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Issue 50



O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

BUMPER 50TH EDITION!

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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. If this causes difficulty, please email or telephone the Editor for advice.**

Membership of the Arborfield Old Boys Association is open to all those who served, as apprentice or staff member, at one of the Army Apprentices' Schools or Colleges at Arborfield, between 1939 and 2004. There is a joining fee of £15.00 for life membership plus an annual subscription of £15.00. Application forms are available by post from the Membership Office at the REME Museum, and on the Association website, www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



I would like to pass on 'Congratulations' to the Association for reaching this milestone issue of the Newsletter – *OBAN50*! Lots of you out there praise the editorial staff for producing the newsletter – but there would be no *OBAN* at all without the precious contributions from our loyal readership. Long may this continue! It would be remiss of me to miss this opportunity of also paying tribute to Keith Evans and his band of volunteers, who get together over a weekend to carry out the essential job of stuffing the magazines into envelopes, addressing them and getting them into the postal system. Bless them all – it must be like '*Santa and his Elves*' at the Museum on these occasions.

My wife and I recently returned from spending another break in Chicago with my daughter, her husband and their two dogs! Again we flew out on Christmas Day – but what a contrast to the previous year. Whereas in 2009 Heathrow had been like a 'ghost-town', following all the delays and cancellations just prior to Christmas 2010, thanks to severe weather conditions, the backlog of passengers all seemed to be in Terminal 5 at the same time! However, British Airways did us proud once we were airborne, providing us with quite a tasty turkey dinner, with trimmings. Okay, it was still in a plastic tray, but not three bad at all!

Life at the OBAN desk continues to be an interesting and varied one, with quite a large postbag – in which I include both the written word and e-mails, as well as some articles from across the globe, which all add to the pending tray. It has been good, recently, to also receive a larger amount of photographs, all of which add a certain something to the written word. Keep them coming please – following the simple rules written on the inside cover of this magazine.

This may be a bit on the late side, but I wish all members and readers the happiest of New Years.

Pete Gripton, 56B

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Cover photographs

Front cover: Col Derek McAvoy, 74C, with his wife Nicola alongside, receives his City & Guilds medal from Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace (see story inside)

Rear cover: Members of his family gather at the Memorial Garden in remembrance of Bob Luck, 57A (see article inside)

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Chairman's Message



Shortly before Christmas, I received one of those 'Round Robin' e-mails – I think it worth sharing.

What's in a name?

During recent years, many of us have aged into a category in which others may see us, that category being 'Old Farts'. Actually, it's not a bad thing to be called, as you may shortly agree.

Old Farts are easy to spot at sporting events; during the playing of 'God Save the Queen', Old Farts remove their caps, stand at attention and sing without embarrassment; they know all the words and believe in them. Old Farts remember World War II, D-day, VE-day, Normandy and Hitler; they remember the Atomic Age, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Jet Age and the Moon Landing; they also remember the peace-keeping missions from 1945 to the present day. If you bump into an Old Fart on the pavement or in a store, he will apologize. If you

pass an Old Fart on the street, he will nod or tip his cap to a lady. Old Farts are more trusting of strangers and are courteous to women; they hold the door for the next person and always, when walking, make certain that the lady is on the inside for protection. Old Farts are offended if someone curses in front of women and children and, similarly, find filth or dirty language on TV or in movies embarrassing. Old Farts have moral courage and personal integrity; they seldom brag unless it's about their children or grandchildren. It's the Old Farts who know our great country is protected, not by politicians, but by the young men and women in the military serving their country. This country needs Old Farts with their work ethic, sense of responsibility, pride in their country and decent values. If this is so, it is a category in which we should be proud to belong.

Early in their lives, Old Farts were taught to respect their elders; it's just getting harder to find them.

Brian Hutchins, 61B

From the Honorary Secretary



In case I forget to mention it later, Happy New Year to everyone and let us hope that 2011 will not be as bad as everyone is predicting. At least we will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the '61 intakes, which I am sure you will agree is something to look forward to.

The fact that I joined the School in September 1961 has nothing to do with it of course - I just hope that we get sufficient numbers to justify a top table! Talking about 50th anniversaries, you will have noticed that this is the 50th issue of OBAN and what a splendid newsletter it has become. I do sincerely congratulate and thank all the editors of OBAN, and others, who have all played their part over the years in the development of OBAN to what it is today – a highly professional and informative journal.

Looking ahead to the Reunion in July, it is highly likely that this will be the last occasion when we will be able to use the old square for our parade. Nothing is certain at this time, but I would not be surprised to see a private housing estate start to be developed on the Rowcroft Barracks site during 2012. We will then have to consider using the Hazebrouck site or making the break once and for all and moving to a facility such as the Warner Holiday Village in Norfolk. I am sure that this will be hot topic of discussion at the next AGM.

I am hoping that the results of the Strategic Defence Review and various other ongoing studies will become known before the summer, in order that decisions can be made based on known facts. In closing, I would just like to congratulate and thank, on your behalf, the members of the Army Apprentice Memorial Committee, for all their hard work. The Committee has worked tirelessly to design and plan the new memorial, which is starting to take shape at the National Arboretum. It will be a splendid and fitting tribute to all Army Apprentices of the past, today and the future - and truly represent the heritage of which we are so proud.

God Bless, Bill Cleasby, 61C

Money Matters



This is the only quiet time of year for the Treasurer. Your account has again been examined by the accountant and found to be in order; and it will be presented at the July AGM for your approval.

All the Direct Debit subscriptions (778) have been collected, with only five having to be returned due to unforeseen circumstances. Cash payers, please send subs to me at your earliest convenience, preferably before the end of January this YEAR!

I have nothing more to say except Happy New Year to you all.

Mike Davis, 60B

Web Developer's Report



May I make an appeal for information surrounding the history of 'Champion Company' again please? I think it's a really important part of our history, but so far I have very little information on which to base a useful archive. I'd like people to send me their stories regarding the competition, how it was won, what privileges it gave, when it first started and eventually finished – you know the sort of thing.

The forum goes from strength to strength I'm delighted to report, with well over 200 members posting over 20 articles each day. In typical Arborfield manner, it's a place where we can chill out, take the mick out of each other, and support each other in times of difficulty. So, if you're not logging on you are missing out – a warm welcome is waiting you!

God Bless, David (Tich) Schofield, 65A

Membership Administration



We welcome the following 8 new or reactivated members who have joined the Association since the publication of *OBAN 49*:

Winder MH, 45B, Ferndown, Dorset;
Snell NHT, 57B, Cinderford, Gloucs;
Evans MG, 58B, Torrington, Devon;
Miles AB, 61A, Wokingham;
Hopkins DP, 62A, Plymouth;
Wright M, 62A, Ringwood, Hants;
Foad BC, 66C, Warwick;
Preston JP, 77C, Reading.

Keith Evans, 45A, Assistant Secretary and Membership Administrator

Recruiting



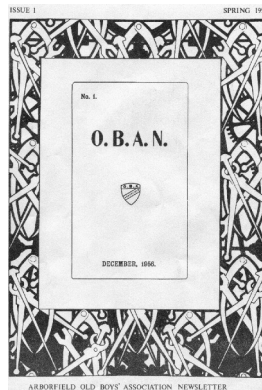
The 'Warners' weekend, 20th to 23rd May 2011, will be a lovely weekend to enjoy with our wives. Warners will reserve an area in their restaurant for our use; the programme starts with welcome drinks on Friday night. During Saturday and Sunday, we have full use of the Seaside Villages facilities - or take trips to Great Yarmouth or the Norfolk Broads. With live entertainment every evening after dinner, what more could you wish for? If you haven't got your name on the list, please contact me ASAP.

Happy New Year, Fred Mills, 51B

OBAN 50th Edition

This is quite a milestone for the Arborfield Old Boys' Association, the 50th edition of the Old Boys' Association Newsletter – or *OBAN* as it has become fondly known. The first edition of this new series started back in 1992, under the editorship and guidance of John Northam, 47A, with much assistance from his dear wife June. The front cover of that *OBAN1* featured a facsimile of the 'original' front page of the *OBAN1* of December 1956. I happily reproduce that cover once again, in commemoration of all the efforts that have gone into keeping the present series going for so long. Sadly, the first series lasted for only a few editions.

Following on from John Northam, the production of *OBAN8* was taken over by



of Editor then became 'situation vacant' for a while, but *OBANs 29 and 30* were largely due to the efforts of Ken Anderson, 58B. I am most grateful for the honour of following in three sets of such illustrious footprints, having taken over the duties as Editor back in Autumn 2004 on *OBAN31*.

It has since been a pleasure and a privilege

Brian Hornsey, 54A, who continued this valuable work right up until the very first 'full colour' version of *OBAN28*, issued in the Autumn of 2003. The post

to have had the opportunity of editing your magazine these past six years.

A couple of 'circles' seem to have been 'squared' over the years. Colonel Peter Gibson was Commandant of the College when *OBAN* rose from the ashes in 1992 – and he continues to give valuable support in the production and publication of each *OBAN* that now makes an appearance. Looking back to the original *OBAN1* – well, in December 1956, I was well and truly a 'Jeep', having joined the School just a few months earlier as part of Intake 56B. With both of us having the initials 'PG', we are always open to a few 'tips'.

Pete Gripton

OBAN Across The Ether - A Reminder

As everyone should be aware, the cost of producing and delivering our Association's wonderful newsletter is rising year on year. In addition to this, the administration required to post each copy across the world is becoming very difficult. Your Committee has been looking at cost savings and delivery methods, whilst still maintaining the very high standard of the publication.

Recently your Committee trialled the delivery of **OBAN** electronically and found it to be a great success. Thus, we wish to offer everyone with the relevant technology the opportunity of having their copy of **OBAN** delivered directly into their 'In-Box' as a PDF file. The standard of production will not, of course, be quite as high as a printed copy, but you would be saving the AOBAs both significant costs and administrative time.

So, if you would like to have your copy delivered electronically, rather than the traditional printed copy, please visit our website at <http://www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk/noticeboard.html> and forward your details, using the secure form you will see - and, for future issues, you can look forward to reading your **OBAN** from the comfort of your computer, safe in the knowledge that you are saving the AOBAs both time and money.

OBAN Issues 1 to 50

by Brian Hornsey, 54A

For some reason I have always been a collector – it's a disease! Over the years, I have collected *Dinky* toys, clocks, rifles, antique air pistols, blow lamps, Victorian cast iron lawn mowers and now, for some reason I have yet to fathom, in response to your Editorial query in *OBAN49*, I actually have all the issues of *OBAN* from Issue 1 to 49, soon to include Issue 50. As an ex-editor, I felt I couldn't let the occasion slip by without writing about those early days. Carrying out the duties of editor of *OBAN* can be a very rewarding occupation, especially when you realise that, as editor, one communicates with a whole host of people anxious to reminisce about days spent in Boys' Service (*even if this editor would have only been 2 years old when it all started in 1939!*).

I can't quite remember why I decided to rejoin the AOB in 1988, but was pleased to hear from Sam Weller (then Hon Sec) that I was already a member of the Association and my date of joining was 31st January 1957. I then remembered that all of intake 54A was marched down to one of the Company offices, where we were 'firmly advised' to join the Association! As a result of contacting Sam, one day I heard a knock on my front door and a tall distinguished (dare I say) gentleman stood there sizing me up, obviously trying to see if he had met me before during his years of service and guess what – it was the man we all have to thank for starting the new run of the *OBAN* – John Northam of 47A. It turned out that he lived in the next road to mine in

Fleet, Hampshire, and, at that time I was working as a freelance Publications Consultant from home.

In those days there was such a thing as 'desk top publishing' and, before being made redundant from *EMI*, I ran the 'Tech Pubs' department in one of its divisions. One thing led to another and I started helping John and June with the difficult job of laying out the page design, at somewhere about Issue 3. I know that John and June used to work all hours, often late into the night, trying to overcome the various obscure workings of the *Word Perfect* program, which was the elected word processing program used at the School of Electronic Engineering (SEE). I later became the official Sub-editor from *OBAN* Issue 5.

A short while later, things started to get a bit too much and John decided he and his wife were becoming too stressed with the worry and he decided he would be glad of a replacement editor. Just in the way Pete Gripton later took over from me, so I took over from John, starting with *OBAN* 9. Suddenly, I was in touch with lots of Old Boys, who all knew a lot more than me about service life, some having reached ranks that I would never be! I have to say it felt very daunting and strange returning to the Army at Arborfield, with all its formal procedures. I had left the Army in 1963 with the rank of Sergeant, so I was presented with a gap of some 28 years as a civilian to catch up on

By now, 'desk top publishing' was of the new standard used in industry and I had needed to learn all about it when running a department, so I was ideally placed to use it to design the layout from about Issue 5. John Northam's editorial in the spring issue of 1994, *OBAN5*, makes interesting reading. At one point he makes reference to being retired and I can tell you that any time my freelance work dried up, we would visit 'the pub of the day' for a long lunch. Our knowledge of the North Hampshire pubs was second to none! In the same *OBAN* he also included an article, 'Our Visit to New Zealand', which he and June made in November 1993, partly in response to the many letters he received from members living over there.

I lasted as editor up until *OBAN28*. What had started as a nine-page newsletter, typed using *Word Perfect*, was to blossom into a news magazine boasting printing on semi-gloss art paper, with covers in colour at Issues 29 to 30 and then to full colour for *OBAN31*. The membership decided it was time to upgrade the newsletter to a colour publication and, as I was unfamiliar with these latest techniques, I had no option but to make way for someone brave enough to take over. I am so pleased that Pete Gripton volunteered – I know he was a bit hesitant at first, but look at him now! His first editorial appeared in Issue 31, which explains all, and from that point he has never looked back. So, here we are at Issue 50!

Dreamland

When midnight mists are creeping and all the land is sleeping,
Around me tread the mighty dead - and slowly pass away
Lo! Warriors, saints and sages, from out the vanished ages,
With solemn pace and reverend face, appear and pass away

The blaze of noonday splendour, the twilight soft and tender,
May charm the eye, yet they shall die - shall die and pass away

But here, in Dreamland's centre, no spoiler's hand may enter,
These visions fair, this radiance rare, shall never pass away
I see the shadows falling, the forms of old recalling;
Around me tread the mighty dead, and slowly pass away

(Lewis Carroll (1832 – 1898) is famously known for his whimsical tales of his 'Alice' books. This verse shows a more profound side, as he explores the world of dreams, where we can all rest in our own reverie. Ed.)



The Army Apprentice

The object of this article is to tell of the circumstances which, over a period of one hundred and fifty years, led to the development of the Army Apprentice scheme. From medieval times to the present day, the maintenance and repair of the Army's equipment by soldier-tradesmen played a significant part in ensuring its fighting efficiency. Until the end of the 19th century, the simplicity of the equipment - cavalry, horse-drawn artillery, supply wagons and small arms - meant that soldiers, assisted by artisans such as regimental armourers, farriers, saddlers and carpenters, were able to fulfil the Army's needs for technical support. However, the introduction of the 'Rifled' Cannon in the 1871 Franco-Prussian war; the development of the internal combustion engine in the 1880s; and powered flight in 1908, began an evolutionary process of sophistication in military equipment that

rendered many craft trades obsolescent.

To meet the demand for engineering skills, to maintain and repair the Army's increasingly complex equipment, the Army established the first dedicated Apprentice School at Aldershot on the 25 September 1923. The first intake of boys, with those who joined in January 1924, then moved to Beachley Camp, Chepstow on the 28 February 1924. For the next 30 years, the Apprentice Tradesmen were trained in various locations, until the Army Apprentice scheme reached its apogee in the latter half of the 20th century with the establishment of the four principal Army Apprentice Schools - at Arborfield, Carlisle, Chepstow and Harrogate. The four benches mounted on the memorial are a reflection of the Army Apprentice scheme in its final form.

The facsimile Army Apprentices School Cap-badge, engraved on the memorial monolith, is a statement in stone that commemorates the thousands of boys who passed through the Army Apprentice scheme. The School Cap-badge not only gave the Apprentice Tradesman a regimental identity, but also symbolises the ethos that controlled and directed the activities of a system that turned boys into skilled soldier-tradesmen.

Prominent and most important are the Cross and the Crown. These stand respectively for 'Character and Loyalty' - character based on the principles of Christianity and Loyalty to the School, the Army, the Nation and the Sovereign. The Torch stands for 'Learning and for Training', of both body and mind, on good sound health lines. The Crossed Swords stand for the military virtues of 'Discipline, Steadfastness, and Devotion to Duty'. Finally, the Gearwheel forms the basis and background of the whole design, denoting 'Technical Knowledge, Skill and Co-operation'. It is only by meshing or co-operating with others that good work is done. These are not 'just words'; for the Army to be operationally effective it is required to believe in them and live by them. The standards demanded are 'lawfulness, appropriate behaviour and total professionalism', which gives rise to an institutional climate of decency and fairness.

Many of the boys who entered the Army Apprentice scheme came from an underprivileged and chaotic background. The shared experience of education, training and comradeship enabled a significant majority of the boys to go forward and achieve successful careers in the services, commerce and industry. Their ability to do so is a measure of the intelligence, integrity, determination, self-discipline and courage that define the Army Apprentice.

Remember with Pride

(This is a condensed version of Gordon Bonner's article that has been concocted for the benefit of giving background information, regarding the Army Apprentices' National Memorial, to the general public.)

Inner Peace

I am passing this on to you because it definitely worked for me today - and we all could probably use more calm in our lives. Some doctor on TV this morning said that the way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you have started.

So I looked around my house to see which things I'd started and hadn't finished. And so, before leaving for work this morning, I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of Chardonnay, a bottle of Baileys, a bottle of wum, a package of Prungles, the remainder of both Prozic and Valiuminum scriptins, the rezz of the jeezecake and a box of chocletz.

Yu haf no idr how bludy fablus I feel rite now. Please send this on to dem yu fee ar in ned ov iennr piss. An telum u friggin luvum!

1939 And All That

by Joe Griffith, May '39

Holding the King's shilling, three days ration money and three days pay, about fifteen shillings (75p) – an unbelievable sum of money for a schoolboy in pre-war England – I stood alone on Stockport railway station. It was May 22nd 1939. Self-consciously wearing my first pair of long trousers, I awaited the arrival of the Recruiting Sergeant, who had arranged to see me off on the Reading train. This would take me to join the Army Training School (Boys), Royal Army Ordnance Corps, at Arborfield. With relief I spotted him in his blue uniform, red sash and be-medalled chest. With a silver-topped stick in hand, he pushed through the crowd towards me.

"Are you ready?" he asked anxiously, appraising me with a keen eye. *"Is your father here?"* he added sharply. Hesitantly and a bit abashed, I stammered *"Oh, er, well – he couldn't leave his shop this morning. Though I think my aunt will be here to say goodbye"*, I quickly offered as an excuse as a look of Annoyance crossed his face. *"Oh well, never mind"*, he said sadly and rather quietly, *"but make sure to drop me a card and let me know how you're getting on"*. I nodded in reply. *"And remember about sport. You must take it up – you'll get on quicker"*. That was a worry to me, a country bumpkin and not very good at any form of sport! Was I damned from the start? Then I was off. I saw the face of Auntie Annie looking for me as the carriage moved down the platform. She waved desperately as I disappeared from view. Little did I know that this was not only the start of the longest railway journey I had yet experienced, but the beginning of an adventure that was to last the next thirty years.

"Can yer lend us a shilling mate?" The words penetrated my confused mind.

A powerfully built, ugly sort of bloke stood at my elbow as I stood on the hot concrete road, looking for the dining hall. It was my first day at the School. *"Ah'll let yer 'ave it back termorrer"*. Thinking this fellow might wield some influence around the place, I compliantly took the shilling from my sparsely lined pocket and meekly gave it to him. Every time I saw him after that, I looked anxiously in his direction, but he appeared not to know me. Sadly and slowly, the realization dawned on me – I had been 'caught'. It was my first experience with the 'smart guys' –

and it wouldn't happen again.

The dining arrangements appeared very homely and inviting. The messing tables were covered with white enamel tops, which gave the appearance of white tablecloths. At breakfast time, there were flowers on each table, boxes of cornflakes, jugs of milk and bowls of sugar. I remember it all looked very civilized. Unfortunately – the boys were not! The biggest and the toughest got the most. The first to get there piled whole boxes of cornflakes on their own plates, then poured milk on until it overflowed. It became like a rugby scrum. In no time at all the decks were cleared, the food all gone, so those at the back got nothing. As a result of this, the system was changed and we formed long queues at the serving hatch.

