy of Craftsman magazine. Sadly, George passed away recently – see Keith Evans' tribute to him on Page 35.

Our rear cover this issue is an artist's impression of the Army Apprentice National Memorial, kindly supplied by Maurice Hope, 59B – see his letter in the letters section.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Chairman's Message



It is hard to believe that it was only at the last AGM in 2009 that the subject of an Army Apprentices National Memorial was brought up and given the overwhelming support of the gathering.

Since then, a team of dedicated old boys has expanded, to include other Old Boys' Associations, and moved rapidly to fruition. General Gerry Berragan, 48B, kindly agreed to be its President and the launch to raise funds occurred and was very well received. The monument design has received approval and will form an appropriate and attractive addition to the Arboretum. I hope you have been able to respond to the appeal and make a contribution, no matter how small.

You will also recall that, a couple of years earlier, a suggestion that the next-of-kin of each deceased Old Boy might appreciate a Commemorative Scroll, marking his participation in the grand old scheme of which we are all proud members. Although marking a sad occasion, these scrolls have been well accepted. Although we enjoy our annual gatherings to renew old friendships and exchange stories, it is these other types of activity that really embody the spirit of our Association.

Brian Hutchins, 61B

From the Honorary Secretary



I am pleased to say that we are just about there in putting the finishing touches to the arrangements for the 2010 reunion. As usual, a number of unexpected problems have had to be resolved, but that's what makes life exciting!

The cost of the weekend to members has remained the same for the third year running and hopefully we will be able to absorb any future rises for some time yet. We will have a large number of old boys and their wives staying in the *Madejski Hotel* at Reading this year, in particular the 60's intakes and, if this proves viable, it could well be the way of resolving our accommodation difficulties in the future. It takes about half an hour to move by coach from the hotel to Arborfield and, with a little bit of tweaking of the programme, I believe we can make it work. We have a new military team in place this year, headed up by WO1 (RSM) Thomas Hall and a new Corps ASM, WO1 (ASM) Stuart Jones. I have asked Stuart to make an appearance on Saturday to meet you and hopefully he will be able to make it.

Changing the subject, you should all be aware by now of the exciting new project to produce an Army Apprentice Memorial at the National Arboretum. Fundraising is going well and I have been advised by Gordon Bonner that the sum raised has passed the £12,000 mark. I have to say that the memorial website, www.armyapprenticememorial.org.uk is excellent and Max Warwick is to be congratulated for putting together such a professional package. Changing the subject yet again, the AOBA (for administrative purposes) is considered to be a branch of the REME Association. This entitles the membership to attend, if they so wish, the annual REME Association weekend. We have just had a very successful gathering in Hayling Island and I do recommend that you consider attending next year's reunion at Blackpool. It is scheduled to be held over the weekend of 6th to 9th May 2011 and based on the *Norbreck Castle Hotel*. That's all for now folks, don't forget that we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 60s intakes in July. Hope to see you all at the reunion.

God Bless, Bill Cleasby, 61C

Web Developer's Report



It gives me great pleasure to report that the Army Apprentice Memorial Fund received around £150 in donations from the 2010 AOBA Calendar downloads, so many, many thanks to everyone who donated. I am currently designing the official 2011 AOBA Calendar and

hope to have hard copies available for sale at our July reunion – so make sure you bring enough cash with you to buy your copy. As with this year's copy; all proceeds will go towards the Army Apprentice Memorial Fund.

We have just received the latest version of the web-designing software, and it looks like it gives an option to allow 'distance editing', something I know a number of guys have been asking me for. I'm about to start trials and, once I've got my head around it, people will be able to edit their own pages on the site – so you won't have to wait for me to do your updates!

God Bless, David (Tich) Schofield 65A

Money Matters



There is very little to report in regard to the Accounts this time, except that we have now received our 2009 Gift Aid contribution from H.M. Revenue & Customs. Isn't it great to see a bit of sun?!

All the best to you all, Mike Davis, 60B

Recruiting and Membership



The Association goes from strength to strength, its membership increasing every year as more ex-boys hear about our existence. However, one of the downsides of this job is to discover the whereabouts of an old mate you haven't seen for over fifty years, then the joy of talking about the Reunion - only to hear he has passed on before you get a chance to meet. Rest in peace, Dave Amy. I notice that the Reunion is being reported on the 'Forces Reunited' website, I hope more names will be added to that list. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the end of July.

Regards, Fred Mills, 51B

Membership Administration



We welcome the following 28 new or reactivated members who joined the Association between the publication of OBANs 46 and 47 – sorry the production team missed you out last time:

Humphrey,	39A,	Isle of Wight;	Mundell, JR,	53B,	Marlborough (react);
Birrell JW,	57B,	Victoria, Australia;	Flaherty D,	58A,	Pontypridd;
Donnison PA,	60A,	North Baddesley;	Lloyd D,	60A,	Llanelli;
Lines TW,	60A,	Colchester;	Ruddiforth B,	60A,	Aberdeenshire;
Smith CJ,	60A,	Newbury;	Ventress B,	60B,	Reading;
Barnes PA,	60C,	Chelmsford;	Bosanko PA,	60C,	Andover;
Collett DJ,	60C,	Yelverton (react);	Lawman GFH,	60C,	Sandy, Beds;
Leadley SB,	60C,	Bretagne, France;	Le Gall DA,	60C,	Almeira, Spain;
Gant RJ,	60C,	Hartlepool;	Leighton RS,	60C,	Royston;
Moore G,	60C,	Melton Mowbray;	Pitt L,	60C,	Taunton;
Smith RA,	64A,	Louth;	Sandford BJ,	64B,	Thames Ditton;
Coleman DA,	73C,	Farnborough;	Hedges SG,	77C,	Maidenhead;
Jones RJ,	77C,	Littlehampton;	Wright-Rivers GRG,	77C,	BFPO 15;
Yeoman M,	77C,	Melton Mowbray;	Scragg CA,	PS,	Westbury, Wilts.

We also welcome the following 28 new or reactivated members who have joined the Association since the publication of OBAN 47:

Gordon AT,	52A,	Drente, Holland;	Breeze D,	53B,	Clanfield, Oxon;
Vella CH,	59C,	California. USA;	Green RJ,	60A,	Melton Mowbray;
Hussey RW,	60A,	Fareham;	Raine J,	60A,	Worcester;
Scott PVP,	60A,	Margate;	Walker DW,	60B,	Redcar;
Bentley AJ,	60C,	Arnold, Notts;	Brown DF,	60C,	County Antrim;
Flynn JD,	60C,	Hartlepool;	Fraser JM,	60C,	Wareham;
Hammond J,	60C,	Kegworth;	McLean DC,	60C,	Maastricht, Holland;
Myles ARG,	60C,	Chippenham;	Nicholson J,	60C,	Kelso, Roxburgh;
Kelson GA,	61B,	Chippenham;	Blowman KA,	61C,	Croydon;
Clay JLB,	62C,	Bristol;	Powell CR,	62C,	Leiston, Suffolk;
Jackson JAT,	64A,	Bournemouth;	Butcher KR,	64C,	Sauchall, Cheshire;
Day WL,	68C,	Portland, Dorset;	Falconer AP,	72C,	Worcester;
Birley BT,	73A,	Ipswich;	Smithson TJ,	79C,	Swavesea, Cambs
McMaster Peggy,	WRVS	(Hon Member)			(react);

Lists provided by Keith Evans, 45A, Membership Administrator

Please support

The REME Association Shop

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



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

Orders can also be made by telephone on 0118 9763223
 or by email to association.shop@rememuseum.org.uk

All major credit cards accepted except American Express. Cheques also accepted.

***** New Items *****

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

The Blakang Mati Cowboys

by Joe Young, 48B

Regarding John Worland's request in *OBAN46*, I spent roughly 18 months between 1954 and 1955 as the Inst Mech Cpl with the REME LAD 1st Singapore Regt RA. I say 'roughly', as the recalling of dates was never my strong point! However, I do remember it as being one of my best postings. We of the LAD considered it as a bit of a 'Paradise Island'. We worked from 07.00 hrs until 14.30 hrs, there was a great beach and good food. When the NAAFI closed its bar, due to lack of trade (it was situated on the far side of the Parade Ground from the British ORs' quarters, integrated with the Malay ORs' accommodation), I sought and received permission to open a BORs' Club



on our side of the patch. This was granted on the express condition that all stock was bought from NAAFI. The Club was successful – so much so that NAAFI exercised their rights to take it over, about six months after I left.

It is my understanding that the 1st SRRA's role at that time was that of a Training Regt. MORs were trained in Field Artillery, Coastal Defence Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Artillery. During my time, the Regiment trained with 25-pdrs, twin 6-pdr Coastal Installation and 6" Naval Guns (and yes, by then they did have 360-degree traverse). And finally they had 3.7" A-A Guns. During my watch, the Regiment exercised the 6" Coastal Guns, firing to the south of Blakang Mati and we did go into Malaya to carry out a firing exercise, using 3.7" A-A to lay a tree-top 'creeping barrage'. We were never told if it was a success or not. I believe the Infantry side of this operation was carried out by the East Yorkshire

Regt. A two-week A-A live firing exercise was carried out in Malaya, at Kahang airstrip. Members of what was the Singapore equivalent to our TA joined the Regiment for their annual camp. Towards the end of the stay, one of the RA officers organized a wild boar hunt! The 0.303 rifle was our 'gaming piece'. Most of the BORs took part. Perhaps just as well that no game was seen, as I'm sure somebody would have been written off!

Another exercise carried out was that of an Air Defence of Singapore Dockyards. At that time, Radar (No.7B?) 'range bearing angle of sight' data, relating to hostile aircraft, was transferred to our *Vickers* No.1 Predictor. This, having

resolved the future position of the hostile, supplied (via a re-transmission unit) future aiming points to the Troop (4 x 3.7" guns) it serviced. We were not allowed to fire our guns, as we were

very close to local housing, so it was a 'dry' exercise. Despite this, I have lasting memories of that drill. The No.1 Predictor depends on its shafts rotating at a constant speed of 60 rpm, this being controlled by a gramophone motor, which in turn was controlled by an adjustable governor, set against a stop-watch. When our *Vickers* No.1 was reported 'out of action', with no replacement

available, I took a look at it and foolishly decided that a Dispatch Rider should return to B-Mati. He would bring back a 'time of flight indicator' (used with the 6" Naval Guns). I would fix all the shafts, take the top section off the Predictor and

change the governor with that from the Indicator. I would then rebuild and double-check 'Ts and As'. It took me just over 36 hours, non-stop, to complete!

Naval ex-pat civilian staff, employed in the Dockyard, had noticed the panic when the machine went out of action. They were just about to have their lunch – their homes were just the other side of the perimeter fence, hence the 'no firing' order. Some 36 hours later, as they returned from a 'good night out', they were quite chatty and, as my job was just about completed, they asked, "What next?" I said, in passing, that as no showers were available, a couple of lads were going to pour buckets of cold water over me to freshen up. The ex-pats then offered me the use of their home showers and our OC gave his blessing to me and three other lads. They had been 'volunteered' to keep me in tea and butties whilst the work went on. To this day, I don't know who those very nice people were, but I shall be eternally grateful for their hospitality – particularly as the shower came with beer, crisps and nuts!

Right then – back to Blakang Mati! I have selected four photographs that may be of interest to anyone who served at B-Mati. The first is of the officers and BORs, RA and REME, just before Christmas Dinner, 1954. The second is of members of the LAD, taken in front of a 3.7" A-A Gun, just prior going into Malaya. The third is of the BORs' barrack block. In the fourth, of the RASC ferry, you can just make out the hat worn by both British and Malay RA members of the Regiment. That particular hat is worn by a MOR Provost NCO. The hat is quite different to either the Australian or South





African issues, I came across both of them during my service. HQ REME wouldn't sanction REME attached personnel wearing the regimental headgear. Capt Atkinson did, however, choose to wear the 'Samcock', as can be seen in the pre-exercise picture 2 – by whose or what authority, I know not! So, whoever started the 'Blakang Mati Cowboys' label, I think our Corps members were exempt!

From that period, some names of LAD members come to mind. Capt Atkinson (already mentioned), followed by Capt Ingram Cotton; ASM (later commissioned) Arthur Parkins (or Parkinson?); S/Sgt (later commissioned) George Brooks; Sgt Pat Timmins, Sgt Henderson, Cpl 'Jumbo' Frost and L/Cpl

Bob Verrell. Another item of historical interest – I understand that, at that time, married MORs were not entitled to married quarters. It was alleged that one CO had built, I believe at his own expense, a number of small breeze-block buildings. These formed a small Army village (Kampong) to accommodate some of his married Gunners. His name was, I believe, Lt Col Jardine. He also had some steps named after him on the RASC Singapore Ferry landing steps – the 'Jardine Steps'.

Finally, just in passing, Harry Walmsley (mentioned by John Worland) was a very good friend of mine when he was a Craftsman doing his National Service at Singapore District Workshop in 1954. He enlisted into the Regular Army on my advice. After retiring

from the Army, I lived for a while in Loughborough, where Harry visited me just before he left UK to start a new life in Australia. I'm afraid that was my last contact. If anyone out there has news of Harry, I would be pleased to hear it.

I have rambled on a bit I know – but that was Pulau Blakang Mati (which, loosely translated means 'Island of the Dead') through my eyes. Now that the name has changed to Santosa and the whole island turned over to tourism and museum, I have been advised not to return, as it would shatter old memories! Sad, how sad.



I Did It My Way! (Part 1)

by Gerald 'Gerry' Hincks, 56B, 'B' Company

I am the eldest of eleven children, seven boys and four girls, the middle two girls being twins. Sadly, one sister, the youngest child, died when she was only 32. However, by the time I joined the AAS in 1956, there were only five boys and one girl at home. As one can imagine, space was tight, as we lived in a 3-bedroom council house 'out in the sticks'. Mum, desperate to have my bed, as my sister was growing up, encouraged me to see if I could join the Army. Having seen the recruiting advertisements for entry to Apprentices' Schools, Mum duly telephoned the Recruiting Office. Before I could even think about it, an officer was on our doorstep the following evening! To cut a long story short, I was duly called to take a few tests and sit an interview. We later received a letter, stating that I had been selected to be trained as a Vehicle Mechanic, and I subsequently took the 'Queen's shilling'. I still have my pink attestation papers.



My introduction to life at Arborfield was much the same as for every other boy who joined - suffice to say that it was a total shock! Nonetheless, I soon settled into the School routine. After leaving HQ Coy, I moved to 'B' Coy and stayed there until I was promoted to L/Cpl, then moved back to HQ Coy as Games Room NCO. This was a doddle of a job, as it came complete with bunk and no other duties. Utopia was not prolonged however and I

moved back to 'B' Coy after a year, on promotion to Cpl and eventually Sergeant. During my time in the School, I became heavily involved in the gymnastics team, going to shows all around the country. There was also a brief sojourn on a 'KAPE' tour (Keep the Army in the Public Eye.) My other experiences and escapades have been covered in various articles in *OBAN* or the book, *'The Arborfield Apprentice'*, although I may think of some more stories later on.

(Photograph shows Gerry, second from left, out on exercise at Hankley Common. The first guy's face is hidden, but the others, from left to right, as far as I recall, are Alan 'Aldo' Hadfield, Roger Brooker, Roger Nickson, Bennett (?) and Machin (?). Any offers? Ed.)

After passing out in September 1959, everyone enjoyed a spot of leave before

going to pastures new. My first move was to SEME Bordon, to attend an 'A' Vehicles conversion course, lasting until early December, when we learned of our new postings - mine to 5 Infantry Workshops in Dortmund. However, several of us going to BAOR went first as a draft to 15 Inf Wksp in Paderborn, with yours truly as Acting LCpl, draft NCO. Going to Germany was quite a journey in those days. First, everyone had to move in full-scale marching order (FSMO), with greatcoat dollied over the top of the large-pack, and carrying a kitbag with the unit stencilled on in white paint. I took the train from Leicester down to London, then on to Felixstowe, to embark on the *'Empire Wansbeck'* to the Hook of Holland. The trip across the Channel at night was an experience. The ship reeked of fuel oil and stale cooking, the bunks were about 18 inches apart, with very little space to dump the FSMO and kitbag. To top it all, I suffered very badly from travel sickness, so the journey passed in a blur on the open deck, trying not to throw up. Then it was the troop train to Paderborn, where we all stayed for a week awaiting onward movement to our permanent units. Dave Croucher and myself eventually turned up at 5 Inf Wksp during the first week of December '59. We were allocated a two-man room and stayed together for the whole time that I was there, until I was posted away before Dave.

There was nothing unusual about our life in the barracks. We worked in the 'A' vehicle shop, repairing a wide variety of equipments, which reinforced our trade training and taught us to work as part of a team. The equipment included huge *Conqueror* tanks, *Daimler* armoured cars, *Dingo* scout cars and a miscellany of ancient 'B' vehicles. It was in this workshop that the *International* half-track became the mainstay of Forward Repair Teams (FRTs). The idea of mounting a jib onto the front of the chassis, and using the forward winch cable as a hoist, was trialled for lifting major 'A' vehicles assemblies. It was deemed a success and, over the years, the principle was honed and revised until the vehicle became very sophisticated. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the workshop, including attendance for Class 2 VM training at the TTS (Technical Training School) in Duisburg, where I met up with Jim Scurr and Russell 'Jock' Dodds, both ex-boys from 56B. Exercises seemed to be carried out in a light-hearted way and were a welcome relief from life in barracks. I

have fond memories of the stops for buns and tea at the *YMCA 'Windmill'* restaurant on the autobahn, recently recalled by others in the OBAN. Dave and I soon bought ourselves a car - an *Opel Kadet*, a very early model, which looked a bit like a *Ford Popular*. But it was adequate for our needs, either to run into town or to go to Appelerbeck to a gasthaus, where they served a lovely *Wiener Schnitzel*!

Whilst at Dortmund, I passed my driving test for vehicles and motor cycles. This was necessary because I was to be a 'Don R' (dispatch rider), and because I had failed my driving test in Reading in an *Austin K9*, when I was deemed to have tried to run down a man with a wheelbarrow (as if!). Being young soldiers, the hunt was on for some 'top totty'. Dave and I considered how this might be achieved. We decided that the place to go was the huge ice skating rink in town, so we began to frequent it every Saturday to gain a modicum of expertise on skates. We had no aspirations to be like Robin Cousins, but we didn't want to look like rank amateurs either. We also wanted to cast our eyes over the local females. As matters transpired, we eventually became friendly with two young ladies, who both spoke very good English. Dave's girlfriend later married a doctor and went to Poland, while Dave eventually married 'my' girlfriend for 'family reasons' (don't ask, as I had left for another posting some 12 months before!). He eventually settled in Dortmund, where I saw him again many years later.

Another posting

My next posting was to Iserlohn, in January 1961, to join an Infantry Battalion (The Green Howards) as 'attached REME'. There were five of us headed by a Sergeant (Dave Jack), who had also previously come from 5 Inf Wksp on promotion; two National Servicemen, Mike Roffey and Mike Thomas; and another regular soldier, Pete Hulican, who incidentally much later joined the airborne REME, but has since passed away. Sgt Dave Jack was also a National Serviceman but, being an astute Scot, had signed on for the extra year and doubled his pay! I found him to be very switched on and he taught me a great deal about how to handle soldiers. I recall one incident where he had to remonstrate with one of the NS guys, with whom I sided. As I was an acting-LCpl at this time, he took me to one side and gave me the quietest rollicking I ever received, which went on for ten minutes. However he made his point and

left me in no doubt that NCOs always support other NCOs, a lesson I never forgot. The other lesson was that, as a NCO, one should never bawl out anyone in front of his peers.