"I'se no 'Sir', but ah can meck you dance!" screamed the bull-necked drill sergeant at me. Quivering with outrage, his pugnacious face glowered down into mine. My heart contracted with fear; with eyes averted, I stood still and quiet. *"Griffith, Sir"*, I'd answered when he'd bawled *"NAME?"* at me. The rest of the drill squad looked uncomfortable. What next? He faced the squad. The fingers of his right hand toyed with the end of his pace-stick, held tightly under his arm. Stocky and powerfully built, he engaged each squad member with a challenging stare. *"Sergeant! Got it? Sergeant, that's what I am. Sergeant Arthur, South Wales Borderers – and don't you ever forget it!"* he mouthed expressively in a thick Welsh accent.

The black asphalt burned hot under our inadequate civvie shoes, as he flogged us up and down the vast square under the fierce summer sun. For three months, our callow, untidy bunch marched. Quick time, slow time, mark time, open order, close order, by the left, by the right, left wheel, right wheel – these incessant commands pounded our fearful minds and reluctant limbs. The first fortnight had been the worst. My new long trousers were quickly shredded around the bottoms. No kit was issued for several weeks and we drilled in our civilian clothes. There seemed no respite.

"What's the Commandant's name? The Adjutant's? The Company Commander's?" Standing at ease during a sweaty ten-minute break, we were often

interrogated by 'Ben Cook', the rubicund, moustached Regimental Sergeant Major, Grenadier Guards. He made unscheduled visits to gruffly examine our knowledge of the prominent members of the School's hierarchy. Like well-behaved puppets, we chanted in unison their names, ranks, regiments and honours. To get it wrong incurred the wrath of Sergeant Arthur, ever watchful and brooding over his squad. For punishment, he doubles us around the oak tree, shimmering in the heat at the distant end of the square. Mainly an undernourished crowd of skinny, pimply-faced youths from working-class backgrounds, we were soon transformed into a group of fit muscular young men, with gleaming teeth and short hair. Three hefty meals a day, while the Royal Army Dental Corps and busy barbers played their part.

About this time, 'A' and 'B' Companies were taken on an outing to the Scots Guards' depot at Windsor, under the supervision of Ben Cook. The Colonel was obviously satisfied that we were now ready for exposure to public view. But, compared to the immaculate Guards, we felt a ragged lot. Notwithstanding, they viewed us with good humoured tolerance.

With the massive ramparts of Windsor Castle in the background, and their band playing, we marched through the streets of Windsor, self-consciously following them – it was a day to remember.

Many tales have been told about Ben Cook. He was shrewd, large and jovial, a disciplinarian, resplendent in knee-length puttees, gleaming Sam Browne belt and red-banded cap. We boys held him in awe and great respect. One freezing-cold morning, the School was lined up on the edge of the parade ground. We awaited his gruff bark, *"Onn P'ade"*, to call us on to the markers. The parade ground was covered with a thick layer of snow. Suddenly, a snowball hit me on the back of my neck. Without thinking, I hurled one back in reply. *"Come out, the boy who threw that snowball!"* Ben's hoarse rasp boomed out from across the other side. Eight-hundred boys looked at each other. My guilt-ridden conscience was too strong; I just knew he was looking straight at me! With dumb determination, like someone about to commit hari-kari, I took that first fatal step out of the ranks and marched towards Ben. I could sense all of those behind me relaxing, to breathe more

easily.

In his long purple greatcoat, he towered over me, his face ruddy and grim. Out of the corner of his mouth he growled, “*Pick up a snowball*”. With nervous alacrity, I scraped some snow together and held it out towards him. His quick brown eyes twinkled with wicked humour. “*Now*”, he said, “*eat it!*” Without hesitation, I pushed the gravelly mixture into my mouth, relieved that I not about to be escorted to the Guardroom. However, the eating was not so simple, as the snow froze in my hand. Ben, impatient with my slow masticatory progress, and anxious to get on with the parade, signaled me with his pace-stick to retreat behind him and finish it off. Craftily, I dropped it and hoped he wouldn’t notice. In vain! From the corner of his mouth, in his inimitable style, came the rasping, “*Pick it up, pick it*

up!”

He was always ahead of us with all our schemes and tricks, the malingerers and dodgers, appearing amongst them when least expected. The furtive smokers were his special targets – and many of the ‘enjoyed’ smoking his thick black twist for their pains, instead of the usual fourteen days confined to barracks, I don’t think he made any deals! My brother Denis, who joined the School after I left, told me stories of Ben (then promoted to Lieutenant Cook, the agricultural officer) and his horse Gilbert. I am sure that, by now, every member of the AOB is familiar with every story.

Other disciplinarians were not so benignly thought of by the boys. I have today, vividly in my mind, the anguish and chagrin on the face of a young apprentice, seconds late to join his squad after a

NAAFI break, the top pocket of his overalls stuffed with two-bob’s worth of chocolate bars – his weekly wage. He was ferociously accosted by a malevolent CSM, who took his treasure and crunched it under his polished boots. A silent collective groan of horror passed through our squad as we stared, fascinated at this obscene execution of a weekly joy. That was 1939 – I don’t think it would happen today.

(The above article first appeared in OBAN18, back in 1999. Once again, I include it in order to provide a ‘glimpse from the past’ for some of our newly-joined members, perhaps encouraging them to write themselves. I am sure that, like me, even our youngest members cannot but be fascinated by these ‘tales of yore’ and the ‘old school’ characters that appear in them. Ed.)

A Soldier

A soldier lay down at the roadside, awaiting his transport home,
For a moment he let his mind wander, for a moment he let his thoughts roam

Home to his wife and children, to his family and friends he loved dear,
He turned his eyes towards heaven and said, “*Dear God why are we here?*”

*The people who live here don’t want us, but the powers that be say they do,
And why are we losing so many, for the ideals and whims of a few?”*

In the distance he heard the gunfire and he thought of his comrades in arms
And he wished that he could be with them, though he knew that he could come to harm

To be part of this band of brothers, he knew that his duty was clear,
For with all of his friends around him, he knew that he would feel no fear

A soldier lay down by the roadside, knowing he would fight no more,
For he had become a statistic, he’d been killed just two days before.

So those who sent our youth over, to a war that cannot be won,
Stop! And think of your feelings, if that soldier was your only son

So please bring our young people back, back to their own home ground,
And pray that the Good Lord looks o’er them and they ALL come home safe and sound

(Written and kindly contributed by Andy O’Neil, ex-boy soldier, 56A)

The School Prayer

Teach us good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

(I have to admit to having forgotten all about the above, until I read it once again in the Passing-out Ceremony programme recently sent in by Maurice Hope. So thanks to ‘Mo’ for the reminder of what should be in our everyday thoughts and actions. Ed.)

Exercise Grape-Pick

by West Robertson, 50B

Back in 1975, I was invited to become a founder member of 'Sales and Training'. This was a scheme whereby time-expired men, who were reasonably fit, could extend their service by occupying positions such as instructors and advisors, or on secondment to foreign powers, where physical ability was not an essential requirement. It offered three tours of five years duration, rank and appointment would be retained, and also gave the right to resign at any time - I accepted! As far as I know, the scheme was soon abandoned - but not before I was posted as Instrument Inspector to 1 BR Corps. Arriving in Hanover on my birthday, the day my Regular service ended, I found that, although I was a touring inspector for 1 BR Corps, I would be based with 63 Station Wksp, where my instrument abilities could also be employed. Within a year, the incumbent ASM at 63 Station retired and I was invited to take the job. Rummaging through some dusty regulations, I came across a section headed '*Exercise Grape-pick*'. Intrigued, I delved deeper and found that since the war, when available local labour was in short supply, the Army had called for volunteers to assist with the grape harvest on the River Moselle. (*That's the French spelling, it is Mosel in German. Ed.*) In theory, time spent would be part of the soldier's annual leave entitlement, nominal wages would be provided by the family being assisted, as would food and accommodation. This appeared to be something I should have a go at, so telephoning the appropriate number, I offered my services!

Sometime around mid-October, I received a call from a lady, thanking me for the offer of my services, and informing me that the start date for the late-season picking would be announced shortly. There would be only one day's notice and I should be prepared to travel to Berncastle for allocation to a family. Notice duly arrived, the car was already packed, so off I went on the journey south to the Mosel. Berncastle, a pretty, old, typically German town, with narrow streets and timber-framed houses and shops, is the centre of the Mosel wine-growing industry. In a hall close by the river waited the reception committee, comprising a local council member and individuals from each of the villages. A number of squaddies already awaited allocation. I made myself known, and

soon joined about a dozen or so others who were assembled for employment in the tiny village of Leiser, situated about six miles from Berncastle. A minibus arrived to take those without personal transport, while myself and a couple of others followed in our own cars.

Waiting to greet us was a tall statuesque lady, married to a Welshman. Having lived for a number of years in Canada, her English was perfect. In next to no time, all were dispersed to the various homes of those who had requested assistance. All except myself that is! As obviously much older than the average volunteer, the lady had decided that I should go to personal friends of hers, who had also seen the passage of many years, but in whose home it would not be required to provide the sort of amenities that the younger might expect. I was thus taken to meet Hans and Carola Hornung-Glabus. Introductions made, I began to get a touch apprehensive.

The '*low deutsch*' spoken here was far-removed from the tongue I was familiar with in Hanover. Furthermore, Hans spoke a guttural Bavarian that even Carola, after sixty-plus years of marriage, had difficulty comprehending. The only English either had was the "*Hello*" they used when answering the telephone! A bottle of wine was produced, Bacchus again the great leveller, and things began to look up - until the lady interpreter asked if I would like bacon and eggs for breakfast? Of course, in my ignorance, I agreed - only to have Carola disappear then return, bearing in each hand a choice of '*speck*', this being as close to bacon as was available. One slab was pure fat, the second had slight traces of meat, and was therefore chosen!

Getting to work

At seven o'clock next morning, Hans rummaged among the feather duvet and matching pillow until he grabbed a part of me, shook it until establishing I was awake, then left to collect his tractor and trailer. Downstairs, Carola poured me a cup of black coffee, then proceeded to hack slices from the slab of speck, which were then slapped on a plate and placed in front of me. She spoke - of what she said I have no idea - but I could have replied in Persian, and possibly did, but she stopped slicing. Breakfast over, the sound of Hans returning had Carola indicate that I should take a pile of old coats out to the yard. I started placing the coats over my arm but

was stopped. The coats were acting as the insulation around a huge pot and it was the whole caboodle that was required to go. The badly-dressed pot was dumped into the back of the trailer, to join a large basket with carrying-straps attached to one edge, and some black plastic buckets in which lay half a dozen secateurs. Joining Hans and Carola on the tractor, we left the village and drove towards the vine-clad hills, meeting and greeting other working parties as we did so. Grapevines stretched in all directions, as far as the eye could see, there did not seem to be any boundary markers. Indistinct conversations of groups already hard at work, drifted between the pole-staked vines, and I was handed a pair of secateurs, having already claimed a bucket and hoisted the basket onto my back. *Riesling*, the name synonymous with wine from the Mosel, is actually the type of grape from which the wine is made. Small berries are tightly clustered, each bunch resembling a large, green raspberry, and are picked by cutting from the parent branch. Each worker fills his bucket and, when full, tips it into the basket placed conveniently at the end of a row. When the basket is full, the most able worker carries it downhill and deposits the contents into the trailer, returning the basket to a suitable position, before returning to his harvesting. No prizes for guessing who was the most able worker!

So the morning progressed, each trip with the basket resulting in a higher return climb, until about mid-day when we stopped for lunch. The pot was de-robed and the lid removed to expose a steaming mix of potatoes and onions, on top of which lay small smoked sausages. Lunch over, rather too quickly I may add, we returned to work until, at about five, the trailer was full. But that was just the start of the working day! Back to the house and the trailer was backed alongside the cylindrical construction, which I now knew to be the winepress. While Carola went indoors to heat up some coffee, I helped Hans manhandle what looked like an old fashioned mangle above the press. That done, a length of hose was then connected to a tray below the press. Hans lit some sort of paper which gave off a foul smell as it smouldered, then lowered it into an ancient, two-thousand litre wooden barrel. Sterilisation complete, the other end of the hose was popped into the top of the barrel.

A long-handled garden fork was

produced, power was connected to the mangle, and I was instructed by sign language to start shovelling the grapes into the gaping maw of that contraption. Battered grapes and juice dropped into the waiting press. As the fruit was crushed, Hans would occasionally take a bunch from the trailer and bite off the end, trusting his taste and experience, rather than the hydrometer, to gauge the sugar content - and encouraged me to do the same, although it was all a mystery to me.

About a ton of grapes soon dripped their juices from the perforated sides of the press, the trailer was empty, and Carola called us to dine. Silly me! Thinking that the day was done, tired and aching just a bit, I was halfway through a bottle of quality brew and contemplating bed, when again came the call to work. Pressing complete, the skins and pips, now dry to the touch, had to be cleared from the press and put into a large, polythene-lined barrel, standing on end in a corner of the yard. This done, froth from the already fermenting juices, which had accumulated on top of the drip tray, was collected in buckets, press and mangle were hosed clean, and then, when all was deemed satisfactory by Hans, it was back to the bottle! And so the weeks progressed. There were days when duties were completed early enough for me to meet fellow volunteers, few of whom appeared to be so involved with the aftermath of the actual picking.

Sundays were of course, labour-free. It was then that I was able to find out more about my employers-cum-hosts. One fine day, Hans and a friend, both officers in some Bavarian Cavalry regiment, had ridden into Leiser, from where they were on exercise, dressed in full military splendour, breastplates and helmets shining. Carola and her girl friend were, naturally, smitten! Romance had blossomed, but so did the call to war. Hans had returned, whole but broken, to become a peasant farmer and husband to Carola, who, in turn, has more than she could have dreamed for. Her friend, with sparrow-like anxiety and patience, still waits to hear again the sound of hooves on the cobbled street, for her man sadly perished, but even after two wars, her hope has not diminished.

Wine grading

'Exercise Grape-pick' actually only applied to the late-season gathering of grapes, a time which gives name to one of the quality German wines produced, 'Spatlese'. To understand the marketing of wines in Europe, we must go back a few years. Too much wine was being

produced, of which it was impossible to determine quality from what was printed on the label. The French restricted the number of bottles a grower could market, irrespective of the quantity he grew, which accounts for the fact that it is possible, in wine-growing areas, to buy for pennies in a local shop, what will cost pounds elsewhere. The Germans took a different tack. Grades of wine were defined and the quality of the original juice (must) would control this. Yeast, in the presence of sugar, will produce alcohol, so the amount of sugar in the must will determine the eventual strength. But alcohol kills yeast, so too much sugar will leave a sweet wine. Earlier picked fruit will usually contain less sugar, consequently it will be fit for drinking sooner, and is usually classed as 'Table wine' or 'Qualitat'. Progressing up the scale, there are six grades of pedigree wine, or 'Qualitat mit Pradikat'.

First comes 'Kabinet', almost dry tasting, followed by 'Spatlese', sweeter and thicker. 'Auslese' is the last to come straight from the vine, showing its pedigree by colour and texture. The product now becomes much more labour-intensive, where each bunch of grapes has any unripe or unworthy grape removed before pressing, this is called 'Beerinauslese', a beautiful sweet after-dinner tippie. Going to extremes, as only the Germans seem to do, 'Trocken Beerinauslese' is the result of this time, picking only the best berries from the bunch to press. I never went that far! Topping the pedigree list is 'Eiswein'. This is the simplest of all to produce, but the worst to gather. Fruit is left on the vine to freeze and while still frozen, crushed. Fermentation will have already taken place within the berries, so the wine is just waiting to be gathered, and only crushing is required to release it.

The two-week period of *Exercise Grape-pick* came to an end. Hannah, the English-speaking friend who had first met us, arrived at the house to assist in the wage negotiations, and the completion of some forms required by the Tax collectors. It appeared that I was tax deductible, so I entered and signed for a couple of extra hands in addition to myself, inventing names and remote, obscure units. Wages were a more delicate problem. I wanted no reward, satisfied with the experiences I had had. We eventually settled for a case or two of wine, and a promise that I would return next year. When eventually I put my pack in the car, I struggled to find space for it. Ten cases, a dozen bottles per case, were already there! Late the following October, I was again in Leiser,

as I was to be for the next six years. Informing the appropriate authorities, I would travel directly to Hans and Carola, and we would sample my last year's efforts while imparting each other's happenings over the times we had been apart. With the passing years taking their toll on my hosts, more and more was left to me. I also bit the grapes - but confirmed with the hydrometer. I ran the press, but on the slow side to be sure. I shoveled the residue from the press, late into the night, into that huge barrel and finally covered it with old newspapers and a foot of earth. And I sold wine!

While clearing up one evening, for we intended bottling tomorrow, I heard Hans, who had taken to promoting me as my abilities increased, call a greeting to someone from where he was messing about in the yard. The words "*Herr Colonel*" and "*Meister*" had me worried! Looking out, there stood a group of perplexed Americans, being ushered towards me by Hans. In faltering German, a request was made to taste our wine. "*That worker there said this might be possible?*" Eyes twinkling, as he touched his cap in a serf-like manner, Hans left me to get on with this final part of my training. A couple of dozen cases left that day, and even better days followed as word spread that there was an English-speaking vintner in the area!

Whether or not '*Exercise Grapepick*' still exists, I don't know. This was probably the first 'Hearts and Minds' scheme, devised before the phrase became popular, and had thrived for many years. So, if deceased, yet another tradition is lost, and who will mourn the passing? But if perchance you stumble across a bottle of German wine on a dusty shelf, look closely at the label. Printed somewhere, will be the letters 'AP', followed by five groups of numbers. The first three groups are the licence-number of the vintner, the last, the year in which the wine was bottled. It is the next-to-last that should be noted, for this tells you how much of that vintage was produced. A high number tells of chemists, machines or wage-conscious pickers; a low number, of up to three, tells of love, skill, experience and pride. Who knows? You may even have found the efforts of a battle-scarred warrior, his wife, and a time-expired squaddie! Unlikely to be mine - but I was not alone, the first or the last, and if I managed to find that regulation, so must have others!

(Many thanks, West, for yet another of your well-told tales. I still have a few in the armoury! Ed.)

Brass Monkeys

It was necessary to keep a good supply of cannon balls near the cannon on old war ships, but how to prevent them from rolling about the deck posed a big problem. The storage method devised was to stack them as a square-based pyramid, with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which then rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area, right next to the cannon. This then presented another problem — how to prevent the bottom

layer from sliding/rolling from under the others!

The solution was a metal plate with 16 round indentations, called, for reasons unknown, a 'Monkey'. But if this plate were made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make the plate of brass - hence, 'Brass Monkey'. But few landlubbers realized that brass contracts much more and much faster than

iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey.

Thus it was, quite literally, "*cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey*". And all this time, you folks thought that it was just a vulgar expression?

(Contributed by Mo Hope, 59A)

Vital Work 'Down Under'

Old pal Pete Drake, 57A, who has lived in Perth, West Australia, for many years, recently e-mailed a copy of a newspaper article that he thought would be of worthy news to OBAN readers. The article reported that another ex-Arborfield Apprentice, **Fred Ordynski, 57B**, had been working on this vital project for a number of years now. Pete explained that he knew little detail, other than what was contained in the article, and that "*any questions, you will have to contact him*".

(Pete had attached the article to his e-mail, but it didn't really lend itself to publication. I then asked Pete for Fred's contact details and eventually obtained the following response from Fred. Ed.)

"I have just had a phone call from Peter Drake, to ask if I would give my permission for you to put some info on the Jigalong dialysis system in the OBAN. Well, of course you have my permission and, if you need any further info, please Google 'fred ordynski', where you will find a multitude of my 'crimes' reported! The reports on Jigalong can be found in the news letters of *Newcrest Mining*, called Kujungkarrini, and I'm sure they will interest you. If you need any further info, please let me know."

(I did indeed 'Google' as suggested, and came across the relative information, but I thought that Fred should have the chance to explain his involvement, should he so wish. I was more than happy to receive the following reply. Ed.)

"G'day Pete, here is a quick personal slant on the project at Jigalong:-

Project Objective:- *To provide a respite dialysis program at Jigalong, to enable Martu people, who are forced to reside in*

Perth because of End Stage Renal Failure, to return periodically to the Western Desert to spend time with their families and to fulfill their cultural commitments.

About five years ago, the Aboriginal Elders of the Martu (spoken as Mardu) people asked *Newcrest Mining*, Australia's biggest gold mining company, if they could help in getting a dialysis facility in the Jigalong Community and 'bring their people home'. *Newcrest* has mining operations on Martu land at a place called Telfer, so they agreed to see what they could do. *Newcrest* then approached the Health Department of Western Australia, who promptly 'dobbled' me in as the 'man for the job'. (Mind you, my claim to fame in the dialysis world is Remote Systems, with my furthest away from the hospital being 3,400 km, the same as London to Moscow I suppose - but you know how distances are in Australia!)

I was about to retire and, being as the Aboriginals themselves had shown the initiative, I agreed to help and teamed up with Mr Leon Van Erp, *Newcrest Mining's* Community Relations Superintendent, to "*oversee the total project from feasibility, design recommendations, installation requirements, suppliers, installation of water pre-treatment system, installation of dialysis equipment, testing and commissioning of the unit, including the patient's first treatment*". This was not an easy task, as the location is 1,600 km from Perth, 160 km from the nearest town (Mt Newman), and with 140 km of dirt track to cover. The community is in the Great Western Desert, so water is very scarce, power is by community generators and waste water is sewered to an evaporative pond. We were given a Community House to

convert and, due to the mining boom, had to bring builders from Tasmania to do the building alterations. The logistics of the project were extreme to say the least, but good old REME training came in handy for the task. The project was completed and opened by the Governor of Western Australia in May 2009 and I, for my sins, became the Unit Coordinator and 'Director of Nursing', the latter title being given to me by the Nursing Agency in Perth that supplied the nurses and I signed their contracts. (Good one for the old boys to laugh at!) I am happy to report that the Respite Dialysis Unit has just completed its fourth session and has performed 100%."

(I later made contact with the 'Feedback' department at the Royal Perth Hospital (RPH), who kindly supplied me with the following report and photograph dating back to 2006. Ed.)

RPH loses its first innovator

Royal Perth Hospital is farewelling Dialysis Technician-in-Charge, Fred Ordynski, after 25 years of service. Fred started at RPH in 1981 as a Technician in Charge and is proud to say that, during his entire time at the Hospital, this title has never changed. More importantly - his dialysis systems have never failed. Fred's achievements don't end there - in 1991 he and fellow technicians received the inaugural RPH Innovator's Awards for revolutionising the disinfection procedures using bleach for the Hospital's dialysis machines.

What stands out in Fred's mind is the friendships and rapport he has established



with patients and staff. *"This job is less about machines and more about the personal touch. It is very important to have interpersonal skills, as it is my job to assist the patients with their home dialysis wherever that may be"*, Fred said. In fact

a patient invited Fred around to her house 25 years later to thank him for his advice and kindness when she was on dialysis. She also introduced him to her son, who she was able to watch grow into a man – thanks to Fred's dialysis work.

In the early 1980s Fred was instrumental in taking 'home dialysis' into rural areas of WA. *"When I started at RPH, patients from the bush had to move to Perth for dialysis."* The first remote dialysis Fred installed was in Fitzroy Crossing in the late 1980s and this was a complete success. *"The most remote dialysis I have ever installed was in Kalumbaru, which is 3,500km from Perth, and I had to meet the equipment on the beach, which was delivered on a barge."*

In all his years in dialysis, Fred has seen numerous changes and said technology had advanced significantly, particularly in the accuracy of dialysis machines. Earlier

this year, Fred created WA's first 'Dialysis Bus', which enabled dialysis patient Gail Matthews to travel around the state while being able to dialyse. Thankfully, Fred will not be leaving the Hospital altogether. He will be volunteering at the RPH museum every Thursday, when it is open to the public. RPH thanks him for 25 years of service and wishes him all the best in his future endeavours.

Photograph - Fred is pictured with home dialysis patient Gail Matthews.

(My thanks firstly to Pete Drake for sending me the newspaper cutting – and then to Fred Ordynski for telling we readers of his excellent and vital work in saving lives 'down under'. I hope readers will agree that this is a tale worth telling. You've certainly earned your retirement now Fred! Ed.)

Back At 'Fally' For A Brief And Final Tour, 1966 – 1967

by Pete Gripton, 56B

Returning to 'Fally' with The Greys, the 'myth' of my being deemed 'essential to the trade' was immediately proven, as I actually spent most of my time running the battery charging shop – as well as learning how to handle the crossword in the morning paper! There was an Artificer Staff Sergeant, Archie Schofield, running the electrical side of the workshop and he told me that he had far too many Corporals crawling over his tanks already and could hardly ask a Sergeant to do the same thing!

Therefore, he asked me how I'd like to take charge of the battery shop, not too difficult a task! *(I hasten to add that I was very well informed about batteries after a couple of years at SEME teaching the theory about them!)* For the first month or so, I stayed in the Sergeants' Mess, one of only about three living-in members. Each morning I would wake to the smell of a freshly-brewed cup of tea on my bedside table and some young Trooper whispering, *"What would you like for breakfast, Sarge? It'll be ready when you come downstairs."* So, after a wash and shave, it was downstairs to a leisurely choice from freshly cooked bacon, eggs, sausage, a 'fried slice', beans etc - I think they call it 'the life of Reilly'!

I'd only been there a couple of weeks I guess when, standing at the Mess bar one lunchtime, came the letter from old mate and ex-Sergeant John Howarth, with some

really astounding news. While still at SEME, I had been in a 'pools swindle' and, upon leaving, I'd left just enough money in the kitty for one final week's gamble. What a surprise to find that 'the syndicate' had won around £17,000 between them and that my share was a cheque for a huge (in those days) £651! Even though it was 'drinks all round' at the Mess bar later that night, the bulk of that money was definitely a lifesaver. We were later able to use it towards a deposit on our house – yes, the one we still live in today at Greatham.

About a month after I'd arrived at Fally, Joyce and the girls joined me in an Army quarter up on the main road down towards the little town of Fallingbostal itself – the one up which Joyce used to trudge, backwards and forwards, a few years previously. We had just a few short months there – thinking back, I reckon that by sending me out to serve with The Greys, REME Records had hoped I would be persuaded to 'sign on'. But by then the die was cast – we'd see out our time at Fally and then it would be back to Bordon for demob and a crack at me being a civvie instructor.

That Army quarter was huge! I think the barracks had originally housed some German cavalry soldiers – and seemed to have plenty of spare room for their horses too! Each block was split up into four separate quarters – you opened the main

door to be confronted with a wide corridor, covered in some highly polished green material and long enough to hold a dance in! I can't remember exactly how many rooms ran off each side of that corridor, but sufficient to say it was more than large enough for Joyce, two small girls and myself! Above us was an attic and, on one occasion, a young German girl hid herself away up there, apparently 'on the run' from the authorities. I think my elder daughter Lorraine's memory still stretches back to that story, even though she must have been only three-years old at the time.

The block also had a basement, which contained the central heating system. If I remember correctly, each 'flat' occupant would take it in turns for a week at a time, keeping the boiler stoked up with coke during the cold weather. Having the two girls with us meant that going out to functions as a couple wasn't easy, not unless we could get a baby-sitter. There was one guy, a young Geordie recovery mechanic, who 'baby-sat' for us one night – but when we got home, he'd helped himself to all the beer in the fridge and the below-stair neighbours had had to step in when they'd heard Michelle crying! I don't suppose we bothered going out too often after that! Although mostly we were able to depend upon Corporal Bob Owen, a really nice bloke, with whom we have always exchanged Christmas cards over

the years. We even attended his wedding to Linda at Bracknell in 1967 and, many years later, on our way to a holiday up in Yorkshire, we astonished Bob by dropping in on him at his home near Scunthorpe! Just going back to the 'trade' question of why I'd been sent to Fally – there were CET Corporals attached to every Troop and Squadron. So many that you couldn't place a piece of paper between them, so the need for a Sergeant was superfluous – no wonder I was asked to work in the battery shop!

One function that we definitely did attend was the 'Burns Night Supper' in January 1966. With the regiment being historically of Scots descent – they were at Waterloo in 1815 – this particular occasion was celebrated every year with all the 'pomp and circumstance' you'd expect. 'Tatties and neeps', plenty of Scotch whisky and the piping in of the haggis – yes, we had it all. Trouble was – it just went on –and on – for so long! Traditionally, nobody was allowed to get up for a 'natural break', not as long as the RSM was still sitting down at his honoured position at 'the top table'. No doubt his bladder was highly trained for such an occasion, because he just sat and sat and sat. We lesser mortals just had to sit in stoic silence, bladders straining at the leash, until finally, the event came to a conclusion. You've never seen such an explosion of bodies, as the biggest proportion of Mess members made a dash for the gents! Which of course was far too small for such a crowd, so I was definitely one who relieved himself on the parade square, amongst many others seeking relief! I'm pretty sure the RSM (Barnes?) knew all about what went on, but thankfully he was still inside the building and we all got away with our military indiscipline!

The Royal Scots Greys were an Armoured Regiment and, back in 1966, were equipped with the old *Centurion* tanks, no doubt (to use the parlance) around Mark 13s. These were supplemented with *Ferret* Scout Cars for reconnaissance tasks and backed up with a variety of other cargo-style vehicles. I hardly ever got near a tank, except for one session of a few days when I went out with a Squadron to do some radio suppression testing on Hohne ranges. It was quite boring really – you'd drive around to different locations, test the radios and write reports on the reception in each area. I suppose this was to make sure of good communications, should the Russians ever come rumbling across the border – believe

me, that was still a real threat in those days.

The Colonel of the regiment was a 'gentleman' in every sense of the word. I remember being interviewed by him both at the start and end of my short tour and was very impressed by his demeanour. Colonel John Stanyer later became 'CIGS' (Chief of the Imperial General Staff). Amongst the other regimental officers, the Adjutant was none less than Edward, Duke of Kent – 'Steady Eddie' I think the lads called him! One of the young subalterns was a member of the Player family – remember *Players'* cigarettes? It is rumoured that once, having written off a *Ferret* in an accident, he just wrote a cheque for its replacement! There were two 'QMs' (Quartermasters) with the regiment, one who dealt with the technical stores and the other non-technical. Both had 'come up through the ranks' and were, by custom, allowed to use the Sergeants' Mess as well as their own Officers' Mess. They would sit up at the bar and invite you to join them in a game of 'pokey dice' – at least I think that's what it was called. I know it involved a lot of deception and bluffing – followed by copious drinking! I got stuck in a game one evening and when I woke Joyce up on my return home, she mumbled "Oh, you're early". I certainly was early – it was about six in the morning! I must have slept a few hours, it being a Sunday – and I remember playing football for the LAD (Light Aid Detachment) that afternoon – life was a bit different then!

I find it hard to recall many other members of the REME personnel then serving with The Greys. Two of the vehicle artificers were John Ambler and Tony Hughes – the latter also became an instructor at SEME in later years, when I found out that he was also an ex-apprentice from Arborfield, intake 50A. I still catch up with him occasionally at reunions. I believe that there were two junior ranks, 'Spud' Battle and 'Farmer'

Pike, who later actually left REME and joined The Greys, such was their affection for the regiment. I'm really having to rack my brain here, but I have the feeling that, not long before we were due to leave Germany, we were paid a farewell visit by Familie Godawa – well at least Mutti and Poppa. They must have come up from Celle, possibly with Karl-Heinz and maybe even with Dave Howlett, it's a long time ago! *(It was to be another thirteen years until I saw them again, but that tale is in another chapter!)*

Not long after I'd left the Regiment, restructuring of the Army enforced their combining with the 3rd Carabiniers to form



the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. This move didn't suit the Greys at all, they considered themselves as much the superior of the amalgamated pair – and I'm told that, over a period of time, they gradually subsumed the other lot into what can still be proudly called 'The Greys'. Many years later, on a visit to Edinburgh, I took the opportunity to visit the Regimental Museum, located in Edinburgh Castle – where I picked up the accompanying postcard.

(I did go on to get that civvie instructional post at SEME Bordon and hope to continue this saga at some point in another OBAN. Ed.)

Passing-Out Ceremony - 10th April 1963

Kindly provided by Terry Harris, Intake 60B

Passing-Out Parade

10th April 1963

Commandant – Col J L Dobie, B Sc, AMIEE
Chief Instructor – Lt Col J W Hill, AMIEE, AMBIM, REME
Senior Education Officer – Lt Col A A Haworth, B Sc, Dip Ed, RAEC
Adjutant – Maj P Smith, XX The Lancashire Fusiliers
Regimental Sergeant Major – RSM H Simpson, Coldstream Guards

The School Bands

Brass Band: Band Staff Sergeant A Parker, Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders; App Band Sgt T Jacobs

Pipe Band: Pipe Major D R Carver, Royal Highland Fusiliers
Apprentice Drum Major A Boyd; App Pipe Major D Thomas

Corps of Drums: Sgt B R Conway, REME; App Drum Major B W J Northcott;
App Bugle Corporal P M Galloway

Commanding the Parade – A/T/RSM B A Barnfield

Major Awards

‘Award of Honour’ – A/T/CSM D M M McPherson
‘Commandant’s Cup’ (for the Best Soldier) – A/T/RSM D M M McPherson
‘Chief Instructor’s Cup’ (for the Best Tradesman) – A/T/Sgt M A Milton
‘Commandant’s Special Award’ (for the Best Potential Leader) – A/T/RSM B A Barnfield

Individual Prizes – Senior Division

Prizes for technical ability

Control Equipment Technician – A/T/Cpl D Holmes; **Tels Tech** – A/T/Sgt C W Wyatt
Radar Tech – A/T/Sgt R Robson; **Electrician** – A/T/Cpl K Westgate
Vehicle Mechanic – A/T J P Hernon

Prizes for education

Mathematics – A/T/Sgt R Robson; **English** – A/T/Sgt P A Skelton
Science – A/T/RSM B A Barnfield; **Map Reading** – A/T/Sgt P A Skelton
Best all-round progress – A/T/Sgt P A Skelton
Highest Educational Achievement – A/T/Sgt R Robson & A/T/RSM B A Barnfield
(Equal 1st)

For Weapon Training

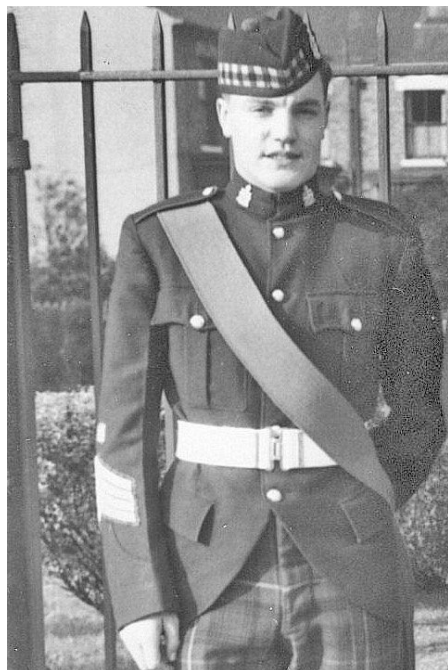
Best Rifle Shot – A/T/Cpl D Hirst
Best LMG Shot – A/T P Hill

(Many thanks for the contribution Terry – I hope other programmes will be forthcoming in future OBANs. Ed.)

Personality Slot

Tony 'Tee-Cee' Church, 55A

Tony was born in Kingston-upon-Hull and evacuated to a farm on the Yorkshire Wolds to escape 'The Blitz'. He was educated at Endyke Lane Secondary School, leaving in 1954 at the age of fifteen, to work as an apprentice at *Blackburn and General Aircraft*, making the *Blackburn Beverley* transport aircraft. He then left civilian life to join the Army Apprentices' School at Arborfield, training as a General Fitter. While there, Tony joined the Pipe Band as a learner



Tony Church 'then' - at his brother's wedding, November 57

drummer, rising to Apprentice Drum Major in 1957. In 1958, he passed out into REME and was first posted to 14 Command Workshop, Ashford in Kent, where he passed his 2nd-Class Trade Test. Then, in 1959, he was posted to the Junior Leaders Regt RA, Hereford, before moving on to Bramcote, Nuneaton, when the unit was relocated.

In June 1960, Tony had an emergency posting to the Command Workshop at Dhekalia in Cyprus, working at the VDRI (Vehicle Depot Repair Increment) - NOT the Venereal Disease Research Institution, as some claimed! This was an outlying unit, located on the beach near the 'Key' Cinema, which employed eight REME personnel and forty to fifty Greek and Turkish Cypriots on vehicle repairs. His job was to read vehicle inspection reports, order parts and progress them from stores to job completion. At tea breaks, he

would step through the barbed-wire, have a 10-minute swim in 'the Med', then carry on working! Tony was occasionally called out on riot squads, but things were improving until, after independence in October, he was posted back to the UK, travelling back on the soon-to-be redundant troopship *'MV Dunera'*.

In November, Tony was posted to 4 Trg Btn RAOC, Deepcut, Surrey, where he maintained all sorts of weird and wonderful RAOC equipment - Oxygen and Acetylene producing plant, Mobile Laundry and Shower units, cobbling machines and a fleet of ninety or so vehicles. When he arrived, the REME unit consisted of a Major, three WOs, six NCOs and approximately forty men. Upon leaving, three years later, the same work was being done by one ASM, himself (now promoted to Corporal) and six civilians. National Service had been phased out over the intervening years and this was the birth of the new, modern Army.

Having been married for 18 months, he was posted to 13 Field Survey Squadron RE, at Fernhurst, near Haslemere. It was a lovely posting, set amid fir trees in deepest Surrey, a unit of sixty or so surveyors, printers and allied trades. Unfortunately, upon his arrival, the first question asked was, "*Are you coming to Aden with us in a month's time?*" - illusions shattered! So, in January 1961, Tony and his unit flew from Gatwick, *en route* to his new posting, at Falaise Lines, Little Aden. In March, the CO announced that Aden had ceased to be an active service area, but the next month all hell broke loose up in the Radfan, with the war finally ending in July.

The unit was working flat out to survey and supply maps to Commanders in the field; the survey troops were regularly ambushed and eventually had to enlist the support of the Royal Marines as escort. Tony was with the survey troops 'up country', riding 'Tail End Charlie', carrying out repairs to the unit's four *Land Rovers* and two *Bedford* RLs, as they negotiated soft sand, flooded wadis and big boulders. He lost count of the clutches he changed and broken springs he fixed - all in a temperature of well over 100°C. Eventually the war died down and June, his wife, joined him, living in a married quarter in Crater, opposite the local jail

and Armed Police Barracks. One interesting aspect of this location was that, when a full moon appeared, the noise in the jail reached horrendous proportions. Upon enquiring of their 'dhobi wallah' (laundry boy), he remarked that this was 'Macnoon'. Tony was trying to figure out who this mythical Scotsman was, when it was explained to him that the jail was also the mental home and 'Macnoon' was allegedly Arabic for '*nutty as a fruitcake*'! Shortly after this, the terrorism began, with both soldiers and civilians being shot in the streets, so reluctantly he had to send his wife home. The following January, Tony's tour ended, and he returned to the REME Depot at Arborfield. As he was due for demob in April, and having one month's resettlement leave, he handed in



Tony Church 'now' - in his uniform of Hamble Pipe Band

his kit at the Depot and entered civilian life once again.

Before being posted to Aden, June and Tony had taken out a mortgage on a house in Kirk Hallam, near Ilkeston, Derbyshire, which at the time had not then been built. Now they were able to move in immediately, which was just as well, as son Paul was born one week after their return. With a new baby and a mortgage, Tony worked shifts as a maintenance fitter for *British Celanese* in Derby, eventually returning to Wokingham, his wife's home town, in 1970 - by then the proud father of a baby girl, Michaela. After two years, working at the Fighting Vehicles Research

and Development Establishment (FVRDE) on Chobham Common, he eventually became a fork-lift Field Service Engineer, then eventually moving into management, a career he pursued until retirement.

The couple now lives in Titchfield, near Fareham in Hampshire, where their

bungalow looks down over the Solent and they enjoy a panoramic view from Portsmouth to Cowes. They also own a chalet on the end of Southampton Water, giving a grandstand view of the ocean liners, yachts, and all the activity that this busy stretch of water contains. Tony has recently reverted to his youth and plays

the drums with the St Andrews Pipe Band of Hamble Le-Rice, whose Pipe Major is David Pickworth, 52A, (Lt.Col. Ret'd). Tony has compiled many odd pieces of verse as a contribution to the Arborfield Old Boys' Association, finding that it helps relax him and, more importantly, keeps him out of mischief!