My time with the unit was another learning curve, as we were one of the first units to receive the *Humber APC* (armoured personnel carrier). It wasn't long before the nickname '*Humber Pig*' became common parlance. They were ungainly vehicles and, being underpowered, the infantry drivers were always wrecking the clutches. This caused us a lot of work because, up until this time, they had only been used to *Austin Champs*, *Bedfords*, *Austins* and *Volkswagen Beetles*. Because of the new vehicle fleet, an ASM by the name of Whiting came to take charge. Our time in Iserlohn passed in a flurry of exercises, always something of an adventure. We always went on exercise in a *Bedford RL* with winch. It was fitted with wooden bunk beds, a locker, and various cupboards to stow away kit and rations. Being independent of the battalion cookhouse was a huge bonus, as we always supplemented our rations with food obtained from NAAFI. I recall one occasion when the officers were having dinner in the evening, at tables replete with *Persil*-white tablecloths and regimental silver. They don't do exercises like that any more!

During this time I also got married, after having to go in front of the OC to get permission to do so! Can you imagine that happening today? Rosemary and I were married in April 1962 and she was able to join me after I had found private accommodation, consisting of two rooms in a German household. The rooms were part of a first-floor flat being sub-let by the old couple who rented the whole floor. One room was living/cooking and the other a bedroom. The toilet was down a flight of stairs. Initially, Rosemary went to the ASM's house for her bath, while I used the showers in camp; later she went to our friends, who lived in one of those mobile homes that were put on camp to ease the desperate shortage of married quarters. I have always admired my wife for coping with these conditions at the beginning of our married life, as she had lived quite a sheltered life back home. So, now living in Germany, in a flat where the old couple didn't speak any English, coping with a new currency and adapting to Army life, was a very steep learning curve - and she was pregnant at the time! If my memory doesn't fail me, I recall that

room rent was 60DM per week. My weekly pay was 120DM, out of which came Mess fees, groceries etc. The exchange rate was then DM11.80 to the £1. Rose and I used to save up all our pennings, just to go to the AKC on a Saturday night. (What it was like to be poor, before Maggie gave us our first decent pay rise). I was very fit in those days, as I walked to and from camp four times a day, a total distance of about five miles. Later in 1962, we learned that the Btn was to be posted to Tripoli in Libya, North Africa, taking over from the Royal Scots and, in preparation for this, started to pack all the regimental equipment and belongings.

I took Rose home that Christmas, where she stayed at her parents' house, whilst I went up to Barnard Castle (BC), in Yorkshire, our transit camp, to prepare for the move. That winter of '62/63 was particularly hard, with lots of snow. Consequently, we had to occupy a camp on the Yorkshire side of BC, whilst the camp we were to occupy on the Durham side was cleared of snow, which had engulfed the whole camp, before we could move in. The barrack rooms were very small and cramped, in single-storey brick buildings that were as cold as sin. Each had a tiny fireplace that, even with a roaring fire, was barely adequate for toasting bread. The fire was also the only means of drying clothes and boots each night. Coke and coal were at a premium and anything combustible was squirreled away to each of the rooms - and heaven help anybody found in the coal-yard outside working hours, as it was under guard patrol. The fires were not supposed to be lit during the day, with fuel rationed to two buckets per room per day. One thing memorable about my sojourn in BC was having to go to Stirling in Scotland by train, to collect a temporary vehicle fleet of *Land-Rovers* and *Bedfords* - and then driving them back in a blinding snowstorm (intrepid or what?). Slightly better was a weekly trip to *The Rising Sun*, halfway to Bishop Auckland, to sample their best bitter. In the pub, I met a very kind lady who, when she heard about Rose being pregnant, invited me to bring her up for a visit one weekend. Sadly, this wasn't possible, but I'll never forget the kindness of a stranger.

Tripoli – here I come

I had been nominated for the advance party to Tripoli, which didn't please me one bit, as our baby was due in April (eventually born in a maternity hospital in

Rutland) and we expected to fly out in March. Regrettably, I wasn't allowed an appeal, so duly flew off to the international airport just outside Tripoli, for onward movement to Medenine Barracks. How warm it was after the rigours of Deerbolt Camp! Apart from carrying out military duties, everybody was keen to get a suntan, as we stood out like sore thumbs amongst the Royal Scots, who were as brown as berries after their 3-year tour. As can be imagined, there were a few silly soldiers going sick with sunburn, so it became a prevalent offence to become incapacitated through sunbathing. It was never wise to let anyone know that one was sore, otherwise it invited a slap on the back - which gave rise to indescribable agony!

The main party flew out to join us shortly afterwards and the business of allocating married quarters, i.e. private hirings, took place. Our first was a flat in a block of five, surrounded by a small walled garden, and very comfortable. The street, *Via de Gaspari*, was very quiet and always patrolled by a member of 'SIDEF' - military personnel who assisted the civil police. It was while living here that we had our first emergency with the baby, who was only four-and-a-half months old. He began projectile vomiting and was running a very high temperature. We duly took him to the BMH, where he was operated on the same day for a condition known as 'intersusception', a condition where the bowel begins to turn inside out. It apparently only ever occurs in firstborn males and can be fatal. Thankfully he recovered from this with no after-effects. We discovered, many years later, that the surgeon (Col Allen) who saved his life had died; but his wife became the MO at Tidworth, where we met again whilst we were with another unit.

The routine in Tripoli was very mundane, with occasional exercises in the desert. During one such exercise, we learned of the assassination of President JF Kennedy on the BBC world service at breakfast time. Another was a recce for a Battalion exercise, when we had a serious incident - one of our vehicles got lost in the desert. It occurred because some drivers didn't follow the protocol of desert driving i.e. stay in convoy, so as not to create confusing tracks for anyone following after. The recce party was about thirty-strong, including the 2I/C and his wife, in a mix of vehicles that included *Land-Rovers*, *Bedfords* and an ambulance version of the *Humber Pig*. We also had with us two RAF navigators, who were to

plot our journey across the desert, because it was so featureless. Our journey took us from Tripoli, along the coast to Misrata, where we turned inland to Sabha, a city in the middle of the Fezzan, a vast expanse of desert with no habitation for hundreds of kilometres in any direction. After leaving Sabha, we were travelling by magnetic and sun compasses, with the RAF navigators plotting our course by dead reckoning and noon sun-shots, using a sextant.

The journey was uneventful until the *Bedford* carrying all the fuel broke down with an ignition fault. The 2I/C continued ahead with the remainder of the recce party, leaving yours truly with the *Recovery Bedford* and the MTO in his *Land-Rover*. We sorted out the problem on the fuel vehicle, then sent it on to follow the recce party until they met them at the mid-day halt. A minor problem was then resolved on the MTO's *Rover* and he and I, with our two vehicles, continued on to join the remainder of the recce party. When we reached the location of the mid-day halt, at the lip of a huge depression, we discovered that everyone had departed to continue the journey to camp. And then, on reaching camp, it was discovered that Pte Smith and co-driver, together with the fuel truck, had not returned. The MTO decided to allow time for him to appear, before making arrangements to determine his whereabouts. There was some concern, because all of their personal kit, food and water was on the *Recy Bedford* - and we wondered how they would be faring. Thus after two days, the MTO and I set off in two *Rovers*, to backtrack our journey to see where Smith might be. In addition, it was arranged that the RAF would put up a search aircraft on the following day.

We backtracked to the location of the mid-day halt. It became apparent that the proliferation of tracks, where vehicles had milled around instead of remaining behind each other, had misled Smith to go in the opposite direction to the recce party - and so into the desert. The MTO decided that we should split up and search in different directions. He duly gave me an oil company map, showing their various routes in and out of the desert. They had a very simple method of marking these on a plain sheet. On the ground, routes were marked with a ten-foot pole, inserted into a 40-gallon oil drum filled with sand. Each pole carried a number on a shaped symbol, i.e. square, triangle, disc etc. The symbols denoted the oil company and the number denoted the distance along any particular track. These were annotated on

the map and were very easy to follow. Along with my fellow mechanics, I travelled east until we encountered one of these tracks and then headed for the coast and back to Tripoli. We obviously didn't find Smith but, on reaching camp, we learned that the MTO had found him at the same time as the search aircraft. He had broken down near another oil company track, which was ironic, seeing that he was carrying all the fuel. He told the MTO that passing drivers had given them water and some food and they were none the worse for wear. The exercise for which we were carrying out the recce never did take place! Nonetheless, it was a very good experience to learn how silly things can soon get one lost in featureless terrain.

The Saladin incident

During another exercise, I had the opportunity to fly in a *Beaver* aircraft to somewhere in the desert and then get a lift back on a *Saladin* armoured car, which had been carrying out radio relay duties. There were too many people hitching a lift, so three of us were riding on the engine decks. Having settled down for what should have been a short journey, I was half-asleep from the warmth of the engine decks. It was also fast becoming dark, as dusk doesn't last long in the desert. Suddenly the *Saladin* lurched off the road and began to bounce up and

down. Becoming instantly alert, I found myself high in the air, hanging on to an open engine cover. Discretion being the better part of valour, I immediately looked in the direction of the headlights to see what the ground was like. Then I leapt from the vehicle whilst it was doing about fifteen to twenty miles an hour, as I thought that it was in danger of rolling over and I didn't want to be underneath when it did! After completing what felt like half a dozen 'para rolls', I stood up shaken and bruised to discover the vehicle stopped and still on its wheels. When we examined the vehicle, it had sheared a ball-joint on the intermediate steering link on the left-hand side. This had caused the centre wheel to lock up against the hull and thereby the vehicle to leave the road. If memory serves me correctly, we removed the centre wheel and continued slowly back to camp.

On another occasion we were on exercise with a company from Benghazi, up the coast. During the move the water truck, an *Austin K9* with 200-gallon tank, had been playing up with a suspect distributor. On arrival at the campsite the problem was sorted out. The next day the driver was to go to a water point at a place called Timimi. To be certain that the repairs were okay, I accompanied the driver, together with my trusted toolbox.

The tank still contained some water, which only caused a problem when the driver took a couple of bends too fast. The water began to surge in the tank and caused him to lose control. We went off the road, first left and then right, until the truck nosedived off the road, end-over-end. My toolbox went straight through the open cupola and the cab was flattened to the tank. As the vehicle rolled sideways back onto its wheels, I dived out of the passenger door. The driver was suffering from concussion, so I assisted him from the cab to the side of the road. Although the truck was on a slope, it wasn't going anywhere, as it had struck an 18-inch pipeline carrying water to Tobruk and dislodged a joint, so that water was pouring from both ends. I later learned that the pipe wasn't reconnected for three weeks and cannot imagine what hardship this must have caused. We took all of our kit from the truck and waited beside the road. We eventually took a lift with some SIDEF soldiers in a *Land-Rover* to a TB hospital about 15 miles away. Our stay and subsequent CASEVAC in an aeroplane - with pretty nurses too - was worth it, as we got back early and didn't have to drive.

(Gerry's tale will be continued in a future OBAN. Ed.)

Interesting Oddball WW II Facts

Uncovered by Col DG Swinford, USMC ret'd and history buff

1. The first German serviceman to die in WW2 was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937); the first American serviceman to die was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940); the highest ranking American to die was Lt Gen Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps so much for Allies!
2. The youngest US serviceman was 12-year old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age, but his benefits were later restored by act of Congress.
3. At the time of Pearl Harbour, the top US Navy command was called 'CINCUS' (pronounced 'sink us'); the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry division was the swastika and Hitler's private train was named 'Amerika'. All three were soon changed for PR purposes.
4. More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions, the chance of being killed was 7 in 10.
5. Generally speaking there was no such thing as an 'average' fighter pilot - he was either an ace or a target. For instance Japanese ace, Hiro Yoshi Nishizawa, shot down over 80 planes - then died while a passenger on a cargo plane.
6. It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to assist aiming. This was a mistake, as tracers had different ballistics, so (at long range) if tracers were hitting the target, then 80% of rounds were missing. Worse yet, tracers instantly told the enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of a belt to indicate 'out of ammo' - definitely not something to tell the enemy! Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.
7. When the Allied armies reached the Rhine, the first thing men did was to piss in it. This was pretty universal, from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).
8. German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City, but it wasn't worth the effort.

9. German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

10. Among the first 'Germans' captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been first forced to fight for the Japanese Army, until captured and forced to fight for the Russian Army, then captured and forced to fight for the German Army, then finally captured by the US Army.

And finally

11. Following a massive naval bombardment, 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. Twenty-one troops were killed in the firefight - it would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island!

(Yeah, I know they are all American, but pretty good none the less! Ed.)

Recollections Of A Gun Fitter (Part 3)

by Barry Baxter, 57A

Back in Blighty

After disembarkation leave, I reported to my new unit, SEME at Bordon. A REME unit, oh dear! Well, if you are or have been in the Corps, then you'll know what we think about putting REME in one heap! If not, well you'll have to ask someone else. I had the pleasant experience of finding that, as I'd taken no leave whilst abroad, I'd got a lot more to come. More leave? Well I can handle that! I did too. Afterwards, of course, I had to start earning my living on the permanent staff of 'E' Wing in the Gun Shop. One shock to the system though, guess who the RSM was? None other than my old friend 'Snudge' from 1 Cmd Wksp! Others must remember him, turning up on a morning parade and taking your cap-badge out to see if you'd cleaned the back of it? Or making you take your web belt apart, to see if you'd cleaned the inside of the brasses? "*You're only half a soldier, lad.*" I made use of my time at Bordon though, getting my 1st Class trade. I came top in fitting too - was my filing getting better or were standards dropping?

I also found time to get married, to the girl who had sent me a chocolate Easter egg to Aden, and eventually got a married quarter and my first stripe. I found that the stripe didn't make me rocket-proof though. I thought myself well off too. Why, with marriage allowance, I got over £10 a week! That brings me to an abiding memory of 'E' Wing - a pay parade. I was pay witness that day, not a job we normally liked, but this time it worked to my advantage, as pay witnesses got paid first. The civilian pay clerk must have had a bad time with maths that day because, while the pile of money got smaller, the queue of bodies to be paid didn't. The paying officer's face was quite something

as it dawned on him that the money just wasn't going to stretch. I could afford to think it funny, as I'd already been paid. (Now that's not the attitude!)

At the end of 1964, I did my MTC I at the REME Depot in Arborfield. I remember bits of it. Like Wednesday was 'doubling day'. Anywhere you went, except on the square, you doubled! Some of the blokes tried to be clever, querying the wording of questions in the simple written tests they gave us. Didn't pay off though. The instructors didn't need a good command of English to win, just a good command of drill. I met Keith Brown (from 'A' Coy at boys' school) there, who was 'passing through'. I met my brother too - also passing through. It was the first time we'd been in the same country since I joined the Army, never mind the same place. Back at Bordon, we had a course of Africans. I can't remember which country they were from, but I remember them because, while they were all draped over a *Centurion* tank, one of them traversed the turret and broke his mate's leg! Or maybe he wasn't his mate, which might explain it? Seems a bit extreme though. We had a new labourer in the gun shop, a coloured lad, and one of the sergeants was trying to explain a job to him, in what can only be described as 'pidgin English'. The answer he got was, "*Shore, an' I understand you fine, sorr*", in a thick Irish accent! Collapse of one sergeant!

In 1965 I became a father, got my second stripe, and got a posting - in that order. The posting was to Paderborn in Germany, 24 Missile Regt RA, at Barker Barracks. An 'atomic' regiment, sounded really modern. I can almost hear you laughing. This was the British Army, where the equipment lasted almost as long as the traditions. The Regt had four

Batteries, 51 and 76 with *Honest John* missile launchers, and 2nd and 34 with atomic cannons. I was sent to 2nd Bty, where I found the atomic cannons were 8" howitzers, 1943 vintage. They were towed by *Mack* 20-ton tractors of similar age. The work was boring, as the guns only fire one round in each position, so they weren't exactly overworked. The VMs had rather more to do. They say it's like that all the time. Amongst their charges were some *Saracen* command post vehicles. One in particular seemed to hate long journeys and, since we had to drive from Paderborn to Soltau to do our firing, this caused some problems. The Rolling Stones were big in the charts at the time, so the *Saracen* had its name on the front - "*19th Nervous Breakdown*". (For the youngsters, again, ask your Granddad!)

1966 was World Cup year and, for part of it, the regiment was 'on scheme'. We were in a convoy, all with radios of course. England was about to play France and, as the match started, the convoy pulled in. Must be a hold-up somewhere. Well, you know what schemes can be like - all hurry up and wait. We hurried up and waited for the best part of two hours! In fact, it was just as the match ended that the holdup was sorted out and we got moving. Good timing though. The next time England played, we were in a hide. The fitter section had a welding trailer, whose generator had sufficient power, and someone had produced a TV set. Sorted, as they say. Then the generator packed up. It was fixed by the time the match started, just as well for the fitter section.

Another fun game for the VMs was the collection of ¾-ton *L/Rovers*. For some reason, the regiment had about forty of them. I may be wrong, but it was a very large number. Then came an

immediate 'mod' to do with their steering. In those days, an 'immediate' mod meant just that. Everything else stopped and everybody worked flat out until it was done. Halfway in and nothing seeming to make sense. The ASM had another look at the mod instruction and discovered that it didn't apply to any of our vehicles. "*Oh ASM, READ THE QUESTION!*" It just goes to show that even ASMs aren't infallible. It's well known that when RSMs walk, holes are expected to fill themselves in front of them. Obviously, if an ASM tried that, he'd be well advised to carry a ladder.

Off to Germany

In 1968 I was posted again. This time to Detmold, although the family move, now with two children, was only a few miles, meaning a long trip twice daily in those green Bedford tin cans. The regiment? 3RHA again. I know gun fitters only get posted to regiments with big guns, but I thought there was more choice than that! Different equipment this time though, now it's FV433 *Abbots*, 105mm SPs. A familiar face too in a lad called 'Chick' Checkley, we had been together with 'J' Bty in Aden. I got on all right with the guns, but we had fun with a CIM, until someone found the phases were wired wrong and the hydraulics were sucking instead of blowing. We got lots of 'Crash Outs' - two hours to get out of camp. The RSM said, "*I did my first crash out in 1947. We didn't get it right then - and we haven't got it right yet*". They tried it once, really taking all the kit they were meant to. They called it 'Exercise Small-pack', but 'Ex Kitbag' would have been a better name. It took six hours to get out of camp, even though only one Battery was fully bombed up. I hoped that the Russians would have given us plenty of warning.

We had the usual lunacies on schemes. On one dark foggy night, on a live firing scheme, we were following the BSM's echelon in a half-track (that dates me), when he was stopped by an unknown half Colonel. "*Are you the target?*" asked the apparition. "*No sir*", replies the BSM, expecting the worst. And he got it! "*You bloody well will be if you keep going*". We didn't and we weren't. Talking of half-tracks, we had lots fun with them. With that folding jib on the front, there's nothing like 'camming' one of them on a cold wet night, with the old hessian camnet to make you wonder about your career choice - and 'de-camming' was even more

fun. The language was quite something, I even learnt some new words myself! We once tried to lift an *Abbot* with a Half-track. Not intentionally, but the gunner who'd 'volunteered' to remove the pack mounting bolts had only removed the cover plates. I remember spending one freezing night stuck with one, just a VM and me. The prop-shaft to the winch, which passed through a hole in the radiator, had snapped. It certainly enlarged the hole in the radiator! As it was mid-winter and we were short of water, we broke the rules and melted some snow for a brew. We both agreed it was the best tea we'd tasted. We made another one later but this one tasted vile. I can only assume the local wildlife had got at the snow in the meantime.

At some stage the regiments changed over. 3 RHA left and 1 RHA took over. The LAD stayed put and was 'signed for' along with the rest of the equipment. At last we lost the half-tracks and got 432s and 434s. I got to command the 432. No courses or certificates then, just get on with it. Now, of course, we had radios, no more Indian tracking when we got left behind. We soon learned to use them, self help almost. They proved to be a new source of amusement too. No doubt many of you have heard the 'teddy bear' one? When a plaintive voice comes on and says, "*Are there any friendly teddy bears out there?*" Naturally, an irate control jumps in, demanding that the unknown station uses its call-sign, only to receive the reply, "*You're not a friendly teddy bear*". Ours, which really did happen, went like this. "*Hello Noddy, this is Big Ears, radio check, over.*" It was definitely another station that replied, "*Noddy OK, over*". And of course got the reply, "*Big Ears OK, out*". Control dived straight in, demanding a call-sign, he really should have known better, and got the reply, "*Big Ears, Wilco, out*". Our call-sign was '28' and I remember coming to and hearing 88A calling us, answering, and being told, "*88A, you should have changed frequency two hours ago*". Oh dear!

One incident on the gun park that amused us, although it could have been nasty, was a gunner falling while track bashing on an *Abbot*, hurting his back. They called the MI room, which wasn't far away and next minute a big *Fordson* ambulance roared up, offloaded a stretcher, and roared off again, leaving the injured gunner's mates to carry him to the MI room. Fortunately he wasn't too badly hurt. On one scheme, I remember hearing

a group of officers talking about their family military history, when an old Bombardier sitting nearby said, "*We have a military history in my family*". "*Really, Bombardier?*" they replied. "*Oh yes*" says he. "*My Dad was a Corporal in the Home Guard*". There's no answer to that and, to their credit, they didn't try, they just moved away.

At one point the regiment was given three old 25-pdrs, but then they were all old even then. They were to be used on a firing camp, as it was good general training and they had loads of ammunition. First though, they had to provide the cannons for a performance of the '1812 Overture'. It was on a Sunday night and, that morning, I got dragged out because none of them worked. It really pleased my wife, you'd think I'd volunteered for it! Well, we've all been there. When I got to the guns, I found they'd stripped all the breech mechanisms, put them in a big heap, cleaned them and just made up sets anyhow. "*We thought they were interchangeable*", they said. "*They were in 1943*", I replied, "*but now it's 1969 and they're not!*" It took me ages to sort it all out, but they all went 'bang' when asked.

I'm sure it's not just me, but I've noticed that VMs don't seem keen on things that go 'bang'. While we were firing the 25-pdrs, we had a lot of misfires. Only to be expected with the age of the ammunition - and I got lumbered with changing the dud primers. I'd collected quite a lot, when one of the more adventurous VMs picked one up. Tongue-in-cheek, I said, "*Be careful, they've been stuck, they might go off*". He looked concerned and put it back in the box. Just at that moment, all three guns fired. I don't know what the record is for a 'standing jump', but he must have come close! He got lots of sympathy, as you can imagine. On another occasion, when we still had the half-tracks, the BSM asked me to have a look at a HE shell they were having trouble screwing the fuse into. I was sitting in the half-track with it between my knees, while I filed the threads, when one of the VMs asked, "*Is that what I think it is?*" When I answered in the affirmative, they watched the rest of the proceedings from a 100 yards distance!

And now for something completely different?

During this period, I had a go at the Tiffy Board, but didn't get through. I

don't think I shouted loud enough. Then, in December 1971, I was posted again, to the Royal College of Military Science at Shrivenham - an odd place as military units go. I got my 3rd stripe just after arriving and settled into my new job as a fitter turner in the Structures Laboratory. This was where the students did their practical civil engineering. I worked in a small workshop, making anything and everything the students wanted for their projects. Very bright lads, the students, but I did notice a shortage sometimes of what one might term 'common sense'. Nothing new there then.

I visited the gun shop, which was an amazing place. It was full of all sorts of strange things, from very old to the latest, and lots of guns that never got into service. It was run by an ASM who told everybody, *"This isn't a bloody museum - and I'm not the bloody curator"* - but it was and he was! It really was a strange place though. The Sgts' Mess had 25 military members and 80 honorary members. There were about 25 junior ranks, commanded by half Colonel. I wondered who he'd upset. It was in officers that it excelled though. The Commandant was a Major General and department heads were full Colonels. At any one time, there were about 600 officers on course. At least they only wore uniform one day a term, and on that day the other ranks hid! I was told that one enterprising other rank had made a false arm at the salute, which he carried on a stick. I never saw it though. At my first Sgts' Mess dinner, as I was the youngest, in terms of being a senior rank that is, I was to be 'Mr Vice'. I was given strict instructions. Just say, *"The Queen"*, don't say, *"God bless her"*, or some drunken sod will say, *"And all who sail in her"* - and we'll all be on extras. I also got to be Father Christmas at the Sgts' Mess children's party. Maybe I'd offended someone? My two sons were there. They didn't recognise me, but the younger one spotted a flaw. *"That can't be Father Christmas, he's got Army boots on, like my Dad"*. You can fool some of the people all of the time, etc.

September 1973 and the Army caught up with me. *"Would you like to have another go at your Tiffy Board?"* I should have known better. I said 'yes', but explained that I'd not been doing anything military since the last go. *"Oh, we'll sort out something"*, said they. Oh yes? They posted me to a familiar place - the Army Apprentices' School at Arborfield! Only

by now it had delusions of grandeur and called itself a 'College'. I had to go for an interview with the Colonel, to see if they wanted me. One question was, *"We have a church parade once a month, I take it you have no objections to that?"* Colonels asking sergeants if they object? I replied, *"We used to have them once a week when I was here last!"* He hadn't done his homework, and caught his breath. *"Oh, you were here? Well, you'll find that we treat the boys a little differently these days"*. He wasn't wrong! I was to be on the regimental staff, so he said he'd arrange for me to brush up on my military skills. 'Brushing up' involved me going directly from my nice comfortable job at the College of Science, straight to a six-week recruit instructors' course at the School of Infantry at Warminster! Ye Gods! I suppose you could say I was lucky, because the next course did their drill component at Pirbright. Anyway, I survived, I even passed, and off I went to Arborfield. I've still got a letter somewhere, from the AAC admin to the RMCS, which says, among other things, *"You can tell Sgt Baxter he can look forward to two weeks Christmas leave"*. Well would you have believed it? Nor did I. But, would you believe, within a week I was first reserve for Christmas duties and within two I was on! Yes, you would believe that, and you'd be right. It was 24 hours on, 24 off. I got the 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th. My family was really over the moon about that!

Physically, the camp looked much the same, although the buildings had had a paint job. Walls were now 'sand' and roofs 'silver', but inside - lino on the floors? How can you use a bumper on that? I felt old. Every room seemed to have a colour TV too. It surely couldn't compare with our mad rush after tea, to get a seat in the TV room in time for 'Popeye' - could it? The training was different too. Now it was called 'Junior Coy' instead of 'HQ'. Only two weeks drill, instead of our six. Military training was centralised and done in Bailleul Barracks, in the Military Training Wing, which was where I worked. It also lasted only four weeks instead of our six, and included NBC and First Aid, which we didn't do. It also included all the rifle drill the boys did. But we're not lowering standards. We all say things like that though. I can just hear Wellington's old soldiers saying, *"It's never been the same since they abolished flogging!"* My main job was admin, but I also had to be stand-by instructor, so for any lesson I took, I

never had time to prepare. In fact my job was anything that couldn't be nailed to anyone else. The other two staff were a Para QMSI and a Captain from the 'Angle Irons'. He was in the mortar platoon in his regiment, which the QMSI told me is where they end up if they're no good for anything else. I don't think the QMSI was too impressed with him!

The College worked a 14-week term and you could see the instructors 'winding up' as it went on. (I know now what our AAS instructors must have gone through.) It's the ranges that make you jumpy. Once I was taking a 30-metre range with SMGs and, as I called 'Ready' and the boys cocked their weapons, one of the instructors called *"STOP"*. One of the boys still had the piece of four-by-two in the breech that you use for dry training! That's why we had an instructor with each boy. We used to do our long-range shooting at Ashdown ranges near Aldershot. The College didn't have its own transport any more, those Bedford QLs had been retired at last. We had to get transport from a Garrison pool. They used to complain if we kept their drivers out too late, because they had to pay overtime. Not that the drivers complained, the later the better as far as they were concerned. It caused problems on the night shoots though in the summer. Apart from turfing out courting couples, it didn't really get dark enough, well for shooting anyway. Then there was always the fear of one of the boys wandering off. I can remember my night shoot on my course at Warminster. It was November and we were marched onto the firing point and turned to face the targets. I could just make out a vague white patch. Then we were told, *"There's a white marker between each target"*. Oh great. When we fired, I just aimed between the markers and hoped for the best. I got all my rounds on target, but only the Lord knows how - I never even saw it!

On one occasion, the First Aid instructor had made up one of the others with a bullet wound in his hand. The boys were in the lecture room and the plan was to fire a blank outside, then the 'wounded man' would rush in and they'd see what reaction they'd get. They had told the QMSI and the Captain in the office, but their collective memories must have failed because, when it all started, they came hurtling, white faced, down the corridor - no doubt already anticipating the court of inquiry. The boys' reaction? One did. He jumped up and stuck his beret in the

'casualty's' hand. The instructor was pleased that he'd done the right thing, but annoyed because he'd flattened the carefully made-up wound!

One of several downsides to being an instructor was fitting in the annual PE tests. It had to be done before the boys came back from leave and the only available day was always the first day back after Christmas leave. Not the best time for a PE test. Being on duty during the block leaves did have its interesting side. The last week, you would get lots of calls from parents, explaining why 'little Jimmy' wouldn't be able to get back in time. The first week was the one though.

You'd get a call from an irate parent, asking why we'd kept their son back when he was supposed to be on leave. You'd then cause immediate panic by saying, "*He is on leave, he left here two days ago*". Then you got to play Sherlock Holmes, trying to find out where the little sod had gone! Usually, they'd gone home with one of their mates. I don't think we ever lost one for more than a day or so, but the College must have had quite a phone bill.

Towards the end of 1975, I re-applied for a Tiffy Board, only to be told, "*You're too old now*". Oh, thanks very much. I subsequently applied for a posting and they asked, "*Where would you like to go?*" With tongue firmly in cheek, I replied, "*Hong Kong*" and, would you believe it, I got Germany, again! Yes, I know, you would believe that.

Germany calling

And so, in January 1976, I was off to Germany, to 1 QDG in Hohn, a *Chieftain* regiment - and another rapid learning curve. I hadn't been with them long before I formed the opinion that there is no such thing as a British Army - it's really a loose confederation of private armies! Some of them still bemoan the fact that a tank hasn't got four legs and a long tail. Once, on the firing point, I tried to explain to a Squadron Leader why one of his tanks couldn't fire. I got the reply, "*Oh, I don't understand all that technical stuff*". I thought, "*He's only got fifteen tanks on his flick!*" Really though, I suppose he didn't need to understand all that technical stuff, that's what we were there for - but it didn't inspire much confidence.

One of the first things I noticed was little patches of repaired brickwork on the back walls of the tank hanger, just in line

with the gun barrels. Maybe the brakes aren't so good? I was sent to 'B' Sqn and, in line with what seems to be standard practice, I command the ARV, a *Centurion* one then. The fact that I'd never been with tanks before didn't seem to worry anyone at all. It gave me pause for thought though. Anyone who's commanded a *Cent* ARV will know what it does to your hips. Nothing to stand on properly, so you're always leaning against the cupola ring. It's a long way down to the floor too. One young QDG officer wanted to look in one once and, before anyone could stop him, he jumped in. Luckily, he didn't hurt himself, well not badly. The schemes were interesting, especially communications with an A10 radio. It's not bad if the vehicle you want to call is parked alongside you but, if not, you'd be better off with two compo tins and a bit of string. It was fun though if you had a skilled Recovery Mech, to creep up on the *Chieftains* at night. Only the old *Cent* men ever heard us coming. I found too that, if the Russians had ever come, we would have had an unfair advantage if they tried to listen in to find out where we were going. Locations tended to be given in code, like "*Move to that quarry we were in two schemes ago where Bill spilt all the tea*".

On one big scheme, I got scalded, trying to unplug the saucepan type of boiling vessel we had on the *Cent* ARV. Due to my carelessness (some would say stupidity), it was my neck that got it. Fortunately, the other two crewmen were quick with a jerry-can of water, but I still had to be taken to the aid station to be checked over. They flew me by helicopter, the only time I ever flew in one. The medics had been told it was a burns case and were all excited at the thought of a real casualty. They were somewhat disappointed to get just my scald. A giant of a medical sergeant, as I arrived, asked, "*Is that all?*" My printable reply was, "*It's quite sufficient for me, thank you*". They thought I was going to be all right, but blisters came up, so they sent me back to Hohn. At the MRS, a very sympathetic doctor asked, "*Are you married?*" When I said 'yes', he replied, "*Well bugger off home then, your wife can look after you*". My son answered the door with a "*Hello Dad*". My wife, who had a friend visiting, said, "*He's mucking about*". But when my son asked, "*What are all those bandages, Dad?*" she panicked. The blisters went down far too soon and I was sent back. All I really missed was the rest weekend.

When I got back, I realised that I'd left my SMG in the Armoury, so I had to spend a lot of time taking evasive action.

One fun incident involved the Sqn Sqd Major, in a *Ferret*, leading us in the *Cent* ARV through the woods. I can't remember if it was the same scheme. I know it's not easy to turn a *Cent* over, but some of the places he took us sure frightened me! He got us reversed into the trees and went further up the track. Then a German Forest Ranger turned up, most irate berating us for bringing a tank into his wood. He didn't speak perfect English and unfortunately said, "*It is impossible that you bring this panzer here*". We pointed to the tank, said, "*No it's not we've just done it*". Total sense of humour failure, so we pointed him up the track to the SSM. We heard no more but then the SSM spoke German, so maybe he sorted it out. Either that - or the *Ferret* was easier to hide.

One of the things about a 'private army' is that they expect you to dress like them. We had to wear collar badges and stable belts with the RHA but, as a senior rank with the QDG, you had to wear their shirt and jumper as well as their tie. The tie appeared to be an Army, one boiled to make it very pale - cheapskates! SNCOs also wore their rank in brass on a leather wristband. The jumper was light brown and one oddity was that officers wore their pips sewn straight on, which made them (the pips!) hard to see. SNCOs on the other hand wore an epaulette with an old English QDG in white, which from more than six feet away looked like a crown. Away from the regiment, we kept getting saluted! Most times I'd just return it and keep my head down. As sergeants, we had to do duty NCO which, during the evening, meant No.1 dress. I'd got mine at the RMCS and, by chance, it had belonged to someone who'd been with the cavalry. What I'm saying is, there was no room for explanation. One evening, I was visiting one of the LAD rooms when I sat down and my No.1 dress exploded, firing buttons in all directions. When they stopped laughing, someone lent me a needle and thread and I put myself back together and thereafter sat down very carefully.

On duty one Sunday, a trooper complained that someone had smashed up his kit. They'd made a good job of it too, even his bed. Eventually we found those responsible, both drunk, and carted them off to the guardroom. I told the duty officer, a young 2nd lieutenant, and his

response was "I suppose I'd better call the RMP". Now this is a private army and he's going to call the RMP! The conversation along the lines, "Do you like doing duty officer sir?" "No, why do you ask?" "Well Sir, if you call the RMP, I think the Adjutant will explain it to you

sir". He then cottoned on. "Oh, I see. What do you suggest?" I said that I'd have a word with their SSM in the morning. I wonder if he realised the favour I'd done him? It was self-preservation really because, if I'd let him call the RMP, the Adjutant would have

blamed me anyway.

(That polishes off another chapter in 'The life of Barry', which will no doubt reach its thrilling conclusion in due course. Ed.)

Wills and Legacies

Following discussion at the most recent Committee Meeting, the delicate subject of how to use Wills and Legacies to the benefit of the Association came about. It was decided that the following guidelines be published for everyone's benefit, should Members be willing (pardon the pun!) to donate in this manner.

Why it is important for you to make a Will

If you do not make a Will

If you do not make a Will, the law will decide what happens to your estate (everything you own when you die). It will be easier for those you leave behind if you make a Will, because you will have executors who will make sure your wishes are carried out. Telling your family by word of mouth what you wish to happen after your death is not good enough for the law. It is advisable to use a solicitor. There will be a fee, but a straight forward Will would probably cost less than £200.

If you have already made a Will

If you have already made a Will, you can alter your existing Will by means of a Codicil or you can make a new Will – again, do this through your solicitor, who will ensure that it is legally correct in every way.

Legacies and lifetime gifts

The tax advantages to Charities

Legacies and lifetime gifts to Charities are exempt from Inheritance Tax. Inheritance Tax becomes payable at a flat rate of 40%, when the total value of the estate exceeds the threshold set by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his annual budget. From April 2009 the threshold is £325,000

The following are exempt from Inheritance Tax:-

Bequests to the widow / widower of the deceased

Bequests to registered charities

Non-Exempt:-

All other beneficiaries who will pay Tax at 40% on bequests beyond the tax free limit of £325,000 on any one estate

Form of Bequest

Lump sum / Pecuniary Bequest

"I give and bequeath to the Arborfield Old Boys Association c/o REME Museum of Technology, Isaac Newton Road, Arborfield, Berkshire RG2 9NJ, the sum of..... Pounds for the general purposes thereof, and I further direct that the receipt of the Honorary Secretary or other proper officer of the Arborfield Old Boys Association for the time being shall be a full and sufficient discharge of the said legacy".

(This precise wording may be used by your Solicitor to help complete your bequest).

Residual Bequest

That is, all or part of the residue of your estate once all pecuniary bequests have been met from the estate.

"Subject to the aforesaid I give devise and bequeath the whole (or ashare) of the residue of my estate whatsoever and wheresoever both real and personal to the Arborfield Old Boys Association c/o REME Museum of Technology, Isaac Newton Road, Arborfield, Berkshire RG2 9NJ absolutely for the general purposes of that charity and I declare that the receipt of the Honorary Secretary or other proper officer of the Arborfield Old Boys Association for the time being shall be a full and sufficient discharge therefore.

(This precise wording may be used by your Solicitor to help complete your bequest).

You may leave property of all kinds, including land, money or securities, to the Arborfield Old Boys Association (Charity No 1086198). The gift should be written in the Will or Codicil and your Solicitor can advise about this.

We recommend that you consult your Solicitor when you wish to make or alter a Will. Your accountant or bank manager could also be helpful if you need advice about Capital gains Tax thresholds etc. It should be noted that the information given above is believed correct at the time of publication and it is recommended that professional advice is always taken in the making of a Will.