The Arborfield Old Boys' Association (AOBA)

Compiled by Pete Gripton, 56B

This sixty-year old Association, the membership of which is open to all ex-apprentices from Arborfield, held its inaugural Reunion Dinner at 'the School' on August 28th 1948, when about seventy ex-boys were in attendance, most of these being graduates from the previous two years. The School in those days was called the Army Apprentices' School, although it had started life as the Army Technical School (Boys), first opening its famous gates to entrants in May 1939. In October 1966, the 'School' part of the title was changed to 'College', and it remained under the title of Army Apprentices' College until May 1981, when it was renamed Princess Marina College (PMC), after the late Duchess of Kent, who had been the first C-in-C of REME. At the same time, apprentices' accommodation was moved from the old wooden spiders of Rowcroft Barracks to the new purpose-built Hazebrouck Barracks, adjacent to the School of Electronic Engineering (SEE). Finally, in September 2000, PMC was changed into the Army Technical Foundation College (ATFC) – although this had only a too brief history, closing down completely in August 2004. It was on the totally suitable date of Friday 13th – unlucky for some? – that the ATFC held its final Passing-out Parade, thus ending a remarkable epoch of Army Apprentices' training at Arborfield, which covered a period of 65 years.

Despite all the changes of title, plus the move from the original Barracks, in the main the AOBA has continued to flourish, although it has led rather a checkered life. In fact it wasn't an Association at all when first born – the first set of rules, issued in the School magazine in December 1948, decreed that it be known as the 'Arborfield Old Boys' Club'. It is not known exactly when the 'Association' took over from the Club! At the 1951 Old Boys' Reunion, a contingent of old boys proudly participated in the first ever march-past of such a body of men, at the Sunday

morning church parade. The salute was taken by the then President of the AOBA, Col JD White RAOC, who had been the Commandant at the School from 1943 to 1947. Those first Reunions used to include a mixture of sports competitions, held between serving apprentices and ex-apprentices – but then, most ex-apprentices in those days were still young enough to compete! It was also traditional, on the Friday night of the Reunion, that 'a dance' was held, with ladies no doubt bussed in from the surrounding areas of Reading and Wokingham. However, by 1952, the numbers of ex-boys attending that year's dance totalled only 50, and it was decided that a two-day programme would be introduced the following year.

In July 1956, an outstanding figure in the history of the School finally departed its gates. RSM RL McNally MBE, Scots Guards, retired after a full and never repeated fifteen years as the School's RSM. In tribute to him, he became the very first Honorary Life Member of the AOBA. Sadly, that same year, Commandant Col JR Cole, The Loyals, was expressing his concern about the waning strength and viability of the Association, its membership having reduced to a sickly total of 30. It was probably in response to these concerns that the first 'Old Boys' Association Newsletter' (OBAN) was issued, in order to publicise the existence of the Association and to keep ex-boys updated on the School's activities and achievements. This did indeed provide a surge of interest, as reported in the first few issues of OBAN, and in 1959 membership had reached a healthier total exceeding 600. But, amazingly, the 1959 Reunion had to be cancelled, when only 15 members notified their intention to attend. Despite the best efforts of the School staff, keeping in touch with ex-boys in those far-off days proved a difficult task, and the Association

'withered on the vine' over the next few years.

Indeed, correspondence during 1960 showed signs that the AOBA was almost defunct. In response to a query from a REME unit at Larkhill, the then Hon Sec, Lt Col (ret'd) Blunt, wrote that the School had such a large number of commitments that it was unable to hold a Reunion that year. In May 1961, he then had to report that all members of the Old Boys' Committee had left the School and that there was nobody available and keen enough to serve – a sad state of affairs. Meanwhile, in 'The Craftsman' magazine, a brief notice urged all members of the AOBA to forward their current addresses to the Association. Provided there was sufficient response, steps would then be taken to re-activate the Association, with the possible return of the annual Reunion. Sadly, this did not galvanise the expected reaction and it was to be many years before the AOBA was to fully rise back to a position of prominence in School life. One reunion of note did take place in 1964, when it was attended by one 'very old boy', in the shape of AOBA Life President Brig JD White, now aged a ripe old eighty years.

In 1976, at the now Army Apprentices' College, a new arrival took over the reins at Arborfield. It was the first time that an ex-apprentice, Col Barry Keast, from the 1945A intake, had realised the ultimate dream – to come back as Commandant. He must have been horrified to find that the AOBA had virtually 'sunk without trace', so he set about revitalising the membership. With the able support and dedication to the cause of such as Harry Shaw, a member of staff and himself an ex-boy of 39B vintage, an 'Open Day' was proposed at the College. At this meeting, ex-apprentices from across the globe would be invited to make a huge decision – did they wish the Association to survive and thrive? Thus, on January 25th 1977,

with an attendance of more than 150 ex-apprentices, the overwhelming majority voted to make every effort to attend future Reunions and its associated Annual General Meeting (AGM). The very fact that this article is now being written shows that, since that meeting, the AOBA resurrected itself and is now, once again, a thriving Association.

And so it was, as had been arranged in January, that the weekend of 15th/16th October 1977 saw the best attended Old Boys' Reunion in many years. It took place within the original Rowcroft Barracks – wooden 'spiders', rows of washbasins, Cookhouse, Camp Hall and all. There must have been many nostalgic feelings amongst those attending, as they were quartered in, if not their actual original room, one very much like it! Guests of honour at the Reunion Dinner that evening were Maj Gen H McDonald-Smith BSc, CEng, FIMechE, FIEE, who was the current DGEME, and Brig PH Lee, Commandant of the REME Training Centre. It was almost prophetic when the General later wrote to Col Keast:

"I thought that Saturday night's venture with the Arborfield Old Boys was a most successful occasion and that, given the continuing support and enthusiasm from yourself and your successors, the event will prosper. It was quite clear that those who were present enjoyed the occasion and will therefore be good ambassadors, by spreading the word amongst their friends and hopefully returning in future years."

Time was catching up on those old barracks however, and there were only four Reunions held there, before the now Princess Marina College was installed at Hazebrouck and the AOBA began meeting at a brand new venue. At the old 'spiders' of the original ATS (Boys), only the ghosts remained, until their final demolition took place. With a certain amount of irreverence, the new barracks at Hazebrouck were given the nickname 'Legoland'!

In April 1984, the *REME Journal* contained an article, submitted by Capt (ret'd) Bryn Richards, entitled '*A Brief History, 1939–1981*', which told the story of apprentices' training up to that date. This was the forerunner of the eventual 500-plus pages illustrated history of the Arborfield Apprentices' School and College that was to be published in 2003. 1984's Old Boys' Reunion covered a wide range of intakes, dating as far back as the

'greybeards' of 37C (RAOC Depot Hilsea) right up to a sprightly and still-serving member of 62C! It also brought a proud moment for ex-boy Gerry Berragan of 48C, when he filled the post of Reviewing Officer at the weekend's parade. Gerry had risen to the rank of Major General, an achievement reached only by one other ex-boy, Peter Baldwin of 42A. The evening's dinner, which was held in Bailleul Sergeants' Mess, was delayed by a bomb scare, but fortunately it proved to be a false alarm. (*Rumours abounded, of course, that it had been just a typical ex-boy's prank!*)

An incredible total of over 10,000 apprentices had passed through the famous old gates between 1939 and 1981, when the new accommodation at PMC was first occupied. So it was quite a moment in March 1985, when the lovingly rebuilt gates were installed back at the old entrance to Rowcroft Barracks, coinciding with the grand opening of the REME Corps Museum. It is no surprise that the old gates have been adopted as the official emblem of the AOBA. The Reunion that took place later that same year was distinguished by the presence of no less than five Commandants! The newly installed Col Arthur Soar was there of course, as well as his predecessor, Col Sam Roberts. Accompanying them were Col David Brown (1968-70), Brig Joe Dobie (1962-66) and Col John Cole (1955-59). Amazingly, that five should have been six – but Brig Bill Bailey (1970-73) had misread his joining instructions by turning up the previous weekend! The years continued to roll by, with the AOBA gaining in strength and numbers, and many of its ex-apprentices were very proud to attend the College Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1989. To mark that special occasion, instead of the normal 'men only' formal dinner, a dance was held in the College Gymnasium, accompanied by the serving of a splendid buffet supper. This was much enjoyed by the many wives of the old boys in attendance, but it was to be the first and last time that such a Reunion format was used.

When Col Peter Gibson took over as Commandant in 1991, by custom and practice, he was also installed as Chairman of the AOBA. Little did he know that some seventeen years later, he would still be so closely involved with the Association! Col Peter was very much instrumental in the re-birth of '*OBAN*', the *Old Boys' Association Newsletter*. So it is

no surprise to find that now, in 2008, he provides the technical know-how behind the production of the Association's prestigious magazine, having taken up the task from Ken Anderson of 58A, who had been responsible for that side of things for a few years, before ill-health intervened. As described earlier, *OBAN* had started life back around 1956, but as far as is known, survived in its original format for a mere five issues. Since its 'phoenix-like rise from the ashes', *OBAN* has bloomed into a glossy magazine, under the stewardship of three editors – John Northam (47B), Brian Hornsey (54A) and the present Pete Gripton (56B). It is presently issued three times per year and carries letters and articles of a wide-ranging variety, helping ex-apprentices from all around the globe to keep in touch with each other.

In June 1992, an updated 'brief history' of the College was published, due mainly to the efforts of Maj Mike Costanzo, then serving on the College staff and himself an ex-boy of 53B vintage. It must have been around that same time that it was decided to attempt to produce a 'full' history, although time and events combined to delay a determined start upon the project until the Millennium Year of 2000. The contents of the eventual book was based upon the facts – or 'bare bones' – of the brief history, but greatly fleshed out by individual stories, themselves remembered with some great mirth and merriment, although tinged sometimes with sadness, sent in by many ex-apprentices from a world-wide family. The compilation of that history, entitled '*The Arborfield Apprentice*', was undertaken by Pete Gripton of 56B, with lots of technical assistance from Ken Anderson of 58A, both fully backed by the support of serving members of the Old Boys' Committee. The AOBA was most grateful to Rodney Smith of 56B, for the financial support he gave to the three-year project.

June of 1995 saw the College move home once again, back to the familiar territory of Rowcroft Barracks, but in newly built accommodation. But, due to circumstances beyond the control of either the College or its staff, the days of a full apprenticeship were fast coming towards an end. For the 'old boys' of the AOBA, this news was received with much regret. However, on the site of the old Guardroom, a Memorial Garden had been constructed and, at the 1995 Reunion, the attending ex-apprentices were able to proudly participate in a 'March Past'

through the original old gates, followed by a Drum Head Service at the Memorial Garden. A large contingent of some 250 old boys was in attendance for that weekend, with a complement of around 175 sitting down to the Annual Dinner on the Saturday evening.

Despite the events that finally engulfed

the whole apprenticeship system, and the final closure of what became the Army Technical Foundation College in August 2004, the AOBA has managed to weather the storm and, indeed, proceed from strength to strength over the past few years. Some 800 members are currently 'active', and as many older ex-boys reach

The AOBA Collect

*O God our Father,
We pray for all who have served their country.
Remembering especially the families of the
Arborfield Old Boys' Association.
Rekindle our courage to face the future
As we did in our youth.
Strengthen our will to seize the moment
As we did in the past.
Enliven our minds to the needs of others,
As loyalty and discipline taught us.*

Amen

(Much of the article above is drawn from the pages of 'The Arborfield Apprentice', which is on sale at the REME Association shop, located at the REME Museum – a great read for all ex-apprentices everywhere. I put the above article together, as can be read, back in 2008, but thought it would make a nostalgic re-appearance in this 50th edition of OBAN. Ed.)

Remembrance Parade Week-End At The Cenotaph 13th & 14th November 2010

by Jim Gardner, 57A, 'B' Coy

Again another excellent week-end was enjoyed by all who attended, whether it was the dinner on the Friday evening, the Albert Hall on the Saturday afternoon or evening and, of course, the parade on the Sunday morning. The combination of three events did make an excellent weekend, especially those who were lucky to attend all three. The only thing was that attending the Albert Hall on the Saturday evening meant missing the dinner, which is always an excellent event. We mustered 16 for the dinner, held in the downstairs grillroom, a very pleasant evening. We are very pleased that Phil Graham did attend to give support for the dinner, although he was involved at Arborfield for the Armistice Service on the Sunday morning. All are very grateful for your support Phil, thank you.

Thirteen AOBA members attended the parade - Gordon Bonner, Dick Wright and John Lee for the first time and, from their comments, I don't think it will be the last time we see them for the Armistice weekend at Whitehall. Those who attended the parade were:

Col Brian Hutchins, Chairman of AOBA; Keith Evans, Asst Secretary AOBA; Gordon Bonner; George Dixon;

Larry Jarvis; Jim Gardner; Peter Church; John Harte; John Reynolds; Mo Hope; Dick Wright; John Lee and Dave Higgs. Bill Tudman from Glasgow sent his sincere apologies for being unable to attend for health reasons. Those who know Bill will be aware of his breathing problems - you were there in our thoughts Bill.

The meal was excellent value for money and the stories told could have filled a book (AGAIN!). However, the company was outstanding and all enjoyed a great evening. Those lucky enough to attend the Armistice service on the Saturday evening returned to the club, just in time to meet the members rising from dinner. And of course, all retired to the bar for the annual 40s sing-along and a good long night-cap! The 40s sing-along is something to be seen; all the WAAFs, WRENs, WRAC and other ladies' war-time service organizations make this an

annual pilgrimage, to remember their service days and pay respect to old friends killed during the war and to those no



John Lee, John Harte, Larry Jarvis, Peter Church and Jim Gardner on the steps of the Victory Services Club

longer with them .

Sunday Morning

As normal, all detachments were required to report to Horse Guards parade for 0915hrs and form up in their respective columns. It's quite a sight and a great credit to the excellent organisation of the Royal British Legion, to get close on 10,000 people paraded in their respective detachments ready to march on to Whitehall prompt at 10.15hrs - on the dot!

The detachments were marched from Horse Guards onto Whitehall to take their place for the service and march-past. This, as usual, went to plan without a hitch. (Who would dare make a mistake, with those very efficient, rather tall, strong looking ladies of the RBL?)

The atmosphere on Whitehall is an experience in itself. All around are a mixture of service and ex-service personnel of all ages; some in wheelchairs, some on walking sticks in their 70s and 80s. The medals adorning their chests with great pride depict the many years of brave service in defence of their homeland - Great Britain. This is a sight to be sampled and to stand in awe of - all very proud Ladies and Gents, there to



The old boys waiting at Horse Guards before going on parade.

remember their old pals. What is also very evident, and so heart wrenching, is the sight of young children on parade with Dad's or Mum's medals proudly worn. And there are more every year, bringing to the fore the conflicts we as a country are still involved in and the sacrifice and horror this is leaving families with. But, the proud look - and hurt - on those little faces makes everyone so proud of our Armed Forces of today.

At 11.00hrs prompt, the parade was called to attention by the sound of the field gun, fired by the mounted battery of the Royal Horse Artillery on Horse Guards. At this point, irrespective of age, everyone snaps into the military mode, something that is never forgotten from the years of service. Even the assembled spectators fall silent. Being there to experience this as a member of the parade is one thing, but to see the looks on many of the faces of the assembled spectators - it's an experience which will not be forgotten by those who took part for the first time. I'm sure that, no matter how often one takes part in this annual service

and parade, none of it will be ever forgotten.

The service and the wreath laying ceremonies are short and it appeared to be no time at all before the march-past commenced. At this point, the spectators start to applaud every detachment that passes them and they don't stop until Whitehall is empty. The applause from detachments waiting to march past adds to this chorus of applause. The 'old and bold', the Chelsea Pensioners, receive resounding applause from everyone as they pass to pay their respects with a very smart 'eyes left' at the Cenotaph. You could see the pride in their manner, the straight back, and a determination, which obviously took them back many years to their serving days. Now it was AOBA's turn. Under the command word of Col Brian, we stepped off, eyes firmly to the front, arms swinging at the right height, ready to give the 'eyes left' on Brian's command. There is plenty of noise from spectator applause, but you are oblivious to this as soon as the detachment commences the 'eyes left'. Concentration and the beat of the drum takes over, ready for the command 'Eyes Left' and then 'Eyes

Front'. A satisfaction of having at last paid our respects to those who lost their lives for our benefit and to those many who have been so badly maimed.

A right wheel into Parliament Square, where Col Brian took us back a fair bit, with a quick command of 'Change Step', not just once but four times, before we right wheeled out of Bird Cage Walk into the road leading back to Horse Guards. Applause and cheers greeted our very smart drill display! Just opposite the Household Cavalry memorial, Princess Anne took a second salute, before we right wheeled once again, to bring our detachment back onto Horse Guards parade. Until this point, we had been very lucky with the weather, dull with a threat

of rain. But now it did rain, with a vengeance - and those who didn't have a coat on parade just had to take cover.

The parade and service are a sobering experience, leaving those assembled with their own thoughts of old and departed friends. However, it also brings a sobering reality to mind to look around the parade and see the number of young faces paying their own respects to the fallen and badly maimed. This day of remembrance is not an old person's day, it's a day that young and old together realise the sacrifices our servicemen and women are paying to this day - a wonderfully moving experience to be proud of.

Looking ahead

Several of us who attended have already booked accommodation at the *Victory Services Club* for next year and I'm very happy to report that at least another four AOBA members will be joining us who were not at the parade this year. They have booked their rooms already! It would be a wonderful tribute to those ex-boys no longer with us, especially those who lost their lives in conflict, if we could muster a stronger detachment of AOBA members for Remembrance 2011. Finally, a massive thank you to Keith Evans, our Assistant Secretary, who has organised the parade



John Harte, John Reynolds, Dick Wright, John Lee, Mike Carn, John Dennett, George Dixon, Peter Church and Dave Higgs.

tickets through the RBL and all the administration for the weekends since the 2006 Armistice weekend. We hope Keith that you will join us for the future dinners on the Saturday night of Armistice weekend. Many, many thanks, Keith, from all of us, for all your hard work and support.

Col Derek A McAvoy OBE, Highclere, Hampshire - Prince Philip Medal Winner

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Qualification: Level 3 NVQs in Electrical Design & Electrical Test and Inspection, Swindon College

"In thirty-five years, Derek has achieved a huge amount in terms of engineering and service to his country. At sixteen, he joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) Apprentice College at Arborfield and quickly established himself as an able technician, with strong potential for leadership. He became one of the few servicemen to attain every rank within the British Army. His career highlight was becoming Commanding Officer at the College where he started his Army career. He ensured that the 1,800 Apprentices who joined the College every year had every opportunity, not only to develop their technical skills, but also build their leadership abilities."

Lt Col Derek McAvoy was indeed Commanding Officer of what was by then the Army Technical Foundation College, between the years 2000 and 2003. He had first been a member of

Intake 74C at the then Army Apprentices' College – and has 'fond' memories of the sport of bunker-running!

After qualifying as a Radar Tech, Derek rose through the ranks and, via Artificer training, reached the rank of WO1 (ASM). Selected for commissioning in 1990, he obtained a 1st Class Honours Degree in Electronics and Computing, converting to a mainstream post in 1994. Derek adds, "*The attached is broadly correct, I was appointed as a Lieutenant on commissioning, but never actually displayed the rank in uniform*".

(I would like to say a big 'thank you' to John Worland, 52B, who spotted this item in a City & Guilds 'Broadsheet' - his great observational powers have enabled him to furnish me with lots of interesting



'snippets' of information for recent OBAN issues. The photograph of Col McAvoy receiving his medal from Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace was e-mailed directly from C&G, while I am grateful to Craftsman magazine for providing me with the second photograph, which featured in their October issue and is reproduced on our own magazine's front cover. Ed.)

Captain Ian MacHorton, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

by Tony Church, 55A

I recall Capt MacHorton very well indeed, as he was a keen President of the Pipe Band. He was already School Adjutant when I arrived in February 1955, and later retired from the Army around early 1957. On his retirement, he presented his sword to the Pipe Band, to be worn by the Drum Major. He would often come into the Pipe Band room, while we were practicing in the evening, and tell us of his experiences in the 'Chindits' as a 2nd Lieutenant with the Gurkhas. (Remember, at this time the war had been over for only 10 years.) On occasion, we got so engrossed with his tales that his wife would turn up to take him home!

He had only recently written his book '*Safer than a known way*' and explained that he had taken the title from King George IV's Christmas speech of 1939. "*A New Year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all be. If it brings*

continued struggle, we shall remain undaunted". He then quoted a line from Minnie Haskins' poem, '*The Gate of the Year*', (1908).

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way."

Capt Mac Horton described how after he escaped, wounded, from the Japanese, he crawled for days through the jungle, starving and semi-delirious, not really knowing which direction he was taking. But he could see in the wet earth the imprint of a regulation British Army boot, complete with thirteen studs. (The

Japanese boot was a different pattern, with a separate piece for the big toe.) By following these prints for many weeks, he eventually found allied units and safety. He remarked that the only odd thing about it was that, whenever he looked back, the prints had disappeared. Was it delirium? He would never know. He always walked and marched with a pronounced limp as a legacy of those days.

He told us many stories of life with the Gurkhas, of how one of his WOs, who was an expert with the cheese wire method of garroting, put himself on a charge when one of his victims gurgled! He explained how he had to punish him to keep his respect, and banned him from wearing his uniform for a week. A most severe punishment! He also told us that the Gurkhas were past masters of running downhill at full speed! (Not many people know that...) All in all, a first class officer and a gentleman too. I consider it a privilege to have known him.

Capt Ian MacHorton

by Ted Blowers, *Permanent Staff, 1953 - 56*

(Ted was a member of the Permanent Staff at the AAS and wrote about some of his experiences back in OBAN29. After several brushes with authority, he "had gone from being a regular soldier to a bit of a hard case", culminating in his being taken 'under the wing' of Capt Ian MacHorton, the recently arrived School Adjutant. The following words are in answer to my request, published in OBAN49, for any memories regarding the Captain. Ed.)

Due to the fact that no-one really knew

Capt MacHorton had this idea in his head that all Cockneys were rogues and could purloin anything. There was some truth to that, only because to survive in those and prior days, you had to be able to think on your feet and have the ability to duck and dive! I have those abilities, plus I can make people laugh - and he was no exception. I tell you that because what I would describe as our first friendly or social encounter happened because he had purchased, what in those days was called a 'Phonadeck', the first

said, "Blowers, I want you to round me up this lot" and gave me a list, consisting of electrical bits that might just have well be written in Chinese for what it meant to me. I remember resistors, relays etc. I protested that I had no idea how to get this stuff - his answer was, "Use your initiative". I passed the list to my mate, Tin Ohn, and he and another couple of lads got me everything needed except for the amplifier, which on the original was a small parabolic type bowl that the mouth

Ted and Dauglene.

Thank you for your tape and card. Your poems are certainly worth copying and then try to get them published. V. Well done indeeds. Sorry I had forgotten ~~and~~ about the eagle's feather. Yes, as you suggest a pair of tail feathers - G. will be delighted. Before I left Arborfield the Pipe Major composed "Major MacHorton's Farewell" and I have had it recorded by the Band of the 1st Bn. The Camerons. If I sent it to you would you like to get it copied and return one to me.

Honorary Captain Judhbir Thapa, Sardar Bahadur, OBI, who served in the 2nd Goorkhas from 1857 to 1899.

This portrait was painted by Mrs S.G. Burrard who showed it at the West of India Exhibition at Poona in 1894. The picture is now in The National Army Museum.

With best wishes

Ian or Ginnie.



what to do with me, the Adjutant sent for me and made me his 'runner' and we got on really well. You may or may not know that Capt MacHorton was wounded when with the Chindits as a young Lieutenant and often, when he came off parade, we had to dress his leg. He was scared that the Army would find out and he would be invalided out, so I was sworn to secrecy.

hands-free phone system. I believe he had got it on trial and he had taken it to pieces, figuring he could make his own version. I had a little office in the HQ building which had a bell system. I would sit there and, when the bell rang, I would go see what he wanted. On this occasion when I got to his office he had this Phonadeck in bits and spread all over his desk. he was quite excited and

piece of the phone rested in. I rectified this by nicking a ladle from the cookhouse and sawing the handle off. It worked, but vibrated and sounded tinny! We solved this problem by covering the bowl with a velvet type material and wedges.

There were many ways in which he helped me, which at the time, although I was grateful, were not truly appreciated.

The important thing in our relationship came some years later when I was about forty, now living in Canada. I had just came back from Remembrance Day, reflecting on mates lost in Korea, who hadn't had the chance of life - while I had achieved far more than I ever

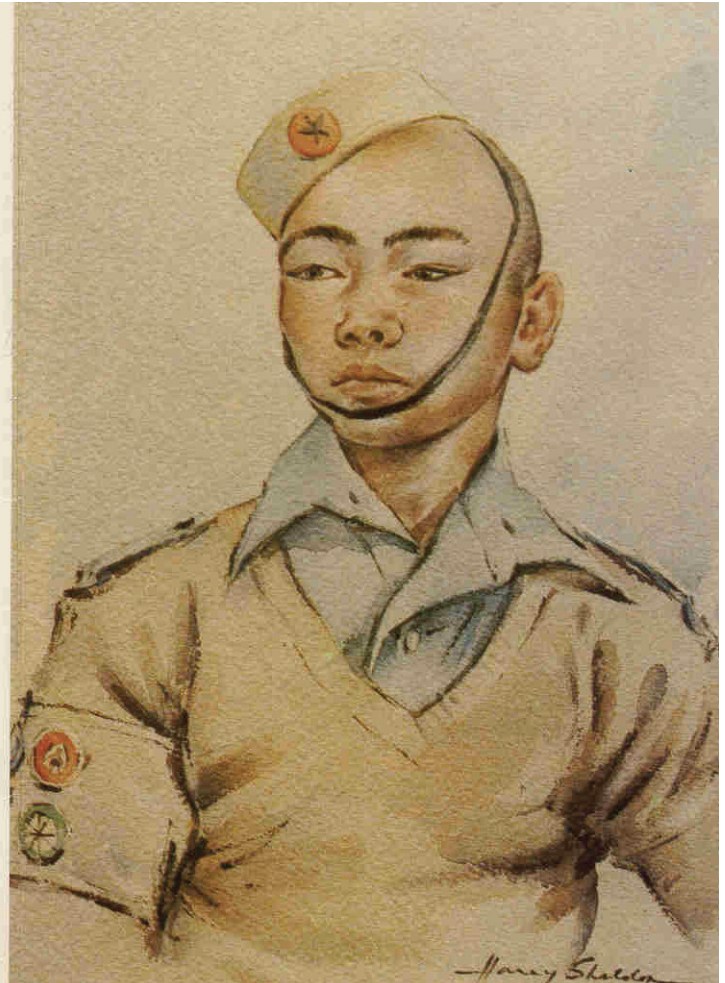
should I wish to forward to them a letter, they would see that he got it, which they did.

When Ian replied, he thanked me for my kind thoughts and apologised for not remembering me. I reminded him of the *Phonadeck* caper and my helping him

directions. There, we were subjected to a number of questions before someone rang Ian's place and we got the 'all clear'. Sadly, when we got to his place, he was not at all well, but still in good spirits. We had a good old chin wag, he was delighted with the Eagle feathers



Portrait of recruit boy Tejbahadur Gurung 8GR, wearing regimental efficiency badges, by Harry Sheldon FRSA 1989. Taken from a drawing made at Quetta in 1943.



expected and started to analyse why. I said to my wife, *"You know, there are people that make a difference in your life and Ian MacHorton was one. I am going to find him and thank him"*. I thought this would be easy, as I had been trained on how to find people in one of my jobs. I knew the last county he had been in as, prior to leaving the UK, I had seen him on TV, where he had started a company to retrain retired soldiers to re-enter the work force. Having no luck, I tried all the known avenues open to law enforcement agencies, still no luck. So I wrote to the War Office, giving his rank and a description of his service as I knew it, and asked if they could help. They replied, saying that they had a retired Lieutenant Col who fitted my details but, due to the IRA danger, they could not give me his address. But,

with his leg; he then knew who I was and asked that, the next time I was in the UK, I should visit him. We corresponded for a couple of years by tape and Christmas cards. He knew what I was doing and, still having his assumptions about Cockneys, asked if it was possible to obtain a couple of Golden Eagle feathers, as his son was third-in-line for leadership of the clan or something,. As it happened, I had just lost an Eagle that had been hit by a car and had taken the tail feathers to give to our local Indians, who use them in their rituals - so I just kept three for Ian's son.

We went to England that year, taking the feathers, and went to see Ian. Getting there was quite the performance as, due to the security aspect, there were no signposts anywhere near his place. So we had to go to the local pub to ask

and I again helped with his legs. He had received a heart transplant and had a helicopter standing by, as he had been having some problems. We spent a few hours with him, having a bit of a laugh about some of the things I had got up to, which he at the time thought hilarious. Shortly after arriving back in Canada we had a letter to say that he had died. I was sad, but pleased that I had been able to thank him for at least starting the change in my life. Had he not placed his trust in me, raising my self-esteem in things that mattered, my life could have been very different. I can honestly say that Ian MacHorton was 'an Officer and a gentleman'.

(Attached are copies of a couple of postcards sent by Capt MacHorton to Ted. Ed.)

The First Kuwait Flap, 1961

by 'Eggy' Eggleton, 52B, 'Recovery Mechanic Class 1'

In 1961, I was attached to the 3rd Carabiniers (Prince of Wales's Dragoon Guards) stationed in Tidworth. Ours, with a number of other units, were rather grandiosely designated as the 'Strategic Reserve'. The Regiment was split into three, HQ and a Sabre Squadron at Tidworth, another Sabre Squadron at the School of Infantry, Warminster, and a third Sabre Squadron in Aden. That one in Aden had half the tanks, crews and attached units up the Gulf, on a Landing Craft, on patrol at any one time. They did not return until relieved by the other half Squadron. This Squadron was known as 'C' (Independent) Squadron, the 3rd Carabiniers (POWDG.). The Squadron Sergeant Major (SSM) was promoted to acting RSM. When the Regiment was back together in Kuwait, the RSM (Kelly) told the A/RSM what to do with his badge of rank and that the Regiment only had one RSM!

On 16th June 1961, Kuwait gained its independence from the UK. On the 25th of that same month, Iraq claimed

billets, but with a canvas central toilet area. This comprised of five-gallon oil drums for urine and airplane chemical toilets for sit-down jobs. If you were caught urinating anywhere but in the toilets, it was an 'On Orders' job. Each day, just after breakfast an open 3-ton tipper, with Arabs in the cab and one on the back, arrived at the toilets. The men from the cab emptied the oil drums of urine into the sand, then passed the toilets to the man in the back who emptied them on his feet. When the vehicle drove off, it was followed by several squadrons of flies!

There was a detachment from Aden Workshops stationed in the camp. This was a benefit for the LAD, as there was only one main building for REME to use, so the LAD and workshop personnel all worked together and shared billets. We had to take over all the vehicles and equipment left in the camp. Some idiot had tried to drive the *Scammell* and had pulled the winch rope through the pulleys and into the laying-on gear. I

refused to sign for it and it was sent away and a replacement obtained. We were on a war footing, therefore all the tanks had to be repaired and in running order. Extra tanks arrived, probably from

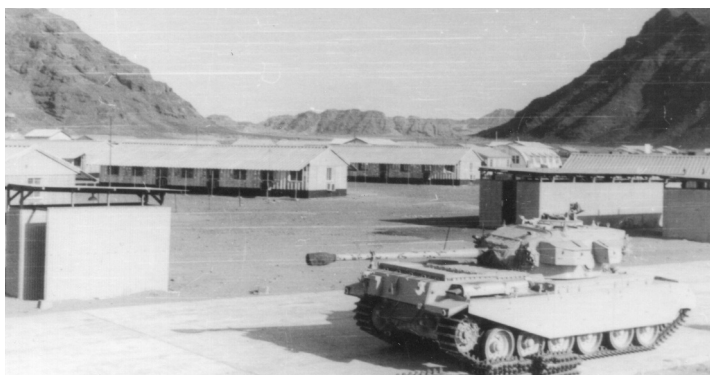
Cyprus. The REME had a guard on the workshop every night, consisting of a Corporal and three Craftsmen. One Cfn walked around the outside of the workshop and parked vehicles all night. About 75 yards from the workshop was a line of RASC *Bedford RL* lorries, parked with their backs to the barbed-wired fence. A sentry walked up and down in front of them all night, only leaving them to go through our lines to their guardroom to change over sentries. In the morning, the drivers came for their lorries and found two gearboxes missing. The Arabs had been there in

the night, using spanners wrapped in rags.

One night I was on guard duties with a Craftsman we called 'Frenchie' (he was from the Seychelles and a coloured lad) plus a dog called 'Boots' (who did not like Arabs), both from my billet. We were at the door to the workshop when Frenchie suddenly started sniffing and said, "*Wog coming*". Several seconds later, Boots started to growl. An Arab appeared, going to the water tap that was situated there. For some unknown reason they were allowed in for water. There was a small settlement outside the rear of the camp. There was a very comical incident when a Trooper chased the RSM around the camp in a *Centurion* tank. The RSM, an Irishman called Kelly (ex-Irish Guards) kept running on the roads and he was shouting, "*Arrest that man*". He stayed on the road instead of ducking between vehicles or billets where the tank could not go.

Transported to Kuwait

Once the Regiment was up to strength, LSTs (landing ships tank) were provided to take the tanks to Kuwait. The dock was quite a distance from the camp. The tanks were driven around the coast, to a point where they could be put on tank transporters and taken to the dock. I was employed driving the tanks to start with, but there was a shortage of *Antar* crews, so I was assigned to one of the *Antars* and we took the tanks to the quay. It was not without incident - the natives weren't friendly and we had a brick through one of the back windows. Once the tanks were on their way to Kuwait, the troops would go by air. It was decided that the REME (LAD & Workshop personnel) would go first. Any defective vehicle in Kuwait could be worked on straight away and be ready for the troops. Once again, Army logic came into play. We would leave in a *Hastings*, an old propeller-driven plane, and the rest would go by *Britannia*. We left first but arrived hours after them. As we were REME, we could not be trusted with side-arms - they were packed and stowed by the RAF. This was a masterstroke, as the



Falaise Camp

Kuwait and Col Kassim threatened to invade. At this time, the Squadron in Aden was on change-over, so there were two boats up the Gulf. They all landed in Kuwait and prepared to defend it from Iraq. In Tidworth, we all paraded around the grass area in the barracks with our kit. The QM called out an item of kit and we threw it onto the grass. Then we were issued with KD and it was off by plane to Aden, a camp called Falaise, outside Little Aden at a place called Bir Fuqum. It was in the middle of nowhere, just sand and mountains, made of crumbling rocks. We lived in



'Up front' near Iraqi border

RAF didn't unload them when we arrived in Kuwait and they went back to Aden, never to be seen again. Great stuff - going to war and not a weapon between us! Still, we could always throw spanners at the enemy. I had previously told the lads of my trip to Christmas Island in a *Hastings* and they thought it was a load of bull. You should have seen their faces when they got on the *Hastings* (it was still rigged for paratroops) - their jaws dropped to their belts. I just said, "I told you so!"

In Kuwait, all the Sabre Squadrons and their REME 'Fitters Troop' were up the front, but the Headquarters Squadron, LAD and Workshop personnel were in a Kuwaiti Army camp. We lived in one hanger alongside our vehicles, but we had beds obtained by the REME senior ranks attached to the Kuwaiti Army. The other hanger was the cookhouse and Carabiniers sleeping quarters on canvas beds. Fresh drinking water was from a one-ton water trailer parked in the summer sun. No need to boil water to make tea - just put water from the trailer straight into the teapot. For drinking water, I had a porous native jug with a damp handkerchief over the top. Hanging on the front of the *Scammell* was a canvas water bottle and native goatskin bottle. For fuel, we just went to a local petrol station and filled up. We had to sign for the amount we drew, so I learnt the Arabic numbers, one to ten. The lads up the front lived alongside their tanks in the desert. Also in the camp were Saudi Arabian paratroopers, they woke us up every morning, running by and making stupid

noises. They had been trained by Yanks, so weren't much good. They were a scruffy lot and their rank badges were just pinned on. The Kuwaiti people did not trust other Arabs.

One day the EME sent for me and said, "We have to fetch

some tanks from the front for repair. Can you drive an Antar?" "Huh!?" I replied. I was told to go to the Kuwaiti Army MT Section and see the Officer and fetch the *Antar*. I found the office, knocked on the door and went in. In there was an Arab Officer who spoke English - I saluted and called him "Sir". He loved it and I told him why I was there and he said, "Sit down". He shouted out in Arabic and an Arab Staff Sergeant ran in, more Arabic and he disappeared. An Arab boy served tea to the officer and me. It was in a small glass, with loads of sugar and no milk. A knock on the door and the Arab S/Sgt was there and the Officer said, "The vehicle is ready". I went outside and



'Yours Truly' in action

there, ticking over, was a diesel *Antar* tractor and *Dyson* trailer. I went to the LAD and picked up my crew. I repeated this every time I wanted the vehicle. The Officer told me he had been on a vehicle mechanics course at 6 Battalion, Bordon. I always saluted him, called him "Sir", and drank my tea. When I went up the front it was to an Arab Café that the Army had commandeered as a Medical Centre, it had a forecourt of hard standing. We waited here for an

ARV to tow the dead tank out of the desert. It was always in the full sun and we had to put gloves on to lower the ramps on the *Dyson* trailer. Anything metal was red hot and we were in just shorts and floppy hats. It was my first trip back to camp, everything was going well. I approached the camp gates and just swung in at a reasonable speed, when an Arab soldier ran out waving his hands. I stopped and he pointed upwards, there were electric cables across the camp road, lower than the top of the tank turret. One of my crew had to climb up and hold them higher than the tank as I moved slowly forward. This had to be repeated every time I went in or out of camp with a tank up.

On one trip to the front in the *Antar*, all the cars and lorries in front of me suddenly started stopping, with people getting out. I had to pump the brakes and stop. Coming towards us was a *Jeep* full of soldiers with machine guns, in front of an American car; alongside this car was a Police car in the middle of the road and behind the car another *Jeep* full of soldiers. It was the Sheikh of Kuwait, returning from a trip to the front after visiting his tribe. On another occasion, going up to the front in the

Antar with a tank up, there was a Carabinier lorry on the desert by the side of the road. The driver waved us down and I eventually stopped. The driver said, "I've broken down". We replied, "We'll get someone sent out to you". He said, "They already know". I asked, "So why did you stop us?" He replied, "I thought you'd like to know!" My reply is not for printing. I started off again, slowly getting up speed, when this idiot overtook me on the inside. He was kangarooing (water in the petrol), then he pulled on to the road in front of

me; we were going up hill and I had to swing out and overtake him. Suddenly, over the hill came an American car travelling fast. The driver saw the *Antar* coming towards him he had eyes like saucers. The last I saw of him was a cloud of dust as he vanished into the desert. On a return trip I came across a herd of donkeys on my side of the road. I swung round them and, as I straightened up, the engine died. I was standing up, pulling the wheel to get the

vehicle on the right side of the road and then stopped at a bit of an angle. We had got an air lock in the fuel line. Ken Standon (ex-Chepstow, '57 intake, later a Major) was one of my crew – he had his toolbox with him and cleared the fault.

The REME attached to the Kuwaiti Army loved having us there, as we assisted them with repairs to their tanks. I lifted gearboxes and engines with the *Scammell* and our mechanics assisted them. Normally they only had an Arab with a crane. I did lifting jobs and recovery for other units, including the RAF, I think mine was the only recovery *Scammell* there. The RAF was going to practice an attack on the King's Regiment, who were positioned on a hill in the desert facing a gap in the mountains. The King's Regiment had a commandeered 3-ton American water lorry that was red and yellow. It had to be removed, as it was too visible but was a non-runner. I was sent across the desert, no map or compass, it was just follow the tracks in the sand. When I eventually arrived, it was like WW1, everybody was underground. I put the vehicle on a straight bar attached to the bumper, no



A wrecked 1-ton Morris that crashed into my Scammell!

sand was piled up to the bumper bar. This had snapped a mounting on one side and the bumper bar was resting on the wheel. I politely told him what I thought of him and dragged him out of the cab. We put the vehicle on suspended tow and got going as quick as possible. It was getting dusk and I did not want to be in the desert once it got dark. One of our Sabre Squadron REME half-tracks got lost in the desert and nearly went across the border. We were told that the Arab soldier with them did not speak English and appeared worried. Also that they drank the water from the radiator and an ex-boy, Lofty Middleton, got heat stroke and kept seeing fish and chip shops!

On the verge of War?

Even though Kuwait was on the verge of war with Iraq, neither side would close the border and upset other Arab States. Vehicles and camels still went back and forth across the border. Once, when we were waiting up front for a dead tank, we were outside and a terrible smell was in

the air. This was caused by a camel train that was passing close by. The desert Arabs cannot have a sense of smell. On a trip to fetch an armoured car back from the front, I noticed a 10-ton *Mercedes* lorry broken down. It was half on the road with its nearside wheels in the desert. There were large lumps of sand all around it, they looked like rocks. I drove round it without any trouble. By the time I was on the return trip with the armoured car (full of live ammo) on a straight bar, it was dark. As I approached the broken-down vehicle, on the other side of the road in my headlights I saw a 1-ton *Morris* heading for me at an angle. Immediately I knew who was driving - it was L/Cpl Sanders or Saunders, a Chepstow ex-boy electrician. I stood on my brakes; the armoured car ran up my rear. The oncoming lorry didn't stop, his front offside hit my offside (out there it was nearside, driving on the right) and removed my headlight. Everything went out, the other lorry had gone several yards into the desert. We got out and ran to the other vehicle; the driver's side of the vehicle was all caved in. The driver was moaning in pain, we had to force the door open and lift him out. He screamed a bit and his right leg appeared to be broken. Somehow an ambulance appeared and he was taken off to hospital.