The Rockin' Years – From 'The Archives'

by Pete 'Scouse' Gripton, 56B

Trying to put down on paper all the memories of three years service at the Army Apprentices' School at Arborfield is almost impossible – well, in any organised sequence anyway! There are so many memories – most of them favourable – one has only to sit down for a few moments to find them flooding back. The following paragraphs may appear muddled, but I would expect most ex-Apprentices to have similar memories, especially after so many years away from the place. My first day of service was particularly memorable! I reported to the Army Recruiting Office in central Liverpool, fully prepared for the long trip south, but to find that my travel documents were for the next day. Back on the bus to Aintree, a knock on the back door, and my Mum bursting into tears – she thought I'd been rejected! After that, leave periods at home always began with the same inevitable question – "*When are you going back?*"

My arrival at the School gates was rather an auspicious one. Mum had insisted on my wearing a long mackintosh which, on a hot August afternoon, coupled with two rather large suitcases, caused quite a bit of sweating! This wasn't diminished by the sight of a denim-wearing tough-looking hard case, who I later found out was on 'jankers', who greeted me with the words, "*Where the **** are youse from lad?*" Fortunately, my birthplace coincided with his, and we became instant 'muckers' – whatever happened to John 'Dinger' Bell?

Those first hectic few weeks of kit issues, square-bashing, getting to know the ropes etc, passed by in a blur. But they were made to feel good when our Platoon Sergeant, 'Sandy' Sanderson' having despaired of ever getting us to look like squaddies, had tears in his eyes when we won the 'Champion' Platoon competition at the end of the first six weeks. End of term was always a great event, starting off with the issue of your 'credits', which seemed a fortune in those days. Then it was off to Wokingham, with a quick call in the '*Molly Millar*' when time allowed, and the train to Waterloo. Another drink there if possible, then across to Euston on the *Northern Line*, all 'scousers' together, into the bar to wait for the Lime Street train – and the journey north was usually spent in the buffet coach.

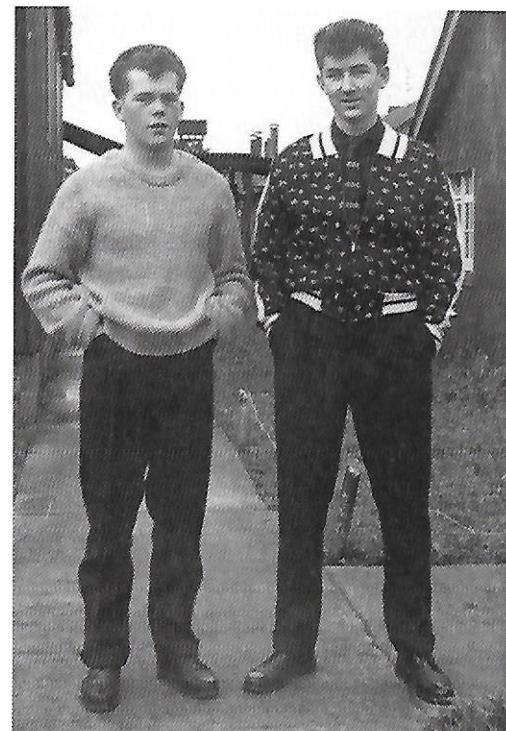
A quick thought on food – how come the cook (Sgt Hunt) always looked so well fed, when we were all so skinny? How we all dreaded that dash to the Cookhouse, to be first in the queue, only to find all the senior boys 'jipping' the queue, forcing us 'jeeps' further and further back. Remember those big white china mugs? The ones that used to be hit sharply with a knife handle, leaving you standing there holding on tightly to just a big white china handle? The porridge, the scrambled egg and the inevitable 'pom' – it all looked and tasted the same, grey and watery! No wonder we all waited for that morning NAAFI-break. Dashing down Education Road, skidding along on those studded boots, crashing through the NAAFI doors, then wolfing down a meat or cheese pattie and a packet of crisps, all crunched together in the same bread roll.

During 1957, if I remember correctly, there was a countrywide 'Asian flu' epidemic – and the Boys' School did not escape. The Camp Hall was commandeered as an emergency hospital and, at one time, half the School's inhabitants were bedded down. But no such luck as nurses from the QARANCs or likewise – in our case, the 'Angels of Mercy' were the other half of the School! Other events about the same time, either 1957 or 1958, did not raise morale, nor add to the School's glorious history, but they were notable nonetheless! Without going into too many gory details, I well remember the following escapades. The raid on the local '*Rainbow Fireworks*' factory for one, and the cache of fags that became available soon after another raid on '*California*', which was a local campsite of some sort or another. Then the ex-boy, and now RAF deserter Paddy Claydon, who not only hid out at the School for some six weeks, but took a collection of sixpence off everyone each payday. And he once marched the Fire Picket down to the Guardroom and drilled the squad under the eyes of Sgt Fred Silver, the well-remembered Provost Sergeant of those days!

What did we do for entertainment in those far-off days before TV? Well, Saturday night was pictures night, with the Camp Hall standing in as a cinema. I remember a few

occasions being asked to help Dave 'Tubs' Harris in the projector room. He changed the reels etc, while it was my job to maintain the distance between the two carbon rods, so that a continuous white arc burned away. In the auditorium, a favourite trick was for a rope to be surreptitiously tied to a folding chair. Then, at a whispered command, several pairs of hands would yank the chair away from under the unfortunate occupant! I swear he would hang there in mid-air, like the cartoon '*Road Runner*', before hitting the deck!

Then there were the dances, also held in the Camp Hall, and organised for many years by Mr Fred Hall and his wife – bless them. I think they must have taken place on pay-day evenings and there were some really lovely girls turned up. One of the best-known – and admired – was Gloria, in her leopard-skin print tight dress and girlfriend of 'Chick' Elliott – wonder if they ended up as a permanent twosome? Of course the above dances were mainly of the 'ballroom' style. But, at weekends, it was off to Reading for some real stuff – giving the night away at either the *Oxford*, the *Majestic* (or magic stick!), the *Olympia* or *Court School of Dancing*. But my favourite was *The Foresters*, up in London Street. That really was the 'in place'. Who could forget the one dim overhead lamp, the ciggy smoke, the



rock'n'roll of Elvis, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran and the rest – and being taught to jive properly by little Connie Fish, what a mover!

Mind you, there was quite a lot of entertainment prior to the dancing! The bus into Reading usually dropped us off in The Butts just before 6 p.m. on Saturday, just in time to get into the 'Allied Arms' for 'Six-five Special', enjoyed in glorious black and white over a pie and a pint! Then it was round to the 'Peacock' on Broad Street, en route to the 'Star', where we got down to the serious drinking and a few rounds of darts – remember the 'egg banjos' and the pickled eggs? After that, those who could still 'cut it' went dancing. Half-time at *The Foresters* meant having the back of your hand stamped, as you dashed to either the 'Barley Mow' or the 'Red Cow' for a refresher! The last bus back to Arborfield was often missed – and it was a long walk back in winter!

Well, I could go on like this for ever I suppose. Those three years at Arborfield were over far too soon. Yes, there were hard times as well, but in the main I reckon that a large percentage of ex-boys of that time look back on those days with great affection. My only regret is that so many of them are now out of touch.

(When I wrote this back in Spring 1994 for OBAN5, little did I know that I would later get back in touch with such a large number of ex-boys. This, both from my own 'Div' 56B – and so many more through the pages of OBAN, once I'd 'volunteered' to be its Editor! The photograph opposite shows myself (right), with Pete Drake, in the togs of the day. Ed.)

On C Dicey, Esq, in Claybrook Church, Leicestershire

O Thou, or friend or stranger, who shalt tread
These solemn mansions of the silent dead!
Think, when this record to enquiring eyes,
No more shall tell the spot where Dicey lies;

When this frail marble, faithless to its trust,
Mould'ring itself, resigns its moulder'd dust;
When time shall fail, and natures' self decay;
And earth and sun and skies dissolve away;

Thy soul, this consummation shall survive,
Defy the wreck and but begin to live
This truth, long slighted, let these ashes teach,
Tho' cold, instruct you and, tho' silent, preach;

O pause! Reflect, repent, resolve, amend!
Life has no length, eternity no end!

(This epitaph was written by Hannah More (1745-1833). Hannah led an extraordinary life, first as a teacher, then a playwright and, finally, as a specialist in epitaph writing. Reading this tombstone inscription certainly made me feel a 'mere mortal'! Ed.)

And The Roof Shook

by Chas Pepper, 43B

I recently re-visited West Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, where, during the War, I spent my leaves from the Duke of York's and Arborfield. Passing the front entrance to the old *Royalty Cinema*, all that remained were the steps leading up to the entrance and a projectionist's window, looking out onto the street. The *Royalty* was the sole place of entertainment in those wartime days – not as luxurious as any *Odeon*, but it had its commissionaire, smartly dressed in a uniform, with a long coat and cap, with the mane of the cinema embroidered upon it. The usherettes had a similar dress and part of their duties was to occasionally pass along the aisles, using a Flit gun to spray germicide into the air!

The performances were not continuous, so a good film had a queue for each showing, at the head of which would be a collection of young boys, begging to be taken in by an adult. The commissionaire used to shoo them away, resulting in cries of, "You should be in the Army, mate!" The poor man would then produce a Service Book, shouting that he had already 'done his bit'. The queue could be the target of charity collectors. The most curious of these was a 'mile of pennies', laid along the kerb of the pavement. The old

penny was 1 3/16" diameter, one mile of which would have amounted to £222 and 8 shillings. It must have taken a strong man to have carted away all 53,355 coins!

There was one show that had added excitement. The air-raid siren had blown and the 3.7" Ack-Ack Battery at Whippingham, a few miles away, opened up. This was followed by firing from ships in the harbour, a mere 200 yards away; British and Polish destroyers and French chasseurs, making quite a noise, which gradually subsided as the enemy bombers moved on. A relieved murmur ran through the audience – and then came a deafening explosion. The camera shuddered to a halt and detritus fell from the roof. The manager appeared in front of the silver screen and offered those who had to leave a pass for the following presentation. Very few took up the offer and the camera whirled back into action, accompanied by loud cheers and the dusting down of hats and coats. The 'what and where' of this detonation, and of any damage or casualties, was never reported – just 'another of those things' in those days.

Gather round

I was recently reading a book about

Australian soldiers in WWI, which told of their habit of gathering around their water-trailer and yarning with each other. It struck me how often I have experienced similar situations when in the field, working with a small party in inclement weather and with little shelter. The ¼-ton trailer was the assembly point, with group members collecting around its sides, facing each other, while joking and yarning. This focusing on the ¼-ton trailer may be of interest to those interested in military behaviour in the field, but it seems to be a common practice. I have even seen children gather round an upright Sky TV connection box in the street, all chattering away furiously with each other.

It is possible the King Arthur, with his famous Round Table, initiated these social gatherings – but he made one big mistake. Each knight had his own designated place at the table, which must have led to upsets if Sir Prancealot sat at the wrong place! A pity that the diplomatic ¼-ton trailer had yet to be invented, it may have saved a lot of antagonism!

(Thanks Chas, for that pair of anecdotes from your seemingly endless treasure-trove of memories! Ed.)

The Army Apprentice National Memorial Steering Committee (MSC) Fundraising and Publicity Campaign 2010

by Gordon Bonner, 49B

Some 60 years ago, when, as a 'snotty'-nosed brat, pounding the hallowed square on my weekly hobby the 'Rodeo', I distinctly remember CSM Ron Patey (he of the Durham Light Infantry) telling me NEVER volunteer for anything except certain death. As usual I took no notice and, for my sins, I not only volunteered as secretary of the MSC, but also found myself responsible for publicity and fundraising.

A number of initiatives have been launched, the first of which was the issue of a collective e-mail to the Editors of *The Wire*, *The Sapper*, *The Sustainer*, *The Craftsman* and *Legion*. The e-mail carried attachments of the AANM Progress Update and the image of the artist's impression of the Memorial, with a request that the information would be inserted into their publications. Next, Max Warwick designed a donation form and, through the good offices of our Association secretary, arranged for them to be distributed with the OBAN. Further, David Chapman (Chepstow), David Cooper (Carlisle) and Johnny McGahan (Harrogate) will arrange distribution to members of their Associations.

A letter was sent to the Regimental Colonel of the Royal Artillery, drawing attention to the fact that up to WW2, a number of ex-boys from AAS Chepstow had served with the Royal Regiment as 'Tiffys RA'. Accompanying the letter

was a request that our progress report and artist's impression be published in the *Gunner Magazine* and the *RA Association News*. Not only did the RA agree to this, I am delighted to be able to tell you that by return of post they sent a cheque for £500 towards the construction costs. Such a positive response is noted and much appreciated. I have also written to the Chairmen of the REME Association and the Royal Signals Association, requesting that they place a request for a donation to our project before the members of their Associations. I am awaiting a reply and will keep you informed. Letters to the Chairmen of the Royal Engineer Association and the RAOC Association are in hand and will be posted off shortly.

I should think by now, Association members will appreciate the purchase of the commemorative tablets is the main thrust for fundraising, in our aim to build the memorial. Bearing this in mind I contacted a number of friends currently resident in the Commonwealth of Australia, made them an offer they could not refuse, and raked in donations to the tune of £300. I would encourage all members who support our project to adopt a similar approach and round up as many of their mates as they can.

At the February meeting of the MSC, I produced a document in the guise of a 'Press Release'. The committee approved the draft, which was then shown to Mr Paul Kennedy (liaison and

contact between the MSC and the NMA). His advice was to contact Mr Andrew Baud, MD of Tapla PR and the official PR firm for the MNA. After a number of telephone calls and exchange of e-mails I had a meeting with Mr Baud at the NMA, Alrewas, on March 16th 2010. As a result of that meeting, I now have a much clearer idea of how feeding information of use to National TV and Press organisations operates. Timing, now understood, is of the essence, and release of publicity information is of no value unless you have something to offer which in our case will be the run-up to dedication day of the completed memorial, planned for the late summer of 2011. In so far as any national publicity benefits both the NMA and our project Mr Baud has confirmed that he will willingly provide support to our project, so that is something to which we can look forward to. I now use the press release as a progress report on our project when I write to members of the public.

By networking the MSC Chairman David Chapman arranged for an artist's impression of the memorial to be commissioned. A digital image of the work has now been published on the website, and I have requested that the original be given to me for framing and use with a publicity stand in public exhibitions. Finally, local fundraising: I have received approval from the Association Committee and will be running a raffle at the July reunion. I already have a number of prizes to hand, and I will 'invite' members of our committees (Association and MSC) to produce prizes as well. Tickets will go on sale Friday evening and into Saturday morning. The draw will be made at Saturday's BBQ. Do raid your Grandchildren's piggy banks so as to make sure you have plenty of change available!

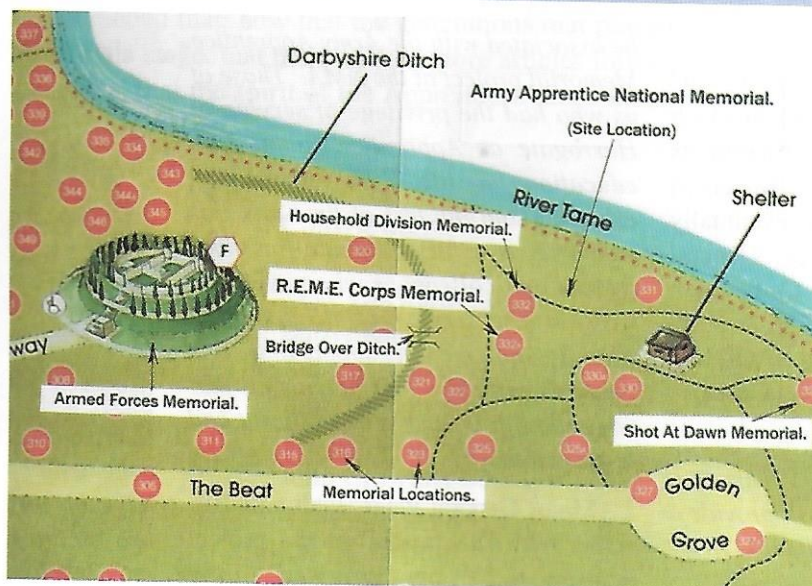
In closing, the MSC believe the construction of the memorial has merit, will provide a fitting tribute to the 70,000 Army apprentices who have served their country world-wide in every conflict since 1923. The project deserves you full support. I look forward to seeing you all in July.



Army Apprentice National Memorial: Progress Report (March 2010)

With the Christmas festivities now a distant memory and a whole new year about to be faced, the Project Steering Committee were firmly focussed no further ahead than January 26th. In the previous few months we had discussed several ideas and designs and finally agreed on our preferred design for the National Memorial. Our proposed design application was submitted to the Trustees of The National Memorial Arboretum and the first hurdle it had to overcome was the Landscape Working Group (LWG), held on January 7th, which had amongst its number a member of the NMA Trustees and the site curator, Mr Paul Kennedy. This group's function was to assess the materials to be used, the memorial size and shape, and its suitability to fit into the overall site model. It would also enable any outstanding issues to be addressed before, if all went well, it progressed forward to the full Trustees Scrutiny Committee, at its first meeting of the year on January 26th. We were informed on January 11th by Mr Kennedy that the LWG had approved the design without reservations and that it had been recommended for acceptance. A couple of weeks later, on January 27th, we received the result that we all wanted from the committees deliberations - that the design had been given its full approval and backing, without the need for any amendments being required.

By early February, a site for our memorial had been allocated to us, situated alongside the pathway that leads from the REME Corps memorial beside the River Tame, down to the "Shot at Dawn" memorial. The exact plot has now been determined and is in a grassy glade, approximately 50 metres in from the riverbank, shielded on two sides by wooded areas in quite a pleasant spot. We are due to be flanked eventually on



one side by a memorial to the Parachute Regiment and on the other side by a memorial to The Rifles, so they will be in honoured company. An official project Constitution, based upon The Charity Commission's recommended format, was submitted to HM Revenue and Customs and approved on March 1st. So the AANM Appeal Fund account is now accepted as a registered charity, enabling us to claim Gift Aid status and to receive 28p extra in the pound rebate on all donations made after December 9th 2009. Every penny will help towards reaching our final total of £30,000 plus.

At our steering committee meeting held on February 17th, we were fortunate enough to be joined by Mr Keith Rackham, who is the managing director of our chosen stonemasons firm of *HL Perfitt Ltd*, of Vines Road, Diss, in Norfolk, where he made an on-site presentation to allow the committee to obtain a clear visual impression of how the memorial will look on completion. Shortly into the New Year, our project website came on line, following some really excellent work from our webmaster, Max Warwick, 49B; the site is now a must for all ex-boys – www.armyapprenticememorial.org.uk.

Of special interest on the site is our appeals cash progress tower, on the donations tab, which is to be updated at regular intervals from information supplied from our project treasurer, Major Mike Davis (ret'd), this is a visual

indicator to all of our fund raising efforts, which need to gain momentum over the coming year if our target for the memorial erection and dedication are to take place, as planned, during the summer of 2011. The fund raising and publicity campaign is now well under way and made a steady start, with a number of initiatives launched by our project secretary Major Gordon Bonner (ret'd) of 48B, who has already reported donations from exiled ex-Arborfield apprentices in Australia chipping in with £300 - and also some quite large donations from the Old Boys' Associations to sponsor the named



benches on the memorial.