I went to see how the armoured car was and there was no damage to my vehicles rear end. The Sgt with the armoured car was Polish (left over from WW2), an 11th Hussar I think. He said, "You need a beer, mate". Then he opened one of the side bins and gave my crew and I a can each. We then parted the wires of the offside headlight and replaced the fuse. It was finish to the job and return to collect the vehicle that had smashed into me. No rest or 'you are suffering with shock, take it easy' - it was just 'get on with it - you've been in an accident, so what?' I never saw the driver again but was informed his leg had been shortened by an inch. As a result of the accident, I had to attend the local Police Station. Sitting outside were four Policemen with rifles. I was shown into an office, with an Arab in civvies behind a desk, a boss man of some description. Also in the office were several Arab civilians and a Police Officer (Inspector or something similar). The man behind the desk spoke to the others and me - he was dealing with three cases at the same time. One of the Arabs was some kind of sub-chief, he had a big knife and revolver in his belt. The Police Officer told me he was there



Me (in beret) and others in front of a Kuwaiti Army Antar

towing eye. A King's L/Cpl was the driver; he said he had been towed before, so off we went. We had been going through the desert for a while when the *Scammell* started to labour. I changed down and carried on - suddenly there was a 'bang', I stopped and we got out. The L/Cpl had gone to sleep and the front wheels were on full lock and

the air. This was caused by a camel train that was passing close by. The desert Arabs cannot have a sense of smell. On a trip to fetch an armoured car back from the front, I noticed a 10-ton *Mercedes* lorry broken down. It was half on the road with its nearside wheels in the desert. There were large lumps of sand all around it, they looked like

trying to get his rifle back, he had threatened to shoot one of the young men of the tribe who had run off with his youngest wife! I told the boss man what had happened regarding the accident and had to sign a statement written in Arabic. All the time we were in the office, a little Arab boy supplied everybody with little glasses of tea. I would drink mine, put the glass down empty and then look at it and it was full again. The lad just moved around the room and I never saw him charge my glass.

Another job I had was to build targets for the tanks to shoot at, as they were going to put on a firepower demo for the Sheikh. With some REME lads, we had to go to the local vehicle dump and pile cars on top of each other and stand VW vans upright on their back doors. We were instructed to put loose wings etc on the targets, so they would fly off when hit. I picked up a wing that was half buried in the sand and, under it, was a nest of camel spiders. You have never seen me move so fast and I jumped up onto the *Scammell's* back - I got my fingertips on the top deck and I pulled myself up in one swift move. Never done anything like that in the gym, in fact I used to fail my tests every year! Although I was good at drill when I wanted to be and could out-shout most CSMs, I didn't get on with Regimental types. I upset one CSM when I had wire in my boots instead of laces, but that's another story. I was sent to the Technical College to do a lifting job for the REME workshops (they were from Kenya). I arrived with my crew, we only wore hats and shorts rolled up. I was trying to find out where the job was when I met their CSM and he made us roll down our shorts. There was an office there with trade senior ranks in, so I went in and said, *"I'm off. I came to do a job, not listen to some regimental type"*. Most of the senior ranks were ex-boys, my division and below, including Charlie Fairless. They convinced me to do the job and keep out of the CSM's way.

The Carabiniers in the next hanger had a 'smoker', with profits from the PRI shop to improve morale. They didn't invite the REME, so we had our own sitting around outside our hanger. Sometime after 10.30pm the SSM marched up to us and said, *"Get to bed*

you lot". The Carabiniers had all gone to bed and were nothing to do with us. Over half the lads drinking were ex-boys from Arborfield and Chepstow. Somebody said, *"You've had your drink and we are having ours"*. That didn't go down well and the SSM looked at me and said, *"You're the senior Corporal, get them to bed"*. I replied, *"We've not finished our drinks yet"*. He then went potty and made all types of threats, including a Court Martial. One of our lads who was not drinking had woken up our S/Sgt 'Chippy' Woods. He came over and asked, *"What's going on?"* We replied, *"Just finishing our drinks, Chippy"*. With that, we drained our tins and went to bed. The SSM was none too pleased, as we took notice of a tradesman but not of him. I hadn't been in bed long and was still well oiled when I was woken. One of our Sergeants said, *"Eggy, it's a breakdown, get your wagon"*. I got my crew out of bed and there was an Artillery Gunner waiting, he had broken down and walked to the camp. The Arabs on the gate had sent him to us. I got the *Scammell* out and, with him on board, went to find his truck. I towed him back and we got a VM out of bed to mend it. Eventually it was diagnosed as a cracked distributor cap - we had no spare, therefore I would have to tow him to his camp. I still had a 'skin full' and I said, *"I will suspended tow you, mate, it is easier and you can guide me to your camp"*. Off we went and he guided me to his camp. I swung in fast and there were loads of Artillery bods sleeping in the open. They got out of bed very quickly as the *Scammell* roared in using third gear. We were laughing our socks off when we dropped the vehicle off. I got back to camp and I was told an incident had occurred while I was away. It cannot be mentioned in print but, in the morning, I had to report to the SSM and, as a result of me talking to a REME Corporal, the previous night was forgotten. The SSM was not a happy bunny and never forgot or forgave the REME - or me! He was eventually promoted to RSM and got killed in Germany.

Kuwait was a 'dry' country, but in the European Clubs drink was available. We were invited to several and enjoyed ourselves. The oil company arranged for REME to have a trip around their installations and the docks. We were provided with food and drink, it was a



The cookhouse and living quarters, Kuwaiti Army Camp

good day out. My crew and I were taken out by an Arab to a working men's club. It was all right but no drink, just sherbet and coffee. We went in his car and, as we drove along, there were some Asians walking along. He wound the window down and shouted insulting remarks, which if I printed, would be regarded as racist. When we were off duty (not very often), we just went outside the camp gates and stood by the road that went towards Kuwait City. The Arabs just stopped and we said, *"Kuwait"* - if they didn't speak English, they nodded. One car we got in had sub-machine guns all over the back seats. The return trip was the same system - just stand by the road and an Arab stopped. In the gold market, the traders only took rupees, not the local dinar. It was years later before I found out why - some of the Arab women wore a yashmak. Those who didn't were from the Lebanon and they were friendly.

The 'flap' is over

Eventually word came from on high that the Regiment would leave Kuwait. All non-runner vehicles had to be towed to the docks. It was a rush job and sometimes I towed a lorry on suspended tow, one behind on a straight bar and a third on a towrope. All vehicles were on the boats and it was now late September. So, off we went to the airport for transport home by the RAF. Waiting for us was a *Beverley*, this was to take us to

Bahrain. It was worse than travelling in a *Hastings*, but we arrived in one piece. It was tented accommodation, with metal beds, for an overnight stop. Next morning we handed our bedding in and put our kit on a *Britannia*. The pilot refused to take off, as there was fault with an auxiliary engine. So it was back to the tents - but another unit had taken out beds! We were told we would be given blankets and sleep on the floor. We then pointed out that the camp was below sea level and the floor was wet every morning. There was a lot of wailing and beating of breasts, but eventually they found us some beds. In the morning, I was detailed with two Craftsmen and a little quiet Sergeant (an electrical tradesman) as escort for two REME Craftsmen from our unit, who had gone out the previous evening and the local police had arrested them. We

went and collected them and I was marching them back when we went past the RHA Airborne unit and Geordie Greenall (52B) shouted to me. The prisoners were Chick Fisher (ex-boy) and a big lad called Knowles (?). We got on the plane and back to Blighty. On arrival, we were told that the prisoners and escort could not get off the plane until everybody else had gone, and we had to use a different door. We got off the plane and marched into the building; the Customs were checking all the troops. The Sgt let me do the shouting and I just marched the escort and prisoners straight through and onto the transport.

It was now October 4th in a cold and damp England, and back to dear old Tidworth. The Army had brought out the new SD uniform. We all had to

parade at the QM's to be measured before going on leave. So we stood in line, still dressed in our KD, freezing. You couldn't get a leave pass till we produced a chit signed by the QM. I dashed to my quarters to get some civilian kit and then off to my Mum's in Yiewsley. When I had left for Kuwait, my wife June was expecting and it was due in October. She had gone to my Mum's when it was almost due. I arrived and she was still in Hillingdon Hospital - my first son was born while I was in Bahrain. After leave, we all got issued with the new uniform. This included REME collar badges that are in pairs. The cavalry did not realise this and I had two horses running in the same direction! Nobody ever noticed and I still had them when I got demobbed.

Pete Curtin, 56A

Surrey and Hants News Group advertisement sales manager Kelly Mitchell and sales representative Steve Maher hand over a cheque for £345 to this year's Poppy Appeal - a donation made possible thanks to the generous contributions from our advertisers. Peter Curtin, the Poppy Appeal organiser for the Bordon area, and secretary of the Bordon branch of

the Royal British Legion (RBL), accepted the cheque on behalf of the appeal. He was accompanied for the presentation by Bordon RBL branch president Don Morrison, who carried the branch standard for the occasion. (See accompanying photograph)

Mr Curtin said the appeal was on course to raise about £8,000 so far -

and there is still money coming in. "My thanks go to the Royal British Legion members, but the truth of the matter is that the people of Bordon, the people who give the money, are really generous", he said. "The money has come from people who work here and the people who live here - and people who are just passing through". The cash goes to the national Poppy Appeal headquarters and is distributed to Armed Forces' dependants, as well as veterans and the families of those who have been killed in service. Organisers of the appeal say they hope to raise £36 million this year.

(I spotted this article in our local 'freebie' newspaper, 'The Messenger'. The aforementioned Kelly Mitchell kindly sent me a copy for publication. So well done Pete and your other collectors for another 'job well done'. Ed.)



Royal Army Service Corps Boys - Jersey

'In the early hours of Thursday 20th June 1940, Joe Gutteridge was one of 240 apprentice tradesmen suddenly deposited here in the barracks at Arborfield. Their RASC apprentices' school had been hurriedly evacuated from Jersey the previous day and it was a weary bunch of lads that gratefully sank onto their straw-filled palliasses in the Camp Hall. Joe still thinks with much gratitude of those RAOC boys who must have worked overtime to fill that bedding as a rush job. The boys' move to the mainland was only just in time, as it was only the following month that German forces took occupation of the Channel Islands, where they would remain for the next five years.'

Joe's stay here at Arborfield, which qualified him as one of our old boys, lasted all of two days! During that brief time, many of the senior boys were able to renew acquaintance with those RAOC boys who had been previously moved here from Jersey in July 1939. But, all too quickly, Joe was off to Dettingen Barracks at Blackdown and then, some ten weeks later, he moved on once again, to Buller Barracks at Aldershot – that was on October 1st. After the next summer leave (1941), that RASC School was disbanded, with the last 105 of the youngest boys going on to Chepstow to complete their training. So Joe can justly lay claim to being an Arborfield Old Boy – but it was a close run thing! Joe later became Treasurer/Secretary for the 'RASC Jersey Boys' and still fondly keeps a close eye on the contents of the Arborfield Old Boys' Association Newsletter (OBAN).'

The above paragraphs were included in the opening chapter of *The Arborfield Apprentice*, the accepted history of the 'boys' school' from 1939 to 2004. The reason I quote them is that I recently received a letter from Jim Macdonald of intake 43A, which contained a photocopy of a clipping that had been written by the same Joe Gutteridge, sometime during his quest to contact other ex-Jersey RASC boys, in the hope that they may sometime get together for a reunion – preferably on the island of Jersey.

Jim Macdonald still belongs to a dwindling Gloucester and Cheltenham branch of the REME Association although, as he writes in his letter, "*Anno Domini and illness are taking their toll*". Jim goes on to say that one of their members, a Hamish Gower, was also (like Joe Gutteridge) one of those 1938 'Jersey Boys' (sounds like a cue for a musical!).

Jim also recalls that he was one of the few boys posted to the RASC, from Arborfield, in 1946. Without further ado, I shall now publish an edited version of Joe Gutteridge's article, which I think may have been published in *Craftsman* magazine a good many years ago. It serves as a reminder to us all of the early days of boys' apprentice training and is thus of some historical significance:

'In 1937, the War Office sanctioned the enlistment of Boy Apprentice Tradesmen directly into the RASC and the first intake commenced training in Buller Barracks, Akldershot. (All previous enlistment of technical ATs into RASC had ceased in 1924, with the opening of the new Boys' Technical School at Beachley, Chepstow, and the RASC boys under training at the time were transferred to the BTS.)

In 1938, St Peter's Barracks, Jersey, was selected as the site for the new RASC Army Technical School. The 40 or so boys being trained at that time – and staff – moved to Jersey. This coincided with the enlistment of the 2nd intake, which numbered about 100 for the RASC – and also included about the same number of RAOC enlisted boys. I understand that the latter were sent to Jersey for training, whilst awaiting the completion of their own Technical School at Arborfield, and their transfer to Arborfield was effected in the summer of 1939.

These 100 or so vacancies were filled by the third RASC intake in August of that year, maintaining the total of boys at around the 240 mark. Towards the end of June 1940 (some three weeks after the Dunkirk operation), the island was declared 'an undefended area' and arrangements were made to close the Technical School and evacuate the boys, plus staff and their families, to the mainland. Some older readers may recall having to provide straw-filled palliasses and bolsters, and laying them out in the gymnasium prior to our arrival in the very early hours of the morning. We were grateful for the rest and, in our two days at Arborfield, many old friendships were renewed between lads who had known each other on Jersey. After documentation, we were sent on leave, eventually reporting to Blackdown in July – a temporary expedient while our new workshops were being prepared at Aldershot. We finally arrived there in October 1940 and recommenced our training where it had all begun – in Buller

Barracks.

By the end of that year, our senior boys had reached the ripe old age of seventeen and a half and, early in the New Year, their postings to various units began. During summer 1941, some of the older boys of the 2nd intake were also posted into man's service and, as there was no intake to replace them, our numerical strength fell to about 150. War Office then decided to disband the Technical School and our new title was '13 Training Battalion RASC (Boys)'. Wholesale postings of the staff took place in a very short space of time and, on September 1st 1941, the remaining boys were transferred to the then Army Technical School at Chepstow to finish off their training. The last of these RASC boys would have been posted into man's service by early 1943. The whole unfortunate saga of disruption had lasted less than six years, from resurrection to the last boy being posted.

However, the dispersal did not end there for the ex-boys. Many of the seniors transferred on the formation of REME in 1942, while other lads volunteered as Commandos, Glider Pilots, Paratroops and the like during the Second World War. Most of those still remaining with RASC Workshop platoons were also transferred to REME in 1951/52.'

Joe's article then continued with his efforts to keep in touch with some of his old pals and, at the time of writing, he was remarking that "we are now all over sixty years of age". His death in 1996 was probably the last mention of those RASC Jersey Boys, but I did trawl through my collection of OBANs and found that Joe had written in similar fashion on previous occasions – notably in two articles in OBAN5 and OBAN15, plus a letter in OBAN10. That final article, from OBAN15, indicates that Joe was eventually successful in contacting some 143 ex-comrades by around 1974 and that they began to meet up with other fairly regularly – and were planning their 'third reunion, on the island of Jersey, in 1998 – the Diamond Jubilee of the opening of their Technical School'. Sadly, Joe did not survive to see that occasion – and I do not know if it ever took place. Is there any reader out there who has any knowledge of what would be 'the final curtain' on these events?

(Compiled by Pete Gipton, 56B, OBAN Editor)

OBAN Articles

Apart from the regular contributions from such as the Chairman, Hon Sec and Editor, as well as readers' letters, the main articles submitted to *OBAN* over the years, from *Issue 36 to 40* inclusive, are as follows:

OBAN 36 Summer 2006	Journey to Iran	Pete Simpson, 56B
	My Paris Caper	John Maddox, 44B
	Doin' a Bunk, the Sequel	Mick Oulds, 57B
	The Seven Thorns	Brian 'Roly' Wells, 55A
	The Early Days	John Smithson, 46B
	The Year I Grew up	Harry Shaw, Jersey 1938 (<i>archive, OBAN 2</i>)
	My First Posting	John Houghton, 56B
	Having a Fling!	Peter McGuiggan, 57B
	A Very Fortunate Life	Mike Addison, 48B
	We've Come a Long Way	Pete Gripton, 56B
	The Great Escape	Tony Guy, 43A (<i>archive, OBAN 7</i>)
	Son of Fred	Freddie Silver
	Sleeving the Noon-day Gun	John Moss, 55A
OBAN 37 Autumn 2006	Bringing Down the Curtain	Victor Brooke
	Charlie Lamb	Tony Guy, 43A
	Forty Odd Years of Civvy Street	Brian Atkins, 43A
	The Way we Were	Dick Manning, 45B
	Pale Blue Beret	Tony Domoney, 56B
	Poperinghe	Keith Evans, 45A
	An 'A' Mech's Tale	Trevor Flett, 73C
	Reunion Report	Frank McKenna & Egon Taska, 66C
	Roy Farran DSO MC	Pete Gripton, 56B (with thanks to Chas Pepper, 43B)
	2006 Reunion	John Houghton, 56B
	My Jerusalem Trip	Freddie Silver
	The Journey	Bill Dutton, 39A
	Traveller's Tale Part 1	John Andrusiak, 70B
OBAN 38 Spring 2007	After the Army Part1	Chas Pepper, 43B
	Brilliant Career Move	West Robertson, 50B
	Busy sort of life	Clive Hartland, 52B
	Serving in BAOR 1961-63	Pete Gripton, 56B
	The Formative Years	John Smithson, 46B
	Last Flight of Beverley	Brian Atkins, 43A
	Maj Jim Morton	Compilation
	Fifty Years On	Tom Pearce, 44A (<i>archive OBAN 6</i>)
	The Awakening	John Burch, 42A
	My Early Life	Jim MacDonald, Apr '43
	The Maunsell Forts	Ken Anderson, 58A
	My Service Record	Tony Guy, 43A
	The Third Age	Lawrence Nixon, Apr '42 (<i>archive, OBAN 3</i>)
OBAN 39 Summer 2007	The 1978 Reunion	Pete Gripton, 56B
	Sick, Lame and Lazy	Arthur Ward, 50B
	My Family and Early Years	Trevor O'Callaghan, 42C
	Top Table at Last	Pete Gripton, 56B
	Jersey Boys	from Stan Bates, 43A
	Now Where Was I?	Ron Callaghan, 42A
	The Suez Crisis	Mike Jackson, 53A
	Early Arborfield	Fred Ford, 39A (<i>archive, OBAN 4</i>)
	Fifty Years in The Planning	Pete Gripton, 56B
	Many a New Tune	Pete Gripton, 56B
	My World Cup Final 1966	Bill Pusey, 46A
	Recollections of a Gun Fitter Part 1	Barry Baxter, 57A
	A Message From our President	DGEME(A)

OBAN 40
Autumn 2007

Recollections of a Gun Fitter Part 2
2007 Reunion Report
Arthur Clarke – Hilsea 1937
Learning Ladder
Surplus to Requirements
Another Fifty Years
Magic Moment
Imperialist Warmonger
Origins of the School Badge
Schoolboy to Soldier
Beyond Arborfield Pt1
My Apprenticeship Years Part 2
I Had a Dream Part 1
Record of Service

Barry Baxter, 57A
Roger Traves, 57A

Chas Pepper, 43B
Jim Cliff, 57A
Jim Gardner, 57A
Pete Gripton, 56B
Peter Simpson, 56B
Ron Janes, 42B
Walter Jobber, Oct 43 (*archive OBAN 11*)
Bryan Atkins, 43A
Trevor O'Callaghan, 42C
West Robertson, 50B
'Eggy' Egleton, 52B

This list will be continued at some time in the future (Ed).

We Know It Doesn't Fit - Part 3

by Johnny Johnson, 56B

(This is the third part of the story of Johnny Johnson's early years in the Army, both at the Army Apprentices' School in Arborfield and in later service life. It should in fact have been tagged on to the end of his Part 2 in OBAN30 – but space constraints must have prevented this. If you look for the Editor's name in that OBAN, you will read 'Post Vacant'! Now firmly embedded in the Editor's chair, I shall endeavour to catch up with the rest of Johnny's tale, starting with him still serving with the 5th Royal Tank Regiment. Ed.)

The Black Sheep

I was invited to take part in a play, organised and produced by 'Griff', my HQ Sqn Sgt Major, who had gained theatre experience at some time in his past. As it turned out, the play was a great success. We used a large converted room on the second floor of a block in the barracks next door, previously occupied by 8 RTR before we amalgamated, and which was not in general use. I was cast as the son in a family of crooks. In the play, I was trying to 'go straight', in order to catch the girl of my dreams. It was a comedy and, after many rehearsals, we were ready. The play was called '*The Black Sheep of the Family*'. Amongst the cast, I remember that the unit Padre was the father of the family and a tall New Zealand girl, called Barbara Blackhead, was my pick-pocketing sister. Barbara was a staff member of the central amenities club in the Garrison, operated by the YWCA. We put on several performances and, to the surprise of

everyone, it was a big hit. Years later, I was on leave in Canterbury, when a stranger stopped me and told me he remembered me in the play. He had seen it when serving his National Service (NS) with 5 RTR. I felt quite good about that! I must relate that, in the performance, 'Father' was supposed to say something to the effect that my sister had the 'slickest fingers in town'. However, one evening, from the mouth of this 'man of the cloth', came the words, "*She has the slickest knickers in town*". This brought the house down, not because it was particularly funny, but because everyone knew who was playing the father!

The Unit Armourer (5 RTR, Fallingbostal)

Being the unit Armourer also meant that one was conversant with the vagaries of the issued cookers, spending a few hours servicing those cookers that had not been submitted for maintenance, etc, before exercises began. Now, when on exercises, a cooker came in for repair, it was nearly always with a promise of some delightful comestible if we made it priority 'number one'. Seeing that we had little other Armourers' duties to perform, making any job number one was quite normal. But naturally, we didn't tell that to those who thought their cookers might take a day or two to fix. We would work 'day and night' (for several minutes after the owner left) to put his cooker in order, and then wait an hour or two before calling him back to collect his property. In this way, entirely unsolicited I might add, we supplemented our rations. Ho hum!

The worst of all tasks was the overhaul of these pressure-cookers prior to annual summer and winter exercises. The burners were of three types: a single burner unit, about the size of a large rectangular biscuit box; a double-burner unit, the size of a briefcase, and a large five-pint burner that gave everyone 'the willies' because it made so much noise when in operation. The first two items were relatively easy to repair but were fiddly when it came to repainting. The last item was like a 7kg gas bottle, pressurised by a large pump and handle fixed to its side. When filled correctly, it was primed with methylated spirits about the main jet and this heated up the jet so that the pressurised petrol (yes, petrol!) would atomise properly for cooking purposes. Despite their simplicity and inherent danger, these cooker units did great service and cooked up some great meals. The latter depended on the quality of the cook. We found that a cook who was treated well, given assistance and encouragement, invariably did his best and provided good meals from the rations supplied.

Of the latter, they were 'ten man, one day' compo packs of a reasonable variety. If we had any gripes it was of two items, '*Mutton, Scotch Style*' and '*Irish Stew*'. After a few days in the field, both would give one 'the runs', giving rise to "*I'll race you to ...*". It would be interesting to know how today's rations stand up, especially the dehydrated type. Of course, the latter rations are of little use in the desert where water is precious and at a premium. Unless of course science has

invented dehydrated water! (Science has always known that water can be extracted from the moisture passing through exhaust pipes. Once this is perfected and made viable, it will be of tremendous value to the world.) Back to rations. If we preferred any particular pack, it had to be the 'summer issue' ones that contained a pleasanter variety of tinned food. Included in one type, 'F' pack I believe, were chocolate bars, fruit gums and other niceties. After all these years I forget the contents of the different packs. The variety ran 'A' to 'F' as far as I remember, but there's no guarantee and, at this stage, I don't suppose the reader is all that interested! Nevertheless, after a few weeks on exercises, we were well aware of our ration pack preferences and did anything legal or illegal to avoid those packs containing the generally disliked food, as already mentioned.

As in any organisation, there are a number of onerous duties to do, not least of all guard duty. There were no exceptions and so, on a fairly regular basis throughout the year, I did a guard duty. I think I spent more hours than I care to remember in the guardroom and on duty. Being on the vehicle barrier wasn't too bad, as there were enough traffic and pedestrian movements to keep one occupied. This meant that the two-hour stag went fairly quickly, unless it was during the 'wee small hours'. On the other hand, doing stag at the tank park in winter was absolute hell! The tank park was a huge cobbled affair, around which were a number of buildings that housed a few tanks; some of the buildings were old converted stables, just wide enough to accommodate a *Centurion* tank. Those tanks and other vehicles not housed 'inside' were parked in serried ranks out on the park. In the winter, the tanks acted as intensely cold radiators, so that touring the park and phoning in at set places was very uncomfortable. In fact the temperature difference, between the area immediately adjacent to the park and within the park itself, was very noticeable.

To begin with I was reasonably conscientious - until I was let into the secret of doing that particular duty!

Most German buildings have a cellar of sorts, particularly those buildings erected before the last war. In the basement of the vehicle workshop was a small rest room for the mechanics. The room was equipped with a field telephone and, at their own expense, with kettle, old chairs and an electric fire, as well as a coal fire. The secret was this. If you were part

of the circle, you made sure that the flap window to the rest room was left unlatched on the day of your duty and that the tea and coffee makings were to hand. In fact, the price of using the facility was to replenish one or more of the commodities in the cupboard. Having done tank-park duty a few times, and being considered trustworthy, my use of the restroom was granted. The purpose of having done a number of duties, as far as admittance to the clique was concerned, meant that you were well aware of the time interval between the differently distanced field phone check-in times. This meant that, as soon as you had checked in on No.1 checkpoint field phone, you headed for the warmth and comfort of the rest room. From this point, you called in at the calculated intervals, pretending that you were calling from a checkpoint phone.

What was important was that you had to be at the small reporting room in the tank park when the Orderly Officer (OO) did his rounds. The Guard Commander always told us when to expect the OO. Random checks wouldn't work, because the tank-park was so big that the OO could walk about for ages and not find you among the plethora of vehicles. Therefore we were waiting or we appeared from amongst the tanks just before or just after his arrival, carrying the rounds-book that he would sign. Some officers, particularly when it was bitterly cold, would sign the book in advance and then you wouldn't see them for the rest of the night! The other occasion would be when hot cocoa was delivered, after the first hour on stag, which was a winter arrangement. Food was never delivered, because everyone ate at the cookhouse, earlier or later than normal, to ensure everybody got a hot meal.

Warmth and comfort being the staff of life in those bitter cold winters, we shed few tears for those that were not party to the dodges. Of course, in hindsight, I realise just how foolish the whole affair was, in terms of discipline and duty. Nonetheless, in part I blame the authorities for not making some effort to organise the duty in such a way as to promote efficiency and to acknowledge the discomfort we went through. Those that institute such duties rarely have to suffer the discomfort, and forget about the men the moment they leave their offices for home. In winter, there was a bottle of anti-freeze set in a bracket on the guardroom external wall. It was the duty of the barrier guard to keep an eye on this. Should it begin to take on a smoky

appearance, this was to be brought to the attention of the Guard Commander. It so happened that one day, when I was on duty, the worst happened and the temperature fell so low that the anti-freeze began to gel. The immediate action was to sound the fire alarm - a wailing device that was hand operated by a crank handle.

There was a particular pattern to be adhered to with this device, so that the difference from a fire alarm was noticed. Practice made this apparent. In the event that the 'cold' alarm was raised, every driver had to report to his vehicle and all vehicle mechanics were automatically to report to the workshops. Any vehicle that could not be started was drained of its water before serious damage could take place. Naturally this meant that, in effect, the whole unit was awakened and very little sleep, if any, was had by anyone that night.

The actual year escapes me, but there was a time when the 2nd Recce Sqn of the 15th US Cavalry moved into the NATO camp. I, among others, was to work closely with them in a form of liaison group and, during this time, I learned a little of their military culture. For example, whereas *Reveille* was for us the time when we were woken up, mainly by bugle, for the Americans it was an actual parade, by Platoon, etc. From my friendship with some of the Americans, I found out that they put a deep but temporary shine on their shoes and parade boots with a pad from a commercial product called '*Five Days Deodorant Pads*'. Seeing the effectiveness of these pads with my own eyes caused me to buy several jars from their PX (Post Exchange). When I eventually ran out of them many months later, I never again had the chance to buy more, as the Yanks had moved out and the French moved in. We took the opportunity of swapping uniform pieces with the NATO soldiers. The Yanks wanted our one-piece overalls, in order to save their fatigue dress from getting dirty. The French wanted our berets, provided they were new and therefore very large and floppy. It was our habit to dunk a new beret alternately in hot and cold water to shrink it, large berets being *gauche*, if you'll forgive the pun.

After about two years with 5 RTR, I was posted to the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars at Hohne, also on Luneburg Heath. This turned out to be an error because, within a few days, three more Armourers turned up at the Hussars, each claiming to have been posted there. This was true, but the error was made at a

higher level. After about a fortnight, we were called together and the names of the recent arrivals were put into a hat for a draw to see who would remain and who would be posted. Needless to say, yours truly was pulled out for a posting. Meantime, we found ourselves on the duty list and bulling up for guard duty. There was a greater amount of preparation than in the Tankies. So great was the competition for stick-man, that members of the guard were actually carried onto their place on the square by their buddies, to ensure that the uppers of their bulled boots didn't crack! I saw more than one guard member wheeled onto the parade-square, standing on what looked like a station trolley. It got so bad, that in this unit it was very common for members to paint their boot with straw-hat dye. The short-term effects were brilliant but, as we were to discover, overdoing it led to disaster. We were told of a case where there was so much dye on a pair of boots that whilst standing on a guard mounting parade, actually turned a deep purple. My 'Five Days' pads were quite adequate for guard duty, although I cannot recall ever being stick-man when with the Irish Hussars.

And the winner is

A few days after winning the 'posting draw', I was called into the office and told to report to the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) in Dusseldorf by the weekend. So once more I packed my meagre belongings into a kitbag and, by Friday morning, I was on a train to Dusseldorf. Somewhere not too far from the city centre was the barracks in which the KOYLI were billeted. My memories of this particular camp are, at best, few and fairly vague. I think this is because the Regt were on notice to move back to UK and so the time spent there was quite short. My immediate boss was 'Pincher M', how he got this name I do not know. Pincher was a man of very fixed habits, good at his trade and, generally speaking, a likeable man. Ever 'the regular', he had his bowel movement at 0900 hrs every day, had his car washed every week, and its engine cleaned every month.

Everything had its place in the workshop and woe betide you if it was out of place at the end of the day. My first error at the KOYLI was with the *Bren* guns. I had been trained and was very familiar with the .303" *Bren*. I knew that they were being replaced by 7.62mm versions but had not come across them since leaving AAS. Consequently, I

tackled them in exactly the same way as I would .303s. My mistake! Having presented Pincher with two *Brens* that I had put through a unit inspection and repair, he was initially quite satisfied, until he checked the tightness of barrels and discovered that I had used breeching washers to attain the proper tightness. At this point he called me over and, in typical military manner, succinctly but clearly informed me of my doubtful heritage and probable miserable prospects for the future. All I could say was that I had yet to do the upgrade course on these weapons. He then relented and explained how 7.62mm calibre *Bren-gun* barrels were tightened, which was by selective fitting of locking nuts, not breeching washers. In some respects it should have been obvious, the fact that rimmed and rimless ammunition would be treated differently, because of the effect on cartridge headspace.

Because my Dad was a Yorkshireman, even though it was obvious from my accent that I wasn't, the Regiment quickly accepted me. The KOYLI depot was then in Pontefract, just a few short miles from Dad's birthplace, in Featherstone, near Castleford. I have three very distinct memories of my time with the KOYLI in Dusseldorf. The first concerns the story a Sergeant told me one day, while I was yet again on guard duty and he was doing his rounds as orderly Sergeant. He swore it was true. One Sunday, he was Orderly Sgt, spending most of that day dozing on his bed, except when doing his rounds and other associated duties. He says that his afternoon was disturbed when a man arrived unexpectedly from the Depot to join the unit. It was part of the Orderly Sgt's duty to organise the man a bed and bedding, etc. He says that the man told him his name was Coffin, and this was confirmed from his Movement Order. Naturally, being NS, the Sgt asked Coffin what his civilian job was. The Sgt was none too pleased when Coffin informed him that he had been a gravedigger. To this the Sgt bristled and warned the newcomer not to be flippant. In Army language, "Don't take the piss, son!" Coffin assured the Sgt that he was being truthful. The Sgt then said that if the newcomer told him he was from Gravesend, he would certainly have him up on charges of insubordination. The newcomer, the Sgt said, looked very concerned at this and, when thus prompted, said nervously that he was from Bury St Edmonds! Well, the story is good for a laugh and is probably another military legend.

Part of an Armourer's duties with the KOYLI was looking after the pedal cycles on issue to the unit. As far back as my apprenticeship, this task had been re-assigned to the vehicle mechanics and so clearly some units had not caught up with the times. On the other hand, a fixed rule for armourers was to be found in EMERs General Part C. Roughly speaking it said, "An Armourer is to undertake any work requested of him that is within his capability". On this basis, I assume that the maintenance of bicycles remained with the Armourers' workshop. Whatever the circumstances, a letter or order, I do not know which, was passed from the QM to us, via the Vehicle workshop, that the annual report on bicycles must be accompanied by an estimation of the miles completed by the tyres. Now, you will know as well as I that this was a ridiculous request. It was treated with the scorn it deserved, even when the QM insisted on a report that he could send to the requesting authority. To this end, Pincher and the Sgt Vehicle Mechanic hatched up a scheme, whereby a number of soldiers were detailed off to ride round and round the dirt square for a given period of time, at the end of which the riders changed. Beginning with a new set of tyres, the tread was carefully measured with a *Vernier* depth gauge until noticeable wear was measured. From this point on, simple maths and a bit more pedalling established an approximate wear rate. With this information, the tyres of all the regimental bikes, half a dozen, or so, were measured and a wear graph produced. The report was highly detailed, giving the method by which the wear rate had been determined and a lengthy table with all the details. Of course, the whole thing was a poke at officialdom, which the QM is said to have been none too happy about, although the MTO was said to be amused. Whether or not the report, as well as the figures, was ever submitted, I do not know.

The other memory is not a particular pleasant one for me. It arose out of an inspection of HQ Coy stores. These storerooms, as well as the Company Armoury, were located in the cellar of the block in which we, as HQ Coy members, were billeted. It was close to the unit's time to return to the UK and the unit was busy cleaning, packing and doing a multitude of other things that are necessary when a unit packs up to move. This was the second time I had found myself arriving at a unit soon to move. Along with others, I had been detailed off to clear out one or two wire cages that

were used to divide up the Company stores. This entailed a lot of hard labour, like lifting and carrying heavy loads. We did what was required that morning and, as we neared the end of the task, we were informed that there would be snap inspection by the 2IC of the unit. So it was that we finished the job and charged upstairs to the ground floor, in time to take our places in our barrack rooms and stand stock still as the Major came in. This is the embarrassing bit for me. As he stopped by my bed, he sniffed and then came closer, sniffing again. Naturally it was me, reeking from heavy labour and having had no time to have at least a quick rinse. This officer then remarked that certain persons should learn to use the bathrooms and wash properly, etc. I couldn't say anything then. I had to take whatever my seniors dished up and say nothing. I was uncomfortable with this situation and, by the end of the day, was determined to do something about it. Firstly I explained to Pincher and asked him to take it up with the CSM. Fortunately that was what he did and the CSM reported it to the Coy Commander, who told the 2IC. There were more than half a dozen of us in that room that day, all sweaty and not pleasant to stand close to. I felt victimised and embarrassed. Fortunately the guys in the room understood the situation and nothing further was said. It goes without saying that there was no apology or words of understanding coming from the 2I/C. At least I had the satisfaction of knowing I had done something about it. Naturally, much of the advice I had received from friends and others was to the effect 'leave things alone and not stir up trouble'. Nevertheless, when you are right, you are right.

Back to England

Eventually the barracks were handed over to the next unit, whoever they were, and the KOYLI, me included, were sent back to England, to their Depot in Pontefract, Yorkshire. The Depot was an old cluster of Victorian buildings that were the basic training home of recruits and NS men called up and sent to the KOYLI. Because of the NS intakes, there was not enough room to accommodate the whole of the Regt that had returned from Germany. Consequently, and contrary to normal practice, personnel who lived or had relations within a certain radius from

camp, could 'live out'. There were a surprising number of local families who suddenly found they had relations they never knew of! Another manner, in which to lighten the accommodation load, was to send men off on courses all over the country. I have never known so many soldiers to be hygiene and traffic duty



qualified. Anyone who fancied a course just looked up the details and made an application; very few were turned down. As for me, I needed a Class I Maths pass to complete my ACE 1. The nearest course was at an Education Centre at Fulford Barracks in York. So it was there that I found myself for six weeks, studying under an Army Education Corps instructor. Lessons were from 0900 to 1230 hrs on some days and 1400 to 1630 hrs on other days. I had never had so much free time in my Army life. No one checked on me for the whole of the six weeks I was there.

Actually, as I recall, there were two barracks next to each other, divided by a ten or twelve foot wall, namely Fulford and Cavalry barracks. I was accommodated in Fulford barracks and walked through to Cavalry barracks via a gateway in the wall between the two. On my first morning I was looking for this gateway, having been told about it by other soldiers on a different course. I walked in the direction given but couldn't find gate and so stopped at the unit vehicle workshop to ask my way. The only person I could see was the bottom half of one, his top-half hidden by the depths of the engine compartment. I stopped and asked the way but got no response. I asked again, but still no response. I then stepped closer and slapped the leg of this torso-less mechanic. A body then emerged, its head covered in a hairnet and an effeminate voice asking who the hell was I? I had just

met my first female VM! I got my directions and went on my way. My maths was weak but I managed to hold my own throughout. Every Friday, we had a test based on past papers. I had good results and bad results, but steadily got to a reasonable grade. Following a successful mock paper at the end of five weeks, I was allowed to take the examination. No one was more surprised than I was, when a study of the paper showed that it was a mixture of past questions, which I had done over the past five weeks or so. The end result was a high percentage pass, which I never ever achieved again in any maths or maths-related examination.

On return to Pontefract, I learned that the KOYLI were to be split up, each active Company going to a different place like Aden, Malaya, or other places I can't remember. However, I didn't want to go abroad just then and so arranged a swap with the man who was the Depot Armourer, thus remaining behind in the UK. My Armourers' shop was located in the actual arms store. The shop was on the second floor of 'The Keep', a small tower-like structure adjacent to the main entrance to barracks and above the QM's stores rooms. The Armoury contained, in addition to the unit's weapons, its collection of historical firearms. This suited me to the ground, as I was by then an avid historical firearms fanatic. I made a point of carefully servicing this collection, as well as maintaining the unit weapons. One task I was assigned to was to match the butt assemblies of stored *Sten* guns to their parent bodies, prior to packing and dispatch back to the Ordnance Depot. A simple task, I thought, but not so. Only a few *Sten* guns were ever matched to the numbers borne by the butt assemblies. This had the QM and me worried for a while, until I spoke to the Brigade Armourer. He politely told me that matching of numbers had ceased to be mandatory a few years previously. Out of this little job and others that followed, I earned the following remark from the QM. *"This man is a credit to his Corps."* This may not seem much and at the time I was pleased, but held no great store by it. Later on in my career that remark, together with others, served to assure me promotion at a time that was opportune. My time was kept busy, as the Companies were put through range training and other

duties like riot control, in readiness for their overseas postings. At last, the 1st Battalion was dispersed to its duty and the Depot settled down to a reasonably quiet life. My work became less rushed and I really began to enjoy life in a training depot. The food was excellent because it was training depot and rations were a little bit more than elsewhere.

And so to Bulford

It was while on the Depot staff that the new Army uniform was introduced. Before long, I was the proud owner of a tailor-fitted uniform to replace the BD uniform I had worn since leaving the AAS in 1956. My time at the KOYLI Depot was shortened, when some of the British Army infantry regiments were amalgamated for the purposes of forming brigades. This change gave the Depot more seniority and the establishment of posts changed, so that the depot was entitled to an Armourer Sergeant. Had I been a Corporal, I'm fairly certain that I would have been promoted. Nonetheless, the fact was that I had to be posted. I did have the choice to remain on the staff, under the new Sergeant but, having been in sole charge for some time, I was not inclined to play second fiddle. On hindsight, I guess it was a bit arrogant. As it turned out, everything was for the best. I was posted to the 1st Btn Royal Welsh Fusiliers (RWF), in Bulford Garrison, way down south in Hampshire. Only just in Hampshire though, because the county of Wiltshire was a matter of metres from the garrison boundary. One fine spring morning I collected my movement order and train ticket from the Orderly Room and was soon on the train to London, where I had to change trains and stations for what was the old *Great Western*

Railway line, to find a train to Grateley Halt. In accordance with the movement order, I was wearing full uniform and was carrying my belongings in a kitbag and a green canvas covered army issue suitcase.