I am delighted to report that, on March 1st, one of our own Arborfield ex-boys, Major General Gerry Berragan of 48B, had been approached and graciously accepted our request to become the overall Patron of the project. He is very enthusiastic about helping to get the project moving forward. You can read his own memories of his Arborfield experiences on the AOBA Website (well worth a read). He started his long career

in September of 48 and passed out as a trained Vehicle Mechanic in July of 1951, to enter REME as a Craftsman. In 1954 he attended and passed an Officer Selection Board and was duly posted as a REME 2/Lt. He applied for and received a regular commission in 1956 and was transferred into the RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps), in which he rose through the ranks to become its Director General (DGOS). He served for a period of 40 years, eventually retiring in 1988. Major General Berragan was awarded the Companion of the Bath (CB) in 1988 and was the Colonel Commandant of the RAOC and also the RLC (Royal Logistics Corps).

On the project website, our patron has the following to say - *"This is a splendid initiative, which will provide a fitting tribute to the 70,000 Army Apprentices who have served this country in every conflict since 1923 and, in many cases, gave their lives. I urge all of you who, like me, benefitted from the education, training and comradeship we experienced during our time as Arborfield Apprentices, to support the building of this memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum"*.

Across the sponsoring Old Boys' Associations, several more senior old boys have given their own messages of support for the project. From Harrogate we have Major General John Stokoe CB, CBE, 63A, who writes, *"I am proud to be associated with the Army Apprentice Memorial project at the NMA. Those of us who had the privilege of serving at Harrogate as Apprentices gained an education for life. The friendships created stand the test of time and this memorial is a fitting tribute for those friends and colleagues who gave their lives in the service of this country. Please join me in supporting this valuable initiative and honouring that comradeship in such a magnificent and appropriate way"*.

Major General Peter Baldwin CBE, Arborfield 42A, states on the project website - *"I am delighted to be associated with the planned Army Apprentice National Memorial. Whatever indignities we suffered at the time, I am sure we all look back with gratitude to the officers and NCOs who shaped our character in readiness for what lay ahead. We also value deeply the friendships we made with our*



colleagues and it is fitting that we should have this memorial to honour those who are no longer with us. I hope that anyone reading this will feel motivated to join me in supporting such a worthwhile initiative".

There will be further updates as we proceed with the project. All the latest news will be published on the project website.

Maurice 'Mo' Hope, 59B, 'A' Coy.

Command Workshop, Cyprus, c1957

Fred Mills, 51B

A large explosion shook the barrack-room walls. There was a long pause, followed by another loud bang. EOKA terrorists had penetrated the Garrison, but fortunately there were no casualties. But there needed to be a response to this outrage, so ex-boys from Arborfield and Chepstow got their heads together and decided on an evil plan of revenge. They would perform a pantomime! If the terrorists had caught a glimpse of these guys, dressed up in all their finery, they would have surrendered immediately! Alan Storey (Arb50A) took the part of 'Sinderella', Ken Jones (Chep 52A) played the small Ugly Sister and yours truly was the other Ugly Sister

— how could such a handsome chap land such a part? Brian Hoskins (Arb52B) played the Fairy Godmother - it could only have been done by an Inst Tech! To round it all off, Eddie Fillbrook (Chep51B) and Bob Condon (Arb52A) performed in the Corps-de-Ballet. Such delicate footwork had obviously been practiced on the old cabbage patch years previously. Needless to say, the Garrison suffered no further terrorist outrages after that performance!



OBAN Articles By Boys From The Sixties – And Onwards!

Here, I conclude the theme of listing some of the splendid contributions so far published in our magazines. This time I am listing those articles sent in from boys who began their service during the 1960s and later. There was an old saying that, "If you remember the Sixties, you weren't there!" This certainly appears to be borne out by the short length of the list of articles below! It is to be hoped that, now that the generations that passed through Arborfield during the years mentioned below reach the nostalgia stage, that there will be more articles forthcoming from them in the future. After all, it is only by those contributions that the spirit of the Apprentices' Schools and Colleges will live on and keep the OBAN going too.

<u>Brief Title</u>	<u>Contributor</u>	<u>OBAN</u>
Personality slot	Mike Dorward 60A	6
Memories from the Sixties	Barrie King 60A	14
In every soldier's knapsack	John Hernon 60B	44
Global Warming	John Hernon 60B	47
Missile Checkout Team	Ted Standford 60C	3
Another brick in the wall	John Crowther 60C	44
Beer really is good for you!	Mike Sibbons 61C	47
Memories of the Sixties	John Swarbrick 62A	31
One step on life's path	Bob Alleway (Chepstow) 63A	23
After Arborfield	Frank Webb 63C	41
The learning curve	Bob Castell 64A	19
In the recovery position	Bob Castell 64A	24
Looking back	Andy Knowles 64A	41
All at sea	Andy Knowles 64A	44
Mutinous goings on	Colin Newby 65A	23
Personality Slot	Pete Marsh 65C	34
Reunion report 2006	Frank McKenna/Egon Taska 66C	37
Army Apprentice 1970	John Andrusiak 70B	19
Traveller's tale part 1	John Andrusiak 70B	37
Traveller's tale part 2	John Andrusiak 70B	43
An 'A' Mech's tale	Trevor Flett 73C	37
Arborfield College life	Garry Chapman 78C	44
Junior Soldier	J/S Anderson-Jones (Harrogate)	33

I must stress that the above list contains only the 'main articles' and does not include the many interesting and humorous letters that passed across the Editor's desk during the same years! Thus, I hope that I am not doing the 'younger generation' a disservice by my previous comments! But please, you lads from the 'Sixties and onwards', I exhort you to make every effort to contribute articles well into the foreseeable future.

Pete Gripton, 56B

Remembrance Scrolls

Sadly, due to illness, our dear friend Eddie Broomfield, 45A, has had to relinquish the task of producing the Remembrance Scrolls. We are therefore most grateful to Roger 'Trixie' Traves, 57A, who has taken over Eddie's responsibilities regarding the Scrolls. Roger's contact details are as follows:

Telephone: 01202 471063. Address: 25, Denmead Road, Iford, Bournemouth, Dorset BH6 5QH.

A Scottish Soldier

A Scottish soldier, in full dress uniform, marches into a chemist's shop. Very carefully he opens his sporran and pulls out a neatly folded cotton bandana, then unfolds it to reveal a smaller silk square handkerchief, which he also unfolds, to reveal a condom. He hands it over to the chemist, who holds it up gingerly and eyes it suspiciously. The condom has a number of patches on it. "How much to repair it?" the Scot asks the chemist. "Sixty pence", replies the chemist. "And how much for a new one?" asks the soldier. "One pound", says the chemist.

The Scot painstakingly folds the condom into the silk square handkerchief and the cotton bandana, replaces it carefully in his sporran, then marches out of the door, shoulders back and kilt swinging. A moment or two later the chemist hears a great shout & bang up outside, followed by an even greater roar. The Scottish soldier marches back into the chemist's and addresses the proprietor, this time with a large grin on his face.

"The regiment has taken a vote", he announces, "and we'll have a new one!"

A Very Personal Accident

A man wakes up in the hospital, bandaged from head to foot. The doctor comes in and says, "Ah, I see you've regained consciousness. Now, you probably won't remember, but you were in a pile-up on the motorway. You're definitely going to be okay, you'll walk again and everything - but something else happened. I'm trying to break this gently, but the fact is, your willy was chopped off in the wreck and we were unable to find it".

The man groans, but the doctor goes on, "You've got £90,000 in insurance

compensation coming and we have the technology now to build you a new willy that will work as well as your old one did - better in fact! But the thing is, it doesn't come cheap. It's £10,000 an inch". The man perks up at this. "So", says the doctor, "It's for you to decide how many inches you want. But it's something you'd better discuss with your wife. I mean, if you had a five-inch one before, and you decide to go for a nine incher, she might be a bit put out. But if you had a nine-inch one before, and you decide only to invest in a five-incher this time, she might be

disappointed. So it's most important that she plays a role in helping you make the decision

The man agrees to talk with his wife when she visits him later. The doctor comes back the next day and asks "Have you spoken with your wife?" "I certainly have", replies the man.

"And what is the decision?" asks the doctor.

"We're going for granite worktops!"

The Life Of An Imperialist Warmonger (Part 3)

by Peter Simpson, 56B

(Peter continues his story of how it was to serve in Iran during the reign of the Shah, before he was eventually overthrown by Muslim fundamentalists. Ed.)

Iran - 1975 to 1977 (or 1356)

We had two Iranian senior ranks who worked closely with the Commissioning and Advisory Team (CAAT); there was Nasser, the interpreter - he was of medium height and quite a pleasant character with morose spaniel like eyes. He was harmless enough, but was petrified of the other senior rank, Reza, who I'm sure worked for the Savak, the Shah's secret police. The population was terrified of having any dealings with them. Reza was a thoroughly nasty piece of work, he was quite overweight and looked a little like Oliver Hardy, having the same sort of moustache. Being with British soldiers, he was constantly being harassed with sly

references to 'Laurel and Hardy'. Comments like 'Another fine mess you've got me into, Stanley', and whistling of the theme tune from their films. Most of these references went right over his head. He did however ask me who was Stanley and why we kept referring to him. I bumbled on about it being a throwback to the days of Livingstone's exploration.

Reza was known to all of us as the 'fat sergeant' or 'Oliver'. He was responsible for liaising between CAAT and the Iranians for the official hand-over of the tanks. One sure way to send him into a paroxysm of panic was to casually mention in his hearing that the next shipment of tanks was to go to 'The Immortals'. These were the Shah's personal guards and considered the elite of the Imperial Iranian armed forces. Reza used to constantly be fingering a string of worry beads, running them slowly through his fingers, but mere

mention of 'The Immortals' used have them flying through his fingers, clicking away like a typist on overtime. The fat sergeant liked to consider himself well educated and would unexpectedly come out with the most outrageous questions, to show what a clever lad he was. One day while we were all waiting for the bus home, he suddenly turned to the group and asked, "What is the symbol for lead?" We all turned and stared at him, wondering what had brought this piece of madness on. "Come on", he said, "you are clever. British technicians, what is the symbol for lead?" Well, I thought, we can't have this. "Pb", I stated, "stands for plumbum from the Latin". Now the only reason I knew that was because I am a cryptic crossword nut and you tend to accumulate all these many pieces of useless information. But this was a bad mistake. The fat sergeant seemed to think that because I knew this one piece of irrelevant

junk, I was some kind of Oxford educated professor!

Ever after this, whenever a question was asked, Reza would say, *"Mr Simpson will know, ask Mr Simpson, he is the only one of you who has education"*. That certainly taught me to keep my mouth shut in future. He used to attempt to engage me in deep conversation, after which giving me his opinions on a variety of subjects; one of his pet phobias was the British Empire and its 'send a gunboat' attitude. *"You British soldiers"*, he used to say, *"you think that the entire world belongs to Britannia and your Queen."* (Yes, he actually used Britannia!) *You can go anywhere and, by fighting take what you want. You are nothing but Imperialist Warmongers!"* I really liked the ring of that and stored it in the memory bank for another day, that day finally arriving some thirty-one years later!

The fat sergeant gave us a lot of laughs while we were there and one of his more comical episodes was during a visit from a colleague at MIS. 'MIS' was an abbreviation for Majid-I-Sulleiman, a town high up in the hills and the base for a British company called *Millbank Technical Services* (MTS) - so we had MTS from MIS! MTS specialised in providing military technical support staff to foreign countries; in this case, they supplied *Chieftain* and *Scorpion* trained technicians and experienced tank instructors to the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces. They asked if one of their tank instructors could pay us a visit, to have a look at some new flotation screens that were being fitted to the *Scorpions*. The Major agreed and they formalised the request with a letter to the camp commandant.

The instructor they selected was a Corporal of the Horse Ted Williams, he was actually a Sergeant but, as he was a member of the Household Cavalry, he was called a Corporal of the Horse, or COH, another quaint British Army tradition. On the official letter, they stated that COH Williams would be visiting us; the fat sergeant was responsible for arranging the details of his itinerary, including his welcome. Unfortunately, he didn't know what a 'COH' was and he certainly was not going to show his ignorance by asking one of us, so he tried the subtle approach. *"Mr Simpson"*, he said, *"this man, he is important?"* I cottoned on immediately. *"Oh, yes"*, I replied, *"very important"*. He tried a few of our other CAAT members and they all informed him that

this lad was 'the bee's knees'. Eventually the fat sergeant decided that 'COH' must have been a misprint and that it was supposed to be 'COL'. Came the day and we picked Ted Williams up in the minibus.

When we got to the front gate, there was a full ceremonial guard paraded in front of the guardroom and Reza asked us if *"Mr Williams would care to inspect them?"* Of course, when Ted got off the bus, he was wearing a uniform with three stripes on his arm and the fat sergeant nearly had a seizure, as Ted casually strolled along, occasionally stopping to congratulate a soldier on his turn-out. Reza was not a happy fat sergeant for the next week or two!

(Peter's memories above certainly struck a chord with me. I was an instructor in the Electrical Section at SEME during that time, and had the job of teaching a course of Iranian Officers on the Chieftain power-pack electrical systems. Everything went through a Colonel, who hopefully acted as interpreter - but one never really knew if all the students understood every lesson! I also recall 'MTS' - they used to 'crib' lesson plans and teaching techniques from we SEME instructors, so as far as we were concerned, 'MTS' stood for 'Mind Tapping Specialists'! Ed.)

Fun and games

On Wednesday afternoon before finishing, we used to have a game of volleyball in the hangar, very impromptu, just string a net up, pick some sides and away you go. The second week I was there we had the usual game. Eddy Wilson and I were on the same side. Eddy was a big Scotsman, a great bloke to have on this type of posting, because he loved organising entertainments, such as a concert for the ex-pats, which went down well. He was also a good footballer and as hard as nails. Well, I went up for a ball and somehow it hit me right on the end of my little finger. I felt a sharp pain and, when I looked down, the impact had telescoped the finger pushing the top joint right back through the skin and you could see the white knuckle. Eddy came over and asked, *"What have you done mate?"* He took one look at my finger and keeled over stone cold! It seems that he couldn't stand hospitals, needles or anything of that nature. He told me after that incident that he could never even break a chicken leg, because it made him feel faint looking at the white bone. I still have a crooked little finger where they failed to set it properly.

I now had to register my car for Iranian plates, so I said to the Major I might need an hour off to do this. He just looked at me, then asked his clerk to get Nasser to come into the office. When Nasser arrived, the Major told him, *"Mr Simpson has to register his car"*. Nasser looked visibly shaken. *"Oh no"*, he said, *"I have only one morning free this week"*. *"Haven't you got just a couple of hours free?"* I asked. *"Believe me"*, chipped in Maj W-T, *"you're going to need the whole morning"*. Well, came the day and it was quite unbelievable. I followed Nasser in the car, he was driving a Russian Jeep; we arrived at this big parking area with about fifty cars. Nasser said to me, *"Don't worry, I shall fix so we shall be first"*. Sure enough, we were called in first when the doors opened at 8:30am. I went into this huge room, it had about forty desks in it and these desks were covered with great big books. I later found out that these were ledgers and that all the information was entered by hand. It took me nearly four hours to get my car registered and the contents (radio, cassette player) logged. I lost count eventually, but I must have been seen and interviewed by at least eight different staff; all of these had a multitude of questions, most of them similar to the questions already asked by the previous staff member. In the end, I left it all to Nasser and sat on a chair with a resigned look, just signing whatever Nasser put in front of me. I might have signed up for the Foreign Legion for all I knew - or even a two-year subscription to the *Readers Digest*. It was a singular lesson in bureaucracy and God only knows how long it would have taken without the assistance of Nasser and his magic ID card.

Bureaucracy was also rampant in the judiciary system, which also has some peculiar ideas on the definition of responsibility. Another ex-pat friend of ours was namesake Dave Simpson, who worked for an American company called *Schlumberger* (pronounced *Shlumburrjay*, so at their barbecues we used to take the mickey and ask for a *Hamburrjay*). Dave was coming home in the early hours of the morning, along a dual-carriageway, when he ran into a moped rider who was going the wrong way on Dave's side of the road. No great damage to the rider, but he had to go to hospital. Dave was arrested and put into the local jail; then next morning he was put in front of the local Judge, who found him guilty. Dave's lawyer asked the Judge how could this be, as the other rider was on the wrong side of the road at

the time? The Judges answer was a classic. *"Well, Mr Simpson"*, he retorted, *"if you had not have been there at that time, there would not have been an accident, therefore you must be at least 50% responsible"*. Dave realised, in the words of the immortal Eric Morecambe, *"There's no answer to that!"*

The House

We had now been in the hotel for three weeks and it was driving me mad - I now regretted that statement of mine that I could happily stay in this luxury for months. Even with a suite, it was so restrictive. Our MFO was still 'arriving' from the UK and I longed to sit down and listen to some of my music or read a good book. Eventually we got news that we could move into our house. We packed everything into the car and, the next day, we drove to the house. The first unusual detail was that there were no street numbers - a street name, yes, but no numbers; thank goodness we were receiving our mail via the diplomatic bag, it would have been a nightmare otherwise. It was a huge house, with five large bedrooms, a lounge (consisting of sitting and dining room), an enormous reception room (it was the Iranian custom to receive guests in a separate room), three bathrooms and three toilets. Two were 'western style' and the Iranian one just a hole in the ground (these were known by the British as 'the *Farsi Karsi*' and by the Americans as 'the *Persian Version*').

The garden was completely walled in, with security gates that were solenoid operated from inside the house; there was also a speaker so that you could confirm who was buzzing. There was a separate air conditioner in each bedroom and two in the lounge. This was welcome, we thought at least we would be cool, but this was before we were introduced to the Iranian version of electrical power supply - more about that later. Water was heated by gas, with two huge cylinders outside the back alley. In the alley were separate servants' quarters, we did not bother with a servant while we were there, some families had them. As I've mentioned, this was the supply Captain's house and, as such, was the only house with a telephone, a blessing at times and a curse at others. I was the one woken up at two in the morning by the Lieutenant at the shipping wharves, to let me know that we could unload the next day. Time was paramount, as the British Government had to pay the shipping and docking fees; so

the sooner we unloaded, the more profit we made.

I got to know the Lieutenant quite well over the next two years, we never physically met, but he would always commence his calls by asking after my health, then Margaret's health, then my daughter Jacqui etc. This was the polite Iranian way of doing business. If a team member wished to make a call back to UK, it ensured a late night for us, as the delay, between phoning the operator with the number and actually getting connected to an operator in the UK could be anytime up to four hours.

The leaking roof

About four weeks after we got there, the rains commenced and we found out that Carol was wrong when she said the roof leaked, it actually poured through. All the houses in Ahwaz were shockingly built. We were watching a house go up on our route to work, every day a little more progress, and then came the brickwork! As we passed on the bus, you could actually see straight through one wall and out of the other at the back of the house, there were such huge gaps in the mortar. On completion, all the walls in the house were tiled over with a form of marble, so the finished product actually looked superb. This was a bit of a worry really, our house was beautifully tiled as well! All the roofs were flat, it is far easier to provide a flat roof after you finish rather than worry about roof pitches etc. But, of course, the water used to pool on the roof. Our magnificent lounge room had a large crack in the ceiling, which ran from the rear to the front, a distance well over eight metres. The reason for the crack was that there was a steel beam in the roof and the crack ran right along it. When the rains came, we had a continuous series of leaks for the whole length of the roof and the water fell like an indoor Niagara. The house was rented by CAAT, so I asked the Major to come and have a look at this aquatic vision. We had every pot, bowl and container in the house in a big long line under the beam; unfortunately most of them were round so there were a lot of drips hitting the floor.

Maj W-T took a look at this and then, pursing his lips, he said, *"I can help you here"*. *"Joy"*, I thought, *"he's going to get it fixed"*. Joy indeed, until he said, *"I know a place down 'Plastic Street' where you can get some square containers; when you put them together they should catch all the leaks!"* Well, we didn't get the

leaks fixed that winter. But the following winter, Sir Anthony Parsons, who was then the British Ambassador to Iran (he went on to become the British Ambassador to the UN) was visiting CAAT. As we had logged many a call to the Embassy for funds to repair our roof he decided that he would stop by with his wife to check our problem. As luck would have it, the day he arrived it was raining fairly heavily. As he and his wife walked into the house, Margaret handed Lady Parsons an umbrella - she looked abashed but, when she walked into the lounge, she was aghast - by this time, the water sounded like a symphony for xylophone and glockenspiel. *"I don't know how you can put up with this my dear"*, she said to Margaret. The next week a gang turned up with tar and a brazier and proceeded to tar the whole roof, it finally fixed the problem. That year, when W-T wrote my confidential report, one of his comments was, *"He copes well with the exigencies of the service"*. I took it that he was referring to the roof!

My comeuppance with the car

As I mentioned earlier, I thought I had the navigation of the huge puddle in front of the house totally in hand now, and used to drive confidently in my figure-of-eight without a mishap. That is, until the day of the formal dance to farewell the OC, who was returning to the UK. Being 'a formal', it was evening dress for the ladies and, as it was my turn to drive, Peter and Chris Hewitson came around to our house. Both Chris and Margaret had long evening dresses on, but with the rain and mud, Wellington boots (or Wellies) were the preferred footwear. It was indeed a sight to behold, they both had their evening dresses pulled up around their waists, tied with a piece of rope around the middle to stop them trailing down to the glamorous black muddy Wellies they wore. We climbed into the car and backed out and locked the gate. The weather was atrocious and my wipers were flicking backwards and forwards trying to clear the rain. Somehow, I misjudged my figure-of-eight and I could feel the car start to slide right into the middle of the deepest puddle of thick mud and water. Inevitably the engine stalled as the muddy water rose up to the bottom of the door. Peter and I crawled over the back seat, put on our Wellies and got out. We then pushed the car out of the water and I tried to restart it with no success. The girls had to get out and we left the car there and carried on in Peter's car.

The next day, at about ten, I went out and tried to start the car yet again. But when the engine turned over, the car jumped forward; even depressing the clutch had no effect, so Peter and I pushed it into my yard. Peter took me around to Dave Tanner's house. Dave was a vehicle mechanic and I needed some expert advice. I got the advice all right, but it wasn't what I wanted to hear. Dave told me that what had happened was that the thick mud had solidified, virtually welding the clutch plates together. I could try spraying clean water in there, to see if I could free it up but, if this did not work, I would have to take the engine out and strip the clutch down. I tried the water, but to no avail. Luckily, I had purchased a comprehensive manual from Citroen in the UK, so out it came and I read up on the procedure for removing the engine.

Pete gave me a hand and it turned out a lot easier than I first imagined. We could unbolt the whole front end of the car and then undo the connections to the fuel supply etc. and the engine was ready to lift out. Again this proved very simple, being an aluminium block the whole engine was lifted quite easily and laid on blocks. Then, at my leisure, I stripped it all down and gave it a thorough cleaning. Once it was ready, we reversed the procedure and everything went smoothly together. Came the moment of truth, I jumped in and turned the key, the engine started second time and the clutch operated silky smoothly. I never had any other mechanical problems with the car until we sold it when we returned to the UK. That Citroen Ami was a real workhorse and served us well from the day we bought it until the day we traded it in. Some cars are mere tools that you use to drive from A to B, while others have seem to have a personality of their own. The Ami was one of the latter. Although very under-powered, it was extremely comfortable. It had a soft ride on the worst roads, was very economical, took a huge amount of luggage and, most importantly, did not let us down.

The Cesspit

At about the third month of rain during the first winter, I got home after work to find Margaret trying to mop what appeared to be dirty water from the main bathroom, which also included the toilet. She was half laughing and crying and I finally got the story out of her. Around mid-morning, she had heard this 'glugging' sound from the bathroom and,

when she looked in there, the toilet was erupting like Mount Vesuvius - except it certainly was not lava pouring over the top! It appears that we were not on main line sewage but actually had a cesspit outside the front of the house. This was supposed to be regularly emptied, but nobody had informed us of this and the rain had gradually filled the pit until eventually it backed up - with dramatic results. The whole bathroom was awash with toilet paper and other unmentionable substances. Margaret ran out of the house for help and there was a lorry, in fact one of the 'sludge suckers', as we came to call them. Margaret stopped the lorry and got the driver, an old skinny Iranian wearing what looked like a *Harris Tweed* jacket and smoking a thin cigarette, to come into the house.

She dragged him into the house near the door of the bathroom. He looked in and then tutted, "*Very bad*". Margaret almost exploded! "*Very bad*", she roared, pointing to the toilet, "*this is very, very bad*". "*No*", he responded, picking up a sodden piece of toilet paper, "*this very bad*". After a lot of light-hearted banter like this, Margaret eventually got the gist of what he was trying to tell her. Using toilet paper was 'very bad' you see - Iranians do not use toilet paper. All their toilets had what we called a 'truncheon' by the side - this was a flexible pipe with a tap on it, which you were supposed to use like a portable bidet. The toilets were not built to take toilet paper, particularly the type they sold in Ahwaz, which probably had a half-life of around fifty years. Anyway, by waving money at him, Margaret eventually got him to help. He rolled up the sleeve of his jacket, handed Margaret his half-smoked cigarette, and waded in. He put his arm down the toilet and proceeded to carry out this impersonation of a plunger. Then he pulled up the drain in the floor and unplugged that, so the effluent started to drain away. He then waded out again, took the cigarette back from Margaret, put it into his mouth and contentedly puffed away at it. Needless to say, we used to ensure that the 'sludge sucker' emptied our cess pit every week during winter, but I never got Margaret to use that truncheon!

Power on, power off

We never had any problems with house security while we were there, every area had an official night watchman. They were all ex-convicts, who were given the

job when they came out of prison. The system worked quite simply; if anybody's house got robbed, the night watchman of that area got put back in prison! We used to pay him and the garbage man every week, but I stopped paying the garbage man when I found out that, after collecting our bag of garbage, he used to throw it over the wall of the empty plot next door to us. As I mentioned earlier, the power supply was not the best, at least once a week during the summer we had a 'brown out'; all the air conditioning units (A/Cs) were on three-phase power and one of the phases used to drop out. Regularly during the hot weather we would lose power altogether. I had come from the UK prepared for this, one of the pieces of priceless information from Maj March. I had a high-pressure kerosene lamp and, when the power went off, I pumped it up and hung it from the fan - the light from it was quite enough to read by. This did not however cool us down and, when the A/Cs were not on, we used to lie on the tiled floor to try to cool down.

The house wiring was also horrendous and it nearly caused my daughter to have a fatal mishap. She was washing the car in the garden while I was at work and put her hand on the wall to steady herself. There must have been a loose connection from the garden light because she got an almighty shock and screamed out loud. Margaret ran quickly out and dragged her away, averting an event that could have had deadly consequences. That electricity supply - or lack thereof - used to cause all sorts of problems. Margaret was sitting on the veranda one day when a van pulled up outside the front gates. A workman in overalls got out and strapped on a pair of climbing spikes. The next moment he shinned up the power pole outside our house and started to disconnect our power! Margaret shot off the veranda and asked him what in the blue blazes he thought he was doing. "*You no pay your bill*", he cried, "*so no more power*". Margaret managed to sweet-talk him down and, after offering him a drink and a few 'readies', he said he would leave it for today and come back next week.

The next day I saw the Captain who paid all our rents and services. He assured me that we were up-to-date with payments and showed me the receipts for the last six months. I saw Nasser and he offered to accompany me down to the office where we paid our bills, to try and sort this out. Like everything else in Iran, it was an epic; we spent two hours being passed around like a parcel bomb until, finally,

we found an official who had the unpaid invoice. It was for a period 2½ years previously! It appears that a new manager had taken this section over and decided to 'clean up', nothing as orthodox as sending out a request for payment, just cut off the supply.

The duty-free shipment

I mentioned that one of the perks of the posting was the fact that we were allowed to purchase duty-free goods. However, there were extremely rigorous rules on how we procured these goods and eventually the British Embassy notified us that they had negotiated a deal with a Danish firm called *Jonsson*. Some of the conditions were that we ordered every six months and that we could only order a complete sealed container of goods. Believe me, there is an awful large amount of space in a container. Again I ended up as responsible for collating our list, sending it to the Embassy and then taking delivery. *Jonsson* provided us with the most gigantic and comprehensive colour catalogue you could imagine; it was a veritable wonderland of quality goods. Obviously there was every type of beer, alcohol and tobacco products, but there was also a fantastic array of groceries from every nation. There were tins of enchiladas, spring rolls, steak pies,

salmon, pineapples and almost every other gourmet delight you could think of - and the crowning glory was the price. A one-litre bottle of *Glenfiddich* was £1.25 (about \$2.95) and a case of *Foster's* only £3 (\$7.20). The same was true of the groceries, the pricing was extremely good.

We were like little children at Christmas and the two catalogues were lovingly perused by the CAAT families before ordering. There was an approximate six-week delivery time on the shipment and, as we didn't have a number on our house, I painted a large 55 (panj o panj) on our gate in Farsi, the numeral five looks like an upside down heart. We heard nothing more about the delivery, every time I checked we were told that there was no new information. I arrived home from work one weekend to be met by an extremely frazzled-looking and nearly incoherent Margaret. When I got into the house, it looked like *Harrods* grocery department - there were cases all over the place, stacked four or five high and there was one exhausted daughter lying on the settee. When I finally got the story, it appears that the delivery truck turned up at the gate and honked his horn; Margaret went out opened the gate and he backed in. She then told him where she wanted the delivery stacked and the driver then told her that this was not his job and

no amount of persuasion or bribery could convince him otherwise. She then tried to raise me on the telephone to no avail and then, to add insult to injury, the driver told Margaret that he had another pickup to do and, if the consignment was not unloaded immediately, he would take it back to the depot.

So Margaret, being a good Army wife got my daughter up and they unloaded the whole truck between themselves, watched by the uncooperative driver. This, of course, was not the end of the saga, as we now had to separate the consignment into the different orders. So I popped up the road to get Peter Hewitson to give us a hand. The whole process took another three hours and I then phoned good old W-T, so that he could inform the others. When we finally had got rid of all the orders and they had heard of the tale of Margaret's hard work, W-T said to Margaret, "*Thank you very much for your efforts, I would like to give you this*". He then gave her a tin of baked beans! I had to hold on to her, otherwise our Major might have needed a proctologist to surgically remove his beans.

I had immediately opened a case of *Fosters* and stacked them in the A/C, this is what we had to do to cool the beer, as the fridge could not cope. All the A/Cs

The Perfect Husband?

Several ex-boys are in the locker room of a golf club. A mobile phone on a bench rings and one old boy engages the hands-free speaker and begins to talk. All the others stop to listen.

Old boy: "*Hello?*"

Woman on the phone: "*Honey, it's me. Are you at the club?*"

Old boy: "*Yes*"

Woman: "*I'm at the shops dear, I've just found this beautiful leather coat. It's only £1,000, is it OK if I buy it?*"

Old boy: "*Sure, go ahead if you like it that much*"

Woman: "*I also stopped by the Mercedes garage and saw the new 2010 models. There was one I really liked*"

Old boy: "*Go on, how much?*"

Woman: "*Just short of £60,000*"

Old boy: "*OK, but for that price I want it with all the options*"

Woman: "*That's great, dear. Oh, and one more thing ... that house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking £950,000*"

Old boy: "*Well, go ahead and make them an offer of £900,000. They will probably take it with the market the way it is. If not, we can go the extra 50-thou if necessary - it's really a pretty good price*"

Woman: "*OK dear, I'll see you later! I love you so much!*"

Old boy: "*Bye for now, I love you too*"

He then rings off. The other guys in the locker room are staring at him in astonishment, mouths agape. He turns and asks, "*Anyone know who this phone belongs to?*"

used to have a six-pack in them. Of course our team house was now well stocked with *Carlsberg*, *Johnny Walker* and all other quality alcohol at very low prices. This made our team house a very popular place to visit for the ex-pats and also the Iranians. To ensure that matters did not get out of hand, we had a rule in CAAT that each member was allowed two honorary guests who were given passes for the year, and they could also bring in other guests on a daily basis. This made the CAAT team members also very popular amongst the community, not only for the invite to the club, but also because we could offer them a decent drink and some foreign food if they came to dinner.

(Peter's tale of working with the CAAT team will be continued in a later issue of OBAN. Ed.)

Granddad

A woman in a supermarket is following a grandfather and his badly behaved 3 year-old grandson. It's obvious to her that he has his hands full with the child, screaming for sweets in the sweet aisle, biscuits in the biscuit aisle; and for fruit, cereal and pop in the other aisles. Meanwhile, Gramps is working his way around, saying in a controlled voice, "Easy, William, we won't be long now . . . easy, boy". Then there is another outburst, and the woman hears the granddad calmly saying, "It's okay, William, just a couple more minutes and we'll be out of here. Hang in there, boy".

At the checkout, the little terror starts throwing items out of the trolley, with Gramps repeating in a controlled voice,

"William, William, relax buddy, don't get upset. We'll be home in another five minutes; stay cool, William". Very impressed, the woman goes outside, where the grandfather is loading his groceries and the boy into their car. She approaches the elderly gentleman and remarks, "It's none of my business really, but you were simply amazing in there. I just don't know how you did it. That whole time, you kept your composure, and no matter how loud and disruptive he got, you just calmly kept saying that things would be okay. Little William is very lucky to have you as his grandpa". "Thanks, lady", replies the grandfather, "but I'm William this little so-and-so's name is Damien!"

Snippets From Craftsman Magazine

Upgraded Lynx back in service

The first four upgraded *Lynx Mk9* helicopters, which are to be sent to Afghanistan, have re-entered service, with three of the aircraft being used for training, prior to deployment, at 9 Regiment Army Air Corps in Dishforth, North Yorkshire. The upgrades on initially twelve *Mk9s* were ordered by MoD a year ago, with upgrades on the remaining ten aircraft likely to follow.

The *Mk9* benefits from a considerably more powerful engine that enables operation in the challenging hot and high conditions of Afghanistan – and the same engine is also being fitted to the new *Lynx Wildcat*, which is expected to be delivered to the military from 2014. Lift capacity in the *Mk9a* is increased by 1 tonne over the earlier version. Other improvements include an updated instrument panel and digital displays, plus a modified gearbox and rear structure to accommodate the new power-plant. The remainder of the twelve helicopters will be delivered over this next year from *Augusta Westland's* factory at Yeovil, Somerset.

Stop press: A contract to upgrade a further ten *Lynx* helicopters has recently been awarded – the total number to be brought to *Mk9A* standard is now 22.

(I feel that I am possibly playing my own small part in all this. In recent months I have been delivering 'engineering parts' down the A303 to Yeovil! Ed.)

Basra wall brought home

A memorial that stood outside coalition headquarters in southern Iraq, to honour the fallen of Op Telic, has been rebuilt at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. The wall, which contains the names of 179 UK personnel who died during the mission and was originally constructed by members of 37 Arm'd Engr Sqn, was dismantled at the end of the conflict in 2009. The bricks used in the original build are not able to withstand the UK weather and have been used to form the foundations and core of the new structure. The outer surface has been faced in marble, mounted with the brass plaques bearing the names of each casualty, including the four REME soldiers.

A slight blip in the story

In *Craftsman of the Army Volume 1*, there is an account of the accidental discovery by a REME Officer, unnamed, that AA radars could pick up mortar bombs in flight, leading to the whole new concept of mortar-locating radar. None of the official accounts of the history of radar refer to this REME discovery but there is much about mortar-locating radar. The report implies that the discovery was made in 21st Army Group i.e. during the North West Europe campaign after June 1944. But, many years ago, a visitor to the Corps Museum said they had been using radar for mortar locating in Italy, much earlier.

Are there any surviving boffins out there who can give a definitive account of how, when and where this discovery was made? Was it perhaps another case of simultaneous discovery and use of an idea in different theatres of operation in isolation? The whole subject was then so shrouded in secrecy that it is quite possible that the left hand did not get to hear what mischief the right hand was up to!

The Golfer

Two women were playing a round of golf. One teed off, then watched in horror as her ball headed directly towards a foursome of men playing the next hole. The ball hit one of the men and he immediately clasped his hands together over his groin, fell to the ground and proceeded to roll around in agony. The woman immediately rushed over to the man and began to apologize. *"Please allow me to help. I'm a physiotherapist and I know I could relieve your pain if you'd allow me"*, she told him. *"Oh no, don't worry, I'll be all right, it'll be fine in a few minutes"*, the man replied. But he was obviously in agony, lying in the fetal position, still clasping his hands together at his groin. At her persistence, however, he finally allowed her to help. She gently took his hands away and laid them to the side, loosened his pants and put her own hands inside. She administered tender and artful massage for several long moments and asked, *"How does that feel?"* *"That actually feels pretty great"*, our brave golfer replied, *"but my thumb still hurts like hell!"*

This is such a great idea!!

Now here's a neat solution to all the controversy over full-body scanners at our airports. All we need to do is develop a booth that you can step into that will not X-ray you, but will detonate any explosive device that you may have hidden on or about your body. The explosion will be contained within the sealed booth. This would be a win-win situation for everyone - none of this crap about racial profiling and the device would eliminate long and expensive trials.

This is so simple that it's brilliant. I can see it now – you're in the airport terminal and you hear a muffled explosion. Shortly thereafter, an announcement comes over the PA system,

"Attention all stand-by passengers - we now have a seat available on flight number ... etc"

(Only an ex-boy could have sent this one in! 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 EX17 4PP – cheques made payable to AOBA Account No.2.

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

Passing-Out Ceremony, 14th December 1961

by Paul Margle, 59A

In OBAN Issue 45 you asked for any Passing-out programmes. Attached is that belonging to 59A, as issued on the 14th December 1961. Hope this is of interest!