The size and combined weight of my belongings made the trip uncomfortable, yet I had to look smart at all times. Fortunately for me the new uniform was almost crease-proof.

Having studied the relevant timetables, it seemed odd to me that very few trains on the line to Salisbury actually stopped at Grateley. I would have thought that, as a station used by the military, there would be more trains stopping there. I didn't know then, that the Orderly Room in Pontefract had used an ancient old station directory (probably wartime), to identify the nearest station to Bulford Garrison. Eventually the train arrived at Grateley, which, had the announcer at the previous station not said that Grateley was the next stop, I might have dozed through. The first thing I noticed, as the train slowed down, was that there were a few rusting sidings in a station that had seen busier and better days. Also, the train was going to stop where there was no real platform. When it did finally grind to a halt, I dropped my kitbag to the ground and lowered myself, holding on to my suitcase. I struggled across a set of lines and walked up the sloping end of the proper platform. Watching me, from the doorway of the Stationmaster's office, was the uniformed figure of a railway employee. He was thin and stooped and obviously close to, if not past, retirement age. "*Bugger I,*" he said in his quaint accent, "*Oi 'aven't seen one of you since the War!*" When I asked what he meant, he said that troops had stopped using the

station years before. He thought I was an American, because of the new issue uniform being very much the same, at least as far as his memory went. I knew different, but was too polite to say so. Hence, he definitely *hadn't* seen one of me since the War!

It turned out that Bulford was not too far away - but far too far to walk. In any case, it involved a lot of country lanes, which I got to know quite well much later. I used the local telephone directory to ascertain the Royal Welch Fusiliers number and got through to the guardroom. My troubles then began, because I couldn't understand what I was being asked because of the man's Welsh accent.

After a lot of time, I eventually established for them exactly where I was and asked for transport, which was supposed to pick me up. I discovered later, of course, that I should have been sent to Salisbury, where I would have been transported to Bulford by a bus service laid on for troops arriving on posting or back from leave. While waiting for the transport, I sat on a bench in this small out-of-the-way country station. After a short while, the railway man invited me in to the pub, which was built smack next to the station, and there I had some refreshment - non-alcoholic, I might add. I drank very little then, as I still do now. In due time, a *Land-Rover* arrived and I was on my way to my new unit. The journey was difficult in that, whilst the driver understood me, I could barely understand a word that he was saying! So much for my introduction to the RWF!

(As one chapter closes, another usually begins – so we shall catch up with Johnny's tale in the not-too-distant future. Ed.)

A Nun's Tale

A taxi driver stops at the roadside in central London and picks up a nun. As she settles into her seat, she notices that the VERY handsome driver keeps looking at her in the rear-view mirror, so she asks him why he is staring. He replies, "*I have a question to ask you but I don't want to offend you*".

She answers, "*My son, you cannot offend me. When you're as old as I am and have been a nun as long as I have, you get a chance to see and hear just about everything. I'm sure that there's nothing you could say or ask that I would find offensive*". "Well", says the cabbie, "*I've always had a fantasy to have a nun kiss me*". To which the nun responds, "*Okay, let's see what we can do about that. Firstly, you have to be single and, secondly, you must be Catholic*".

The taxi driver is very excited and says, "*Yes, I'm both single and Catholic!*" "Right", says the nun, "*pull over into the next alley*".

The nun fulfils the cabbie's fantasy, with a long, deep kiss that would make a hooker blush. But when they get back on the road, the taxi driver starts to cry. "*What's wrong?*" asks the nun, "*Why are you crying?*" He replies, "*Forgive me but I've sinned. I lied and I must confess that I'm married and I'm also Jewish*".

The nun says, "*That's fine, don't worry. My name is Kevin and I'm going to a fancy dress party!*"

A Move to Carlisle (Boys Service Part 2)

by Malcolm 'Mal' Tanner, 58B

(Editor's note: the accompanying photographs should really have appeared with Mal's 'part 1' article in OBAN49, but there was insufficient space. Hopefully, Mal won't mind me now publishing them here – I stress that these were taken when he was still at Arborfield!)

In January 1960, Gun Fitters and Armourers from Arborfield, along with VMs from Chepstow, were transferred to a new AAS at Carlisle. I believe that Instrument Technicians also went there, at a later date. Just as I was heading 'oop north', my brother Graham arrived at Arborfield to start life as a Radar Mechanic. I think his intake, 60A, may have been the first to be billeted in the new block at the top of the Square. I don't recall too much of that journey to Carlisle, though I think we passed through Doncaster and possibly over the Ribble viaduct? *(Was that the Ribblehead viaduct?*

Ed.) Troop trains were usually routed so as to cause no inconvenience to the civilian population. We arrived at our destination during the evening, where the Commandant of the new School, Col Fane-Gladwin OBE, Scots Guards, met us on the platform with a welcoming committee. I think there was also a band in attendance. It was quite dark and snowing when we finally boarded buses to Hadrian's Camp – where the famous Roman Wall actually bisected the camp. De-bussing outside 'A' Coy lines, we could only just make out the lights of the other spiders across the vast Square. This was large enough for a tank regiment to hold a drive-past! Our little group of about 200 Apprentices seemed lost, until the new intakes that were to form Junior Company began to arrive.

While we were at Carlisle, a number of Arborfield lads mysteriously arrived looking for shelter. They had been part of a mini mass breakout and were 'on the run', hoping to put up with us for a few

nights. My memory fades at this point and I don't remember which intake they were from. Were they my own group? I seem to recall Frank Barnard, a very droll West



**November 1959 - 'A' Coy
Grogan
Tanner**

**Todd, A/L/Cpl Baker (57), Hocking, Chattin
Barnard**

Country lad from Plymouth being one of them. Or were they from my brother's 60A group? I'm pretty sure he went on the run at one time! Anyway, this whole idea in my head may have come from that famous story of a deserter staying at Arborfield – and I've just got things mixed



**Picture 2 - Easter 1959 - 58B, Room B5
Tanner, Chattin, Neil, Grogan, Chant, Rodd, Symester and ?
Driver, Hocking, A/L/Cpl Baker (57 intake)**

up. Is there anyone out there who may have better memories on this than myself?

Those were the days when many civilian youths were sporting those

'Mohican' style hairdos. During a room inspection, the A/T next to me, Mick Gill, an Armourer from Gillingham, was picked up for a minor fault, causing the CSM to take a closer look at him. The CSM grasped Mick's white belt, as it was sagging somewhat – and the belt proceeded to fall onto the floor in pieces! Mick had cut the buckles free and made new woggles from the spare bits. This had made it easier to clean, but the belt was now a case of 'damage to WD property'. The CSM then decided to see if Mick had been 'doctoring' his SD cap. Upon removing it from Mick's head, he recoiled in horror at the dyed blonde Mohican haircut that Mick had carefully cultivated! Flabbergasted was the word – and another word that rang in Mick's ears was "Jankers!"

In Barry Baxter's 'Recollections of a Gun Fitter' (OBAN39), he mentions trade tests. On one of our tests, the instructors collected all the breech-mechanism parts from half-a-dozen different guns – 25 pounder, 75mm Pack Howitzer, 5.5" Howitzer, 20-pounder tank, 40/70 Bofors and that odd thing, the 165mm (or was it 6.5"?) demolition gun – and piled them all in a heap. We were then split into pairs and told to correctly re-assemble them. It was amazing at just how many 'wrong' parts could be made to fit together!

Towards the end of my Carlisle time, we took part in a drill competition that counted towards the 'Champion Company' trophy. 'A' Coy's CSM Blood was from the Royal Angle Irons – and also rather short. All the other CSMs were from the Brigade of Guards. According to the book, they all drilled their squads to the 'standard drill' that was laid down in the School.

However, we in 'A' Coy, under CSM Blood and Sgt Ford REME, performed as per the Guards Drill Manual, slightly slower, but allowing more swank and swagger. Needless to say, we won the competition and CSM Blood

was last seen swaggering into the Sgts' Mess, drawn up to his full height, sporting a mile-wide smile, much to the discomfiture of the Guards' contingent. Life in 'A' Coy was rather sweet for the week that followed!

At last, three years after joining, and one day after my 18th birthday, it was time for 58B to pass out. July 26th 1961 was a

very stormy day, and the butts of our SLRs were lifted sideways by great gusts of wind. Luckily, we were wearing battle dress and berets. Part of the grandstand canopy blew down and we were lucky to complete the parade. It was very annoying to find that the parade programme had us described as '58C' – damn cheek! I passed out as Fitter Gun 3rd

Class (Field and AFV). I'm fairly certain that we all had to make our own arrangements to get home, as we were now 'Regular Army' – next stop, Depot REME! But that's another story!

(And one which I am sure will be forthcoming eh, Mal? Ed.)

An Australian Interlude

by John Houghton, 56B

Posting Order

In the summer of 1969 I was with 7 Arm'd Wksp REME, as i/c Armourers Shop/Gun Section. I was summoned to the AO's office, to be informed that I was to be posted to FVRDE (Fighting Vehicles Research & Development Establishment), at Longcross, Chertsey, to take part in 'Exercise Corinthian'. I inquired as to what 'Ex Corinthian' was, and all the AO could tell me was, '...tropical trials of prototype armoured vehicles in Australia'.

Arrival & Employment at FVRDE

I duly reported to FVRDE (Military Division), Aldershot, to be informed by the Adjutant (Maj Hill, RTR) that I had been allocated a hiring in Alexander Road, Farnborough, as there were currently no MQs available at Longcross - and to settle-in my family a.s.a.p. He then enlightened me as to the purpose of 'Corinthian'. I was to be part of a trials team that would support prototype armoured vehicles (2 x CVR'W' *Fox* and 2 x CVR'T' *Scorpion*), that were to undergo environmental and reliability tropical trials ('hot dry' and 'hot wet'), in Queensland, Australia, commencing in September for a period of six months. Queensland was chosen for the trials because it offered both 'hot dry' and 'hot wet' climates, as well as firing ranges, all on one continent and within a few hundred miles of each other. *(Coincidentally – Dave Howlett, 56B, mentioned John's presence in Queensland in his OBAN46 article! Ed.)*

'Corinthian' was to be commanded by Lt Col Fletcher, RTR, with a Capt Kaye, RH, as his 2i/c. The REME element would consist of WOII George Scotcher (Art Vehs), myself (Art Wpns) and Sgt Stuart Gay (Tels). The bulk of the trials

team would comprise two scientific officers, two VMs, a vehicle electrician, a photographer and two drivers (all FVRDE employed civilians). The two civilian drivers, along with two Sgts (Mick Hurst and AN Other), Cpl 'Ginger' Martin, Tpr



An Ex Corinthian CVR'T' spotted in Bovington Tank Museum in 2006

Ray (all QRIH) and a couple of Armoured Corps junior ranks, would be the trials team drivers/gunners. Our 'QM' would be SSgt 'Geordie' Dawson, RTR, and looking after the pay and accounts; Sgt Laurie Wright, RAPC. A few other support personnel, an RAMC Capt, two ACC cooks and five Gurkhas (to undertake general duties), would join us in Singapore *en-route* to Australia. One final member of the team was an *Alvis* representative (makers of the CVR'T') by the name of 'Chuck' Olney. It was planned that the trials would be self-supporting, as far as possible, once we reached Australia.

With only two months before we set off, there was much to be done and get organised. There seemed a thousand and one things to do; medical and dental inspections, OGs to draw and get tailored, tools, spares, scientific trials equipment and other such paraphernalia, etc., all of which had to be carefully packed and boxed. Drivers and gunners had to have training and familiarisation on the prototype vehicles. I myself was dispatched to

RSAF Enfield for a few days, to learn all about the mysteries of the 30mm *RARDEN* cannon. I then spent a couple of days at the FVRDE ranges at Kirkcudbright, observing the firing of both 30mm *RARDEN* and the 76mm 'Scorpion' armament. *(Note: RARDEN was originally a RARDE, Fort Halstead, project and then taken over by RSAF, Enfield, hence the name 'RARD'-EN'. Little did I realise it at the time, but some years later I would become the REME Project Officer for RARDEN (defects, modifications, EMERs, etc.) in Weapons Branch REME.)*

Arrival in Australia

The trials team boarded a *VC10* at Brize Norton, bound for RAF Changi, Col Fletcher and a couple of others having already departed for Australia as the advance party. On arrival in Singapore we then spent a couple of days in transit accommodation in Nee Soon, before journeying on to Sydney. Having met up with the remaining members of the team (the Singapore element), we climbed aboard a *Qantas Boeing 707* and headed for Sydney. I recall, with fond amusement at the time, our civilian element arguing amongst themselves about how many hours overtime they should be claiming. The ever-changing 'time zones' during the various flights were confusing them considerably! On arrival in Sydney, we had over half a day to kill before boarding our connecting flight to our final destination of Townsville, up in Queensland. The Australian Army kindly stepped in and took by us coach on a condensed 'Cook's Tour' of Sydney (the Sydney Harbour Bridge, colloquially and fondly termed 'the Coat-hanger'), the Opera House, Kings Cross area, etc.).

On arrival in Townsville, we were

accommodated in a newly-built Australian barracks. We were made very welcome by the Aussies, but the constant barracking, by a few, about 'Poms' did get on our nerves a touch. The main culprits were two RAN POs, who were staying in the Mess awaiting the repair of their small craft that had gone aground off Townsville. However, one of our team got his own back at dinner one evening, when a dish of mashed pumpkin was placed on the dining table. The Brit enquired of one of the POs as to what the dish was? "Pumpkin", was the PO's reply, "try some, it's delicious". "No thanks", the Brit replied, "in the UK, we only serve pumpkin to our pigs!"

Townsville was to be our start line for Ex Corinthian. From the Australian Army we hired some logistic vehicles (*Land-Rovers* and 4-ton *Internationals*), tentage and other miscellaneous equipment required to support us during the trials period. After about a week, our two CVR'W's, remaining kit and stores arrived by ship in Townsville harbour. The two CVR'T's would arrive later, as they were still being built/prepared back at FVRDE. The next few days were spent unpacking, checking and preparing the trials vehicles, fitting radios, etc. Two memories of Townsville - one was an evening at a drive-in-movie, during the interval the couple in the next car started to chat to us and we enquired where they lived. They mentioned some place we didn't recognise and asked how far away it was? They replied; "137 miles!" Yes, Australia's a big country! The other memory? George Scotcher knew he had a cousin (a painter and decorator) who had emigrated to Australia many years previously, but didn't know exactly where. Out of curiosity, George looked for his namesake in the local telephone directory and phoned a number. He was then very surprised when his cousin answered the phone. The net result was both of us being invited to a very pleasant Sunday lunch at his cousin's home. (N.b. *George, on leaving the Army, emigrated to Australia. So, whilst in Australia on a camper-van holiday in 2000, we stopped off in Townsville and tried to locate him via the local telephone directory, but to no avail. However, I did locate his cousin (who had moved to Cloncurry) and he gave us George's telephone number in Perth, WA, and we had a long chat.*)

Mary Kathleen

Our first three months were to be spent trialling the vehicles in a 'hot dry' environment. The place chosen as our base camp was Mary Kathleen



The other CVR'T employed in Ex Corinthian, along with REME Development Team at FVRDE (none of those present were part of the Trials Team)

(affectionately know to us as 'MK'), some 530 miles due west of Townsville. MK was the site of an open-cast uranium mine (owned by *Rio Tinto Mining*), currently laying dormant, as uranium could be procured cheaper elsewhere in the world at that time. We set off for MK in convoy, with nightly stops in Hughendon and Julia Creek. The journey was relatively straightforward, having first negotiated the suburbs of Townsville, it was a case of taking the main road that led westwards. The first 200 miles were on tarmac, but after that the road deteriorated into a well-used track! The further west we travelled, the drier and hotter it became. The countryside was stark and barren, with the occasional rotting cattle corpse by the roadside. It has been said that there are more termite mounds per square mile in Queensland than there are trees.

On arrival at MK we were pleasantly surprised to find our accommodation was to be a series of wooden huts (previously occupied by the mineworkers), not luxurious, but adequate. Each hut had a bedroom at either end, sleeping three, a kitchen and a central lounge area, with a very crude homemade form of air-conditioning. (Just interrupting here John – I recall on my own Australian visits that I took a while to recognise the term 'egg nishner'! Ed.) The township (as the Aussies call them) appeared to have been a thriving community when the mine had been in operation, with its own shops, post office, etc. But it was now more like a ghost town, with the exception of a few

'caretaker' families left behind to maintain the place. These we came to know quite well during our stay and they made us very welcome, enlisting us as temporary members of their Bowls Club. The club, having a bar, served as the social centre for MK and was the only place one could get a beer! One thing in the club that intrigued me was a yellow painted line on the floor, three foot from the edge of the bar, running the full length. I soon found out its purpose: anyone caught standing between the yellow line and the bar, not engaged in the act of ordering a drink, had to buy everyone in the club house a drink. This kept the 'barflies' from congregating and preventing others direct access to the bar - what a good idea when the place became busy!

Their bowling green was immaculately maintained, a real oasis in comparison with the surrounding area, which was semi-desert and rocky. The township had a swimming pool, but through lack of regular use and maintenance the water had the look and consistency of green pea soup! We asked permission to empty, clean, refill and put it back into use. The townspeople were only too pleased at the suggestion and we undertook the task in our spare time over a period of about a week. Everyone now had somewhere to cool off from the daily temperatures that hovered just above 40° C and dry humidity. Our working dress was OG shorts, boots and socks rolled down when in the shade - with the addition of an OG shirt and 'hats, floppy' when out in the sun.

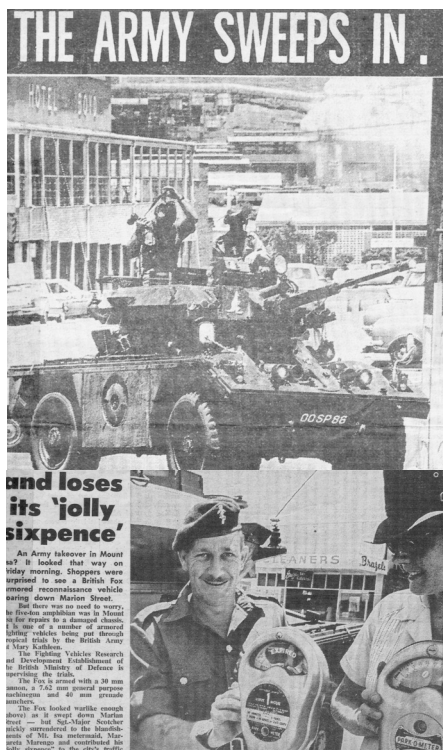
'Hot Dry' Trials

Our CVR'T *Scorpions* had now arrived, having been flown out to us by an RAF *Hercules* to an airstrip at Mt Isa (our nearest town), 33 miles due west of MK. At the same time, we had seconded to us six members of the Australian Armoured Corps (a Capt, WOII 'Bomber' Harris, four JNCOs and Tpr Joe Stalhberg). The Australian Army at the time was looking to procure a new armoured recce vehicle and they thought that our 'Scorpion' may fulfill their requirements, hence their interest in our trials. The Aussies were to share, along with our people, the crewing of the trials vehicles, whilst at the same time observing the trials. Our friendly Aussie, 'Bomber' Harris, shared a room with Stuart Gay and myself. I will always remember his arrival, he was fully kitted

out, full battle order, including machete and a 9mm *Owen* SMG! He must have thought he was being posted to Vietnam, which the Aussies were involved in at the time.

Having settled in at MK, we started our scheduled programme of vehicle trialling in earnest. This included a multiplicity of tasks, mainly involving running the vehicles along roads, tracks and cross-country, to simulate various 'battlefield day' scenarios, whilst at the same time taking readings, from the various scientific trials instruments strategically placed on the vehicles, to monitor the vehicle's health. As the Art Wpns with the team, I initially didn't have a great deal to keep me employed, apart from the occasional inspection of the vehicle's armament, as the firing part of the trials wasn't scheduled until the end of the hot dry trials. Col Fletcher decided therefore, that I should be employed logging all the trials data (daily diary, fuel/oil/ water consumption, vehicle instrument readings, etc.). One trial involved drilling a one inch hole into the side-wall of a 'Fox' run-flat tyre and driving it until the tyre totally collapsed