Commandant – Colonel RFD Legh, OBE; **Chief Instructor** – Lt Col JW Hill REME;
Senior Education Officer – Lt Col RD Wheal RAEC;
Adjutant – Maj P Smith XX The Lancashire Fusiliers

The School Bands

Brass Band

Band Staff Sergeant A Parker, Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders;
App Band Sgt J Palmer; App Drum Major BF Johnson

Pipe Band

Pipe Major DR Carver, Royal Highland Fusiliers; App Pipe Major ME Watts;
App Drum Major P Sancto

Corps of Drums

Sgt B R Conway, REME; App L/Cpl G Medd

Commanding the Parade: A/T/RSM WJ Burns

Awards

'Award of Honour' – A/T/Sgt P Ellis
'Commandant's Cup' (for the Best Soldier) – A/T/Sgt P Ellis
'Chief Instructor's Cup' (for the Best Tradesman) – A/T/Sgt P Ellis
'Commandant's Special Award' (for the Best Potential Leader) – A/T/RSM WJ Burns

Individual Prizes for regimental efficiency
5 Division – A/T DL Collett; A/T D Hirst

Individual Prizes for Trade and Education progress

Electronic and Electrical trades – A/T/ MG Gloster; Vehicle Mechanic – A/T TR Bailey;
Instrument Technician – A/T DE Lunn; Education – A/T C Gaskell (all 5 Division)
Electronic and Electrical trades – A/T J Fowler; Vehicle Mechanic – A/T R Dixon;
Instrument Technician – A/T K Neale; Education – A/T R Unsworth (all 3 Division)

Individual Prizes – Senior Division

Technical ability

Electrician – A/T CE Bailey; Electrician (ex-Chepstow) – A/T DD Greenaway; Instrument Technician – A/T/Sgt AE Cook; Radar Technician – A/T/CSM JR Yeomans;
Tels Technician – A/T/CSM AL Bach; Vehicle Mechanic – A/T/Sgt P Ellis

Education

English – A/T/CSM BJ Stacey; Mathematics – A/T WC Horsley;
Physics – A/T/CSM JR Yeomans; Map Reading – A/T/Cpl GS Mepstead;
Best all-round progress – A/T WC Horsley;
Highest Educational Achievement – A/T/CSM JR Yeomans

Weapon Training

Best Rifle shot – A/T/Sgt T Rust; Best LMG shot – A/T/Sgt T Rust

(Many thanks for the contribution Paul – these details are essential for keeping records that would have otherwise disappeared. If anyone else has details about their own 'PoP', as per above, please send them in! Ed.)

User Problems - Those Below Are Supposedly Actual Call Centre Conversations

Thomson Tours

Customer: *"I've been ringing 0700 2300 for two days and can't get through to enquiries, can you help?"*

Operator: *"Where did you get that number from, sir?"*

Customer: *"It was on the door to the Travel Centre"*

Operator: *"Sir, they are our opening hours"*

Samsung Electronics

Caller: *"Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?"*

Operator: *"I'm sorry, sir, I don't understand who you are talking about"*

Caller: *"On page 1, section 5, of the user guide, it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone jack before cleaning. Now, can you give me the number for Jack?"*

Operator: *"I think you mean the telephone point on the wall"*

RAC Motoring Services

Caller: *"Does your European Breakdown Policy cover me when I am travelling in Australia?"*

Operator: *"Doesn't the product name give you a clue?"*

Caller: (enquiring about legal requirements while travelling in France):

"If I register my car in France, do I have to change the steering wheel to the other side of the car?"

Directory Enquiries

Caller: *"I'd like the number of the Argoed Fish Bar in Cardiff please"*

Operator: *"I'm sorry, there's no such listing. Is the spelling correct?"*

Caller: *"Well, it used to be called the Bargoed Fish Bar, but the 'B' fell off"*

Then there was the caller who asked for a knitwear company in Woven.

Operator: *"Woven? Are you sure?"*

Caller: *"Yes. That's what it says on the label - 'Woven in Scotland'"*

On another occasion, a man making heavy breathing sounds from a phone box told a worried operator:

"I haven't got a pen, so I'm steaming up the window to write the number on"

PC World

Tech Support: *"I need you to right-click on the 'Open Desktop'"*

Customer: *"OK"*

Tech Support: *"Did you get a pop-up menu?"*

Customer: *"No"*

Tech Support: *"OK. Right-click again. Now do you see a pop-up menu?"*

Customer: *"No"*

Tech Support: *"OK, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up until this point?"*

Customer: *"Sure. You told me to write 'click' on the desk and so I wrote 'click'"*

Tech Support: *"OK. In the bottom left hand side of the screen, can you see the 'OK' button displayed?"*

Customer: *"Wow. How can you see my screen from there?"*

Caller: *"I deleted a file from my PC last week and I have just realised that I need it. If I turn my system clock back two weeks, will I have my file back again?"*

A Fine Reunion

by John Hernon, 60B

On a fine fresh spring weekend in late May 2010, some thirty-seven members of intake 60B made their individual ways to a small town in Cheshire, to be reunited for the first time in fifty years - and when wives and partners are included, a total of sixty-six people had arrived in all. Travelling from the four points of the compass, volcanic eruptions notwithstanding, by late afternoon on Friday all but one couple had duly arrived at the appointed location. The fickle finger of fate, in the form of volcanic ash erupting from a glacier in Iceland, had conspired to confound a valiant attempt and the very best efforts of Alan and Sheila Cook to attend from their home in Canada.

Alan had been the instigator of this private reunion from the outset, but his location in Canada had proved logistically impossible for him to organise such an event, so the cudgel had been skillfully taken up by Terry Harris. In a remarkable one-man effort spanning some four years, he had single-handedly managed to contact and physically visit most of those in attendance, by scouring the electoral roles, unrelenting approaches to REME Records and the Arborfield Museum, attempting to dig out contact information. This in addition to criss-crossing the country at his own expense and the many long weary hours spent leafing through the telephone directory eventually all paid off, culminating in a preliminary 'stag' get-together in May 2009. The undoubted success of that meeting spurred him to further efforts and set the pattern for this year's scenario at the sumptuous hotel cum golf course and convention centre near Crewe. An additional task that he undertook was the proviso that wives and partners be included, as the general consensus of opinion was that the ladies in most cases had endured a stoic long suffering relationship with their spouses, frequently on foreign postings, and that their contribution was most deserving of recognition.

It was heart-warming to observe the incredulous reaction of many of the

ladies, when they viewed the montage of photographs that had been assembled by Terry and Dick Bray, from the many contributions donated by other lads. The visual display, depicting an aerial view of the Camp and other shots showing the interior of many of the billets, drew comments to the effect that current Health and Safety regulations would never permit the operating of such an establishment! It reflects sadly on the state that society has deteriorated to, when hardened criminals are these days afforded what our boys would have considered three-star luxuries.

One particular photograph of Junior Company, stripped to the waist for physical training, depicted as many protruding ribs as frequently seen in some of the concentration camp pictures. That drew many sympathetic comments from the ladies, along with the extreme youth of most of the entrants; with the females' intuitive gaze arose a plethora of biting comments regarding the obesity of current youth. Also several querulous remarks as to why Arborfield and the other Schools were allowed to be disbanded without any public outcry. Such remarks are frequently heard when the disastrous social degradation into which our once fine country has descended is held up to public scrutiny, along with calls to bring back National Service. As former servicemen, we all know that continual downsizing and amalgamations within the Army has been the root cause of such closures and that a professional full-time Army has no use or need for conscripts. However, be that as it may, one wonders whether better use could not have been made of such fine institutions that instilled skill, knowledge and training par excellence into the youth of our country. Many of the young serving staff at the Hotel were openly amazed to see such a gathering, which had a mesmeric time-capsule effect when seen in conjunction with the photographic montage.

Those famous words "*Time will not weary*" came to mind when one saw the instantaneous rapport and camaraderie

which exuded from one and all in those few brief hours together after fifty years had elapsed. The build-up had taken a long time, the anticipation was evident in all gathered there, drawn together to honour a system that had taken us with confidence and determination into manhood from mere callow youths all those years ago. We were all justly proud of having gone through that rite of passage and survived but sadly, after a magnificent group photograph, we had to wend our weary ways and endure the inevitable anti-climax that invariably follows a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Albeit many of our number will meet up again at the 'official ceremony' in July

Jock Macpherson's moving comments at the culmination of a fine meal were heartily appreciated and aptly reflected the feelings of the assembled group without being maudlin or condescending - perfect pitch, poise and timing, with just enough emphasis when required. The presence of the lads in the Instrument Tech section who had transferred to Carlisle in 6 Div showed the grip that Arborfield, and 60B in particular, had on the psyche, also borne out by the presence of Roger Mount, a true Arborfield legend. On a more solemn note, it was sad to reflect on those who have passed away over the intervening years: Mike Devey OBE, Jake Jacobs, Phil Carter, Richard Bonsteel and Roger Lines, those who Terry Harris had the onerous task of being informed about during his unrelenting quest. Another point worth making is that the feelings which assail one at the thought of coming into contact with former colleagues after a gap of fifty years is very similar to those we all experienced when approaching Arborfield for the first time. A strange concoction of trepidation, fear, uncertainty and a distinct urge to 'let sleeping dogs lie' - or in the case of fifty years ago, turn around and leg it!

I would like to mention a few close friends who, along with their very dear ladies, served to make this occasion truly unforgettable for me personally.

Ginge Latham: who we all wish a speedy recovery and restoration to good health; Ron Meatcher, the quintessential soldier and sportsman; Bill Gray, tonsorial artist of great renown; Paddy Davis, whose dedication to the Corps is known to all; Trevor Bailey, who reflected a mirror-image of my own initial misgivings; Ian Follett and Bill Fox, from Oz and the USA respectively, only confirming that psyche which transcends international boundaries and that was formed fifty years ago has truly withstood the test of time; Mike Cleary

and Russell Edwards figure clearly in my recollection of the weekend, as do Bob Robson, Dougie Aitcheson and Yani Watts, probably because there was a closer affinity between 'A' and 'B' company at Arborfield, undoubtedly because we were on the posher side of the square!

"Lang may yer lum reek" - with apologies to Mr. Rabbie Burns or 'Anon', whichever comes first! Words spoken to me by a Scottish Party Chief of mine on a geophysical exploration

crew in Cameroon, West Africa, many years ago, uttered in all sincerity as we stood gazing at the plume of smoke drifting away from the volcanic summit of Mount Cameroon way off in the distance on a crystal clear Sunday morning in May. He further qualified this quote by adding "*Nothing lasts forever you know*", speaking in terms of a comfortable sinecure I had made for myself in that place and never a truer word was spoken, except that I would now like to add - "*Apart from Arborfield*".

Ode To A Spelling Checker

Eye halve a spelling chequer,
It came with my pea sea;
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye can knot sea

Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write,
It shows me strait a weigh

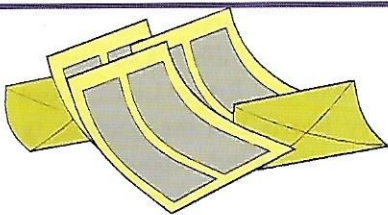
As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite;
It's rare lea ever wrong

Eye have run this poem threw it;
I am shore your pleased two no
It's letter perfect awl the weigh -
My chequer tolled me sow!

(Contributed by Frank Fendick, 45A)

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.



OBAN LETTERS

Eggy Eggleton, 52B, writes:

Roger Millard, 46A

I met Roger in 1975/76 at Bisley, when I was on the Heathrow Police Sports & Social Club committee. The Metropolitan Police took control of Heathrow Airport in November 1974. We formed a Shooting Section and went to the ranges at Bisley at least once a month. We hired rifles from *Fultons* for members

without their own weapons. I had to book the ranges, collect the rifles and pay *Fultons*. We always hired the same rifles and, as you do, I got talking to the armourer. One day, I realised he was ex-Army and I asked him if he'd been at the AAS. I told him that I was an ex-boy and also about the reunions. I don't remember if he'd attended before - but I always looked him up at reunions afterwards.

After leaving the Police, I still attended Bisley with a civilian club - and Roger repaired a pistol I had.

He told me a tale about when he was attached to the Royal Marines Commando Brigade. He was abroad and there was flap one weekend, so the Brigade was put on alert. The Brigadier asked Roger about a machine-gun that was in REMO

Workshops – and that he wanted it ‘now’. Roger duly went to the Workshop and obtained the rifle after much difficulty, as it was closed for the weekend. On Monday, the Workshop ASM sent for him. The ASM was sitting in a glass-fronted office and, behind him, the wall

was mounted with boards, covered all over with hundreds of coloured discs, indicating items in the Workshop and their state of repair – obviously the man’s pride and joy. He went on alarmingly at Roger about the weapon being taken out of the Workshop without his permission. Roger

told him to take it up with the Brigadier and walked out of the office, slamming the door behind him. On looking back, he saw all those coloured discs falling off the wall!

Roger was always very helpful – and a real gent.

Pete Marsh, 65C, writes:

I have shared this with a lot of my civilian friends too; I know a great deal of those civilian friends will know how I have dealt with life thus far and, IMPORTANTLY, they know I am here for them too! I have borrowed this saying from a pal of mine: “Live your life as an Exclamation, not an Explanation”.

CIVILIAN FRIENDS:

Get upset if you are too busy to talk to them for a week

Never ask for food

Call your parents Mr and Mrs

Bail you out of jail and then tell you what you did was wrong

Have never seen you cry

Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back

Know a few things about you

Will leave you behind if that is what the crowd is doing

Would knock on your door

Share a few experiences

Will take your drink away if they think you've had enough

Will talk crap to the person who talks crap about you

Know where you buried the body

Will call you ‘mate’ as a term of endearment

Are for a while

Will ignore this

MILITARY FRIENDS:

Are glad to see you after many years; and will happily carry on the same conversation you were having last time you met

Are reason you have no food

Call your parents Mum and Dad

Would be sitting next to you saying, ‘Mate...we stuffed up ...but what a laugh!’

Cry with you

Keep your stuff so long they forget it's yours

Could write a book with a shed full of direct quotes from you

Will kick the backsides of whole crowds that left you behind

Walk right in and say, ‘I'm home, got a beer?’

Share a lifetime of experiences no civilian could ever dream of

Will look at you stumbling all over the place and say, ‘You had better drink the rest of that, don't waste it’, then carry you home and put you safely to bed

Will knock the crap out of people who use your name in vain

Helped you bury the body

Call you ‘W**ker’ or ‘To**er’ as a term of endearment

Are for life

Will forward this to their military mates

Keith Evans (Membership Administrator), 45A, e-mailed:

Where are they now?

I was recently visited at the REME Museum by two young ladies of 83-year old vintage! They told me that their Dad, Harry Baker (b.1901) came to the ATS (Boys) from Corsham as an Instructor (Mechanical) in 1939. He used to invite some of the Apprentices home to tea on Sunday afternoons. One daughter, Jean Baker (pre-marriage), remembers two of those boys as Les Dangerfield and Gerald Dear. Sadly, Gerald passed away in 2003 – and now there appears no trace of Les Dangerfield, who is recorded as being of intake 39C. A recent OBAN sent to D Stewart was returned, marked as ‘unknown at this address’. Please, is there anyone out there with knowledge of either of these two gentlemen?

Eggy Eggleton, 52B, writes again:

School History - observations

Recently on TV there were programs about Frederick Mitchell-Hedges (crystal skulls and the real Indiana Jones). Sometime between January 1953 and July 1955 he came to the Apprentices' School and gave a lecture on his life.

While I was at Arborfield, a Private in the Royal Scots was posted in as permanent staff. He complained that the Pipe Band wore kilts of Hunting Stuart Tartan - that was his Regiment's Tartan. The School had to be affiliated to the Royal Scots.

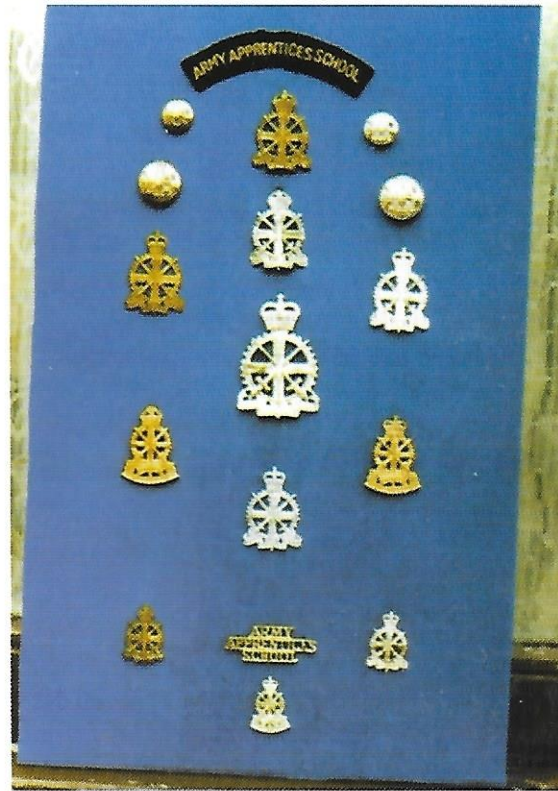
Speaking to ex-boys at the last Reunion, nobody seemed to know that REME was the first Corps or Regiment to make L/Cpl a rank. In the Army it was an appointment and, when posted to another unit or camp, you lost the stripe. In the late 1950s REME made you a Corps Corporal if you were qualified to be a full Corporal. You kept the stripe when posted. I was made a Corps Corporal when I passed my 2nd Class Recovery.

I enclose a photo of my Apprentice

School badges as updated since my request for Queen's Crown button - many thanks.

Reference the article in OBAN44 regarding ARVs: in November 1956 I was serving in 18 Command Workshops, Bovington, and was transferred from the Tels Workshop to the MT Section. In this section we had a Churchill ARV with a drainpipe welded on the turret to look like a gun. Then in 1957, with the 17th/21st Lancers, we had Mark 1 Centurion ARV. If you sat in the front seats of the turret, there was no way of closing the hatch and you were exposed to the weather - another great design.

Request - While I was in the 3rd Carabiniers LAD, there were a number of ex-apprentices serving: Barry Dady, Arborfield '57 intake, Ken Standon (later Major), Lofty Middleton, Trevor Hobday, Chepstow, Slim Seldon, Arborfield, S/Sgt Ken Bye, Chepstow 52B, S/Sgt



Jim Bishop '47 Chepstow (later rebadged RQMS Carbs), L/Cpl Sanders, Chepstow (collided with my Scammell in Kuwait) and a S/Sgt ex-Arborfield, a junior Div to me. I cannot recall his name and would like to. Anyone out there remember serving with me at that posting?

Danny Long, 49B – and proud of it! - writes:

Some time ago, OBAN44 requested any memories of Herbie Payne. I can well remember suffering the iniquities of gardening – using eating irons. Maybe that's why I now have a garage full of all sorts of implements to make gardening easier. Of course, the Army was using lateral thinking long before Edward de Bono wrote about it – what other uses can a knife, fork and spoon be put to? Why, gardening, it goes without saying! What would today's Health and Safety wallies make of it? I have often thought, subsequently, that it was not a very cost-effective way of using manpower to do a simple task. It would have been cheaper to buy a push-along lawnmower out of Company funds. But then it kept maturing minds from thinking of other things to do with their spare time. Good psychology as well – maybe those 'brass hats' weren't so thick after all. I had been told, whilst a Jeep, that Herbie had once halted a marching squad by shouting, "*Halt the*

ride – the Sergeant Major's fallen off!" But it's a phrase he never used while I was being marched by him.

There was recent correspondence about '*The Windmill*' (YMCA canteen) – but it's not that particular one that springs to my mind. No, it was the *Windmill* theatre in London that I remember well. I always liked to spend a couple of days of any long leave in London, to see some of the excellent shows in its theatres. So naturally I got to know the *Windmill*. But it took me many years to pluck up the courage to go through the entrance door. I did however become something of a regular, particularly whilst serving at the FVRDE (Fighting Vehicles Research and Development Establishment) at Chertsey. It had its own station, Longcross Halt, and a half-hourly service to and from London. I used the trip to get away from the monotony of Mess life – but can assure all that I did nothing to besmirch the pages of

OBAN!

One aspect of the *Windmill* was that the 'girlie' acts were interspersed with vaudeville routines, where some of the top British comedy stars had kicked off their careers. These acts were always of high quality – and one that stands out in my mind was an American musician who could make his violin talk! I stopped going to the *Windmill* when I began to find the girls' dancing routines boring, and wanted them to make way for the comedians! I realised that it wasn't good that a heterosexual man preferred not to see females – especially naked ones!

A show that I saw, at another London theatre, sticks in my mind. This was 'No time for Sergeants', an American comedy about a backwoods young man drafted into the American Army. On his first night in barracks, as the bugler is blowing 'Taps', he looks out of his window and remarks, "*Someone's brung his trumpet*"

He is placed in charge of the ablutions and, apparently, US soldiers had to sit 'in open order', just like the Romans did centuries ago. For one CO's inspection, our hero strung all the seats together, so that when the officer entered, not only was he saluted – but one tug of the string made all the seats leap to attention at the same time! The show was later made into a very good film – well worth watching if you can find a copy.

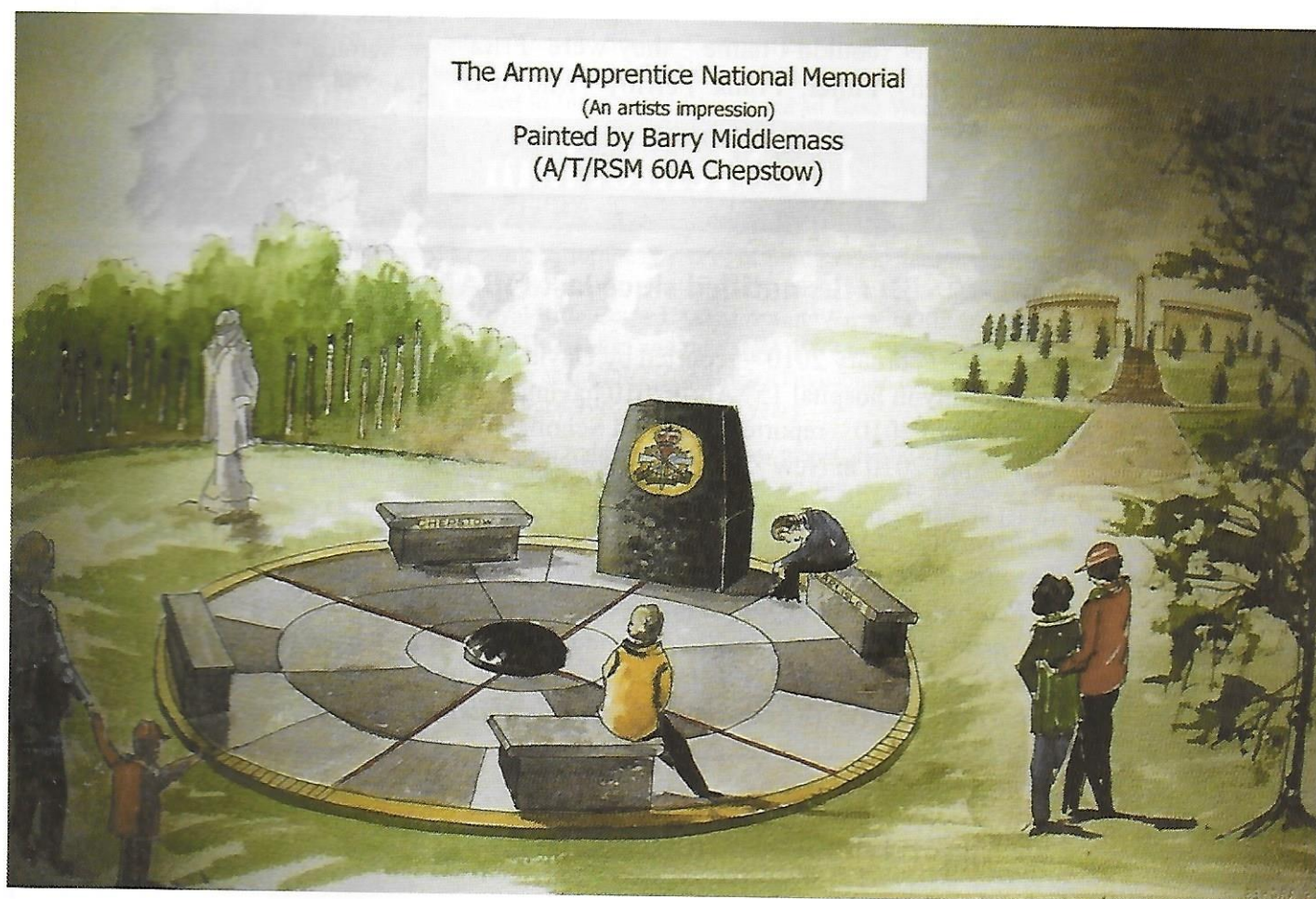
The nearest I ever got to 'open order toilets' was at K Camp, the REME billets for Donnington Workshops. There were brick walls separating the toilets, but no-one had ever fitted any doors. So any visit was guaranteed to find some of your mates in 'embarrassing' positions. The wash-basins had the usual scarce wooden plugs. Then, one day, we found that they had been replaced with rubber plugs, complete with chains. Within a week, these had all

disappeared. Fortunately for me, during my time at Arborfield, I'd bought one of these invaluable items at *Woolies* in Reading – and it stayed with me for many years afterwards!

One further thing recalled was my travels on the GWR (God's Wonderful Railway) between London and Cardiff. The trains always had to stop at Reading – whilst I would have preferred them to thunder right through!

Mo Hope, 59B writes:

I have attached an artist's impression of the Army Apprentice National Memorial, produced from my original plans that were submitted to, and passed by, the Trustees of the Arboretum site. The artist is another ex-boy, who was the A/T/RSM at Chepstow, from intake 60A, by the name of Barry Middlemass. I hope to have an update on progress within the next couple of weeks.



Fred Hayward, 45A, pens a few lines:

Further to Bob Ward's recent letter in *OBAN47*, about his surprise and delight at receiving compensation for developing 'basal cell carcinomas', I too have suffered from these and have also been awarded a 4-figure sum. My consultant dermatologist's first words to me were, "Did you ever serve in the tropics with *HM Forces*?" She had obviously seen a number of similar cases and later, whilst cutting and stitching me, she advised me to have a go at obtaining compensation.

Looking back, if only we had realised just how dangerous is strong sunlight! On the contrary, we considered ourselves fortunate because, while working in the open in Hong Kong's New Territories, we had the luxury of working 'stripped to the waist'. We were in a LAD attached to HQ 27 Infantry Brigade – and the rest of the Headquarters were jealous of our free and easy dress code, as they had to wear tunics and web-belts for a lot of the time. They suffered from prickly heat and tinea (ringworm) – we didn't!

After two years, the war broke out in Korea – and sleeping in a tent during the winter wasn't nearly so pleasant. I then must have added to my troubles by sunbathing at Port Said, whilst awaiting the ignominious withdrawal from Suez in December 1956. I was determined to get back to UK with an unseasonal tan! (p.s. when I went for my medical, I took photographs of our unit whilst working out in the open – I think that clinched it for me!)

Tony 'Tee-Cee' Church, 55A, e-mailed:

Reading Lemmy Holmes's excellent article in OBAN 46, I am reminded that when my intake left 'HQ' Coy to join 'B' Coy, our number was so large that three or four of us were put into D spider room D4, occupied by Lemmy and Co, who were then already in 4 Div. You can imagine our apprehension at this prospect, being Jeeps in such senior company! We had visions of never-ending blancoing and cleaning sessions and being at the beck and call of all and sundry. We could not have been more mistaken

- Lemmy and the rest of the lads treated us like their own, and this in itself gives the lie about bullying in our day. I always remember Lemmy in particular as, by his own admission, he used to get involved in all sorts of weird and wonderful things. He actually possessed, as I recall, a tape-recorder, on which he taped one of our Pipe Band appearances at Earl's Court. A definite 'Bombhead' was our Lemmy! Finally, reference his picture of the D4 occupants who he couldn't name - they were 'Fritz' Fuller, Frank Ferriby (who was

indeed from Ferriby in East Yorks!) and I think that it may be Doug Page, although I may be wrong on that one. I'd love to see Lemmy again, we had some great times in D4!

And again Barrie 'Eggy' Eggleton, 52B, asks:

I am directing this to anybody who served at Arborfield when it was still the Army Technical School. Did you ever wear a cloth shoulder title with 'A.T.S.' in black on a khaki background? Please contact me on 01895 447 017. Many thanks.

Im Memoriam

Deaths notified since last OBAN

Barney O'Shea, 45B, died 17th February 2010 - reported by David Schofield/B Hill

Dave Amy, 51B, died peacefully in hospital 15th April 2010 having been very poorly for a considerable time

Frank Bass, 52A, died 22nd April 2010 - reported by David Schofield

Dan Rennie, 53B, died 3rd April 2010 in New Zealand - reported by Trevor Stubberfield

News was received from Ian Rea (39) of the passing of his friend Peter Humpston, (Jersey 1938 - Arborfield 1939), in hospital in Perth, Western Australia. Peter died of cancer against which he had fought a long battle. Ian and Peter met when they joined the Army Technical School in Arborfield in 1939, Peter transferring from Jersey prior to the German invasion of the island. That they were still in regular contact recently says much for the friendships formed in their early days. With his passing, we lose another link with the very start of our Arborfield history. (Kindly sent in by Trevor Stubberfield, 52A, in response to the last 'deaths notification' in OBAN47. Ed.)

Major John Dixie Churchill MC, 1932 - 2008

In OBAN43, issued back in November 2008, Clive Swatton of 54B reported the death of Major Churchill, who had died earlier that year. Although Clive hadn't known the Major during boys' service, he later served under his command in the Home Service Force in the late 80s. Then, in March of this year, John Worland, 52B, came across an article about the same gentleman, who had first been commissioned into the Suffolk Regiment in February 1953. As Capt Churchill served as one of so many well-respected Permanent Staff members at the Apprentices' School, I am happy to pen this small tribute to him, based upon an Internet entry.

With his Regiment, John served for three months in Cyprus during 1956, during the height of the EOKA uprising. (EOKA was a terrorist group, set up to fight for 'Enosis', union with Greece.) He followed that by a period of recruit training at the Regimental Depot at Bury St Edmonds and later volunteered for service with the Sultan of Muscat's Forces, becoming 2i/c of a Company in the Central Oman Group, with the rank of Captain. In January 1959, the final assault on the rebel stronghold at Jebel Akhbar took place. It was during this difficult period that Capt Churchill, "by his courage and personal leadership of many patrols, imbued the troops with a confidence, which enabled them to operate at will in the mountain refuge of the Omani rebels"

For his fine efforts, Her Majesty the Queen was graciously pleased to approve the award of the Military Cross, in May 1959. Following an attack of jaundice, and a period of eight months on sick leave, in October 1960 he was appointed to the Apprentices' School at Arborfield as 2i/c of the recently formed 'Senior Company'. During his service at Arborfield, John got married and remained at the School until September 1962. He then re-joined his former Regiment, now known as 1st East Anglians, based at Felixstowe. He returned to active service in the Middle East during 1964 in Aden. After further service with the TA Home Service Force, his final retirement came in 1989.

(My thanks go to John Worland for passing on the information that led to this very brief obituary. Does anyone else have any knowledge of Major Churchill's time with Senior Company? Ed.)

George James Alfred Hougez, 42A, 1926 - 2009 **(Late In-Pensioner of the Royal Hospital Chelsea)**

George was born in Alderney, Channel Islands, on 22 August 1926. He was one of six children, the only son, together with five sisters. George's father was a Merchant seaman before joining the Royal Navy, only to have his first and last RN ship sunk in WW2.

George enlisted at Chatham, Kent, into the General Service Corps on 21 January 1942, aged 15, straight from school. He then attended the Army Technical School (Boys) at Arborfield from 1942 to 1944. His first posting was to Kinnegar Base Workshops in Belfast. In 1945 he was posted to India to the Secunderabad Base Workshops, then to 146 Mobile Infantry Workshops at Dhond until 1947. It was not long before his leadership qualities were acknowledged as well as his technical skills. His tour included a 10-week course on Infantry Company Weapons (which he thoroughly enjoyed) and he was promoted to Sergeant VM. In 1947 he was posted to Egypt at Tel El Kebir, on a six-month S/Sgt course. He also had a spell with 775 LAD Workshops in Palestine at Haifa. The unit later moved back to Egypt for one year and George was stationed in Shandur, where he met his future wife Ellen, who was then working for the NAAFI. In June 1949 he returned to the Maintenance Techniques Experimental Unit at Arborfield until 1952, when he was posted to Germany to the LAD of HQ 11 Armoured Division in Sennelager. In 1953 moved to 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps LAD as Acting Warrant Officer Class 2. From 1955 to 1957 he was posted to REME Inspectorate Germany in Dusseldorf and then from 1957 to 1959 to Olen in Belgium, at the Advanced Base Workshops. In 1960 he was posted to Aden as the OIC 'C' Vehicles Division in the Theatre Workshops, before returning to the UK for discharge on 31 March 1962, having served for over 17 years.

George's life is not easy to distil into a few paragraphs, or even a few pages. Some of us move in a relatively straight line from infancy to old age. Others - and they are generally the more interesting people - lead lives full of twists and turns, diversions and fresh starts. George was one of those, although there were enduring themes in his life which underpinned all else that he did. One such thread, or perhaps 'rope' would be a better word, was his total commitment and loyalty to whatever cause or task he undertook. George was equally totally committed to his family's education and knowledge, so that all of them could make the most of their opportunities.

(Compiled by Keith Evans, 45A)

Gerald 'Gerry' Pursglove, 39A, 1924 - 2010



Gerry was born on 18 December 1924 in Sheffield. When he was only three years old, the youngest of seven children, his family moved back to Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. In 1938, at the tender age of fourteen, Gerald joined up as an apprentice boy soldier and, for the next twenty two years, he was to show great bravery and courage as he experienced active service in various war zones around the world. His first years were spent at the Army Technical School, Arborfield. He joined the main Army service when he was eighteen years old and, at the age of nineteen, took part in the historical and terrifying D-Day landings at Gold Beach, which he re-visited several times in later years. He often spoke about the landing craft he came in on and how he and his fellow soldiers had to wade in the water onto the beach, under constant threat of attack from the waiting Nazis. He was a REME soldier, repairing tanks and vehicles, being part of 79th Armoured Division that fought its way as part of the Allied push through France, Belgium and finally into Germany, ending in

Lüneburg. He was posted back to UK when the war finished and sent to Bordon, Hampshire.

Gerry met 'love of his life' Val at a local dance in Petersfield and, after a whirlwind romance of eight months, they married in July 1951, at St. Mary's Church in Liss (Val's home village). After only five weeks of marriage, Gerry was posted to another war zone, this time to Korea for some twenty months. Firstly he was attached to the 8th Hussars and then to the 10th Inniskillings. His leave period was spent in the exotic surroundings of Japan. Once back in 'Blighty', Gerry was sent back to Bordon, where he lived for four years - his son Stephen was born there in 1955. His next posting was to Singapore in late 1957. As part of Gerry's responsibilities, he had to ride once a month on the train from Singapore up to Tai Ping in North West Malaya, protecting passengers from Communist bandits. Val and Stephen went with him to Singapore and they had three very good years all together as a family. Julie was born there in 1958, making the family complete. By this time, Gerry had risen to the rank of Warrant Officer and, on his return from Singapore, he decided to retire from the Army after a full twenty-two years of service.



Despite his global travels and finally settling in the south of England, Gerald never forgot his roots. Indeed, he was proud of his background, his love of his home town never seemed to fade – he loved to hear about 'G', as he and his mother Annie used to refer to Gainsborough. He once said that he had the River Trent flowing through his veins! His sense of humour and military background never left him, even in those difficult latter days of depending on others to help him cope. Gerry loved sports, both spectating and participating. His passion for football started as a young boy and developed in the Army and afterwards. He qualified as a referee and always did his best to be fair and impartial in his matches. In Singapore he refereed Gurkha and RAF matches. He was a keen fan of Portsmouth FC and used to go to Fratton Park to watch them play. In his latter years, his northern roots saw him drawn to Manchester United and he always followed their successes and losses on television. Gerry was also a real polyglot – he studied French at night school for many years and his flair lead him to try Spanish and German. French always remained his real favourite though.

(The words above, and the poem that follows, are taken from the Eulogy read out at Gerry's funeral service by his nephew Alan Overton. Gerry's widow Valerie kindly supplied the two photographs. One shows Gerry, probably just into man's service – note the REME flash. The second shows WOII Pursglove serving at 40 Base Wksp. Ed.)

When Tomorrow Starts Without Me

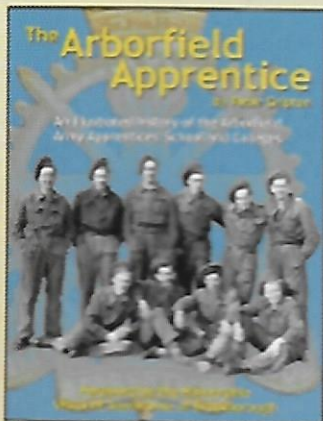
When tomorrow starts without me and I'm not there to see;
If the sun should rise and find your eyes all filled with tears for me;
I wish so much you wouldn't cry the way you did today,
While thinking of the many things we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me, as much as I love you,
And each time you think of me, I know you'll miss me, too.
But when tomorrow starts without me, please try and understand
That an angel came and called my name and took me by the hand;
And said my place was ready in Heaven far above,
And that I'd have to leave behind all those I dearly love.

But as I turned to walk away, a tear fell from my eye,
For all my life I'd always thought I didn't want to die.
I had so much to live for and so much yet to do,
It seemed almost impossible that I am leaving you.

I thought of all the yesterdays, the good ones and the bad,
I thought of all the love we shared and all the fun we'd had.
We have our treasured yesterdays, our paths now part a while;
I'll say goodbye and kiss you, and maybe see you smile.

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.

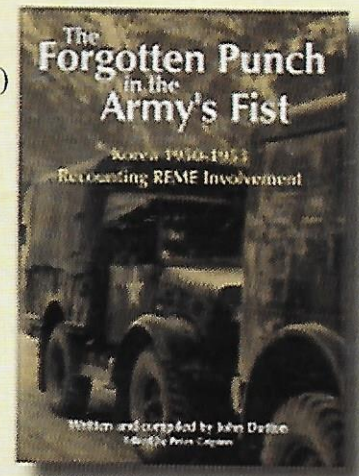
SUPPLEMENT - THE FINAL CHAPTER

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

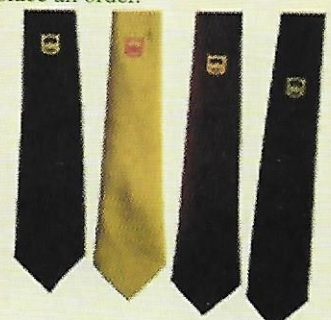
Narrated by John Smithson

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.





An idea of how the site may look
when our memorial is in situ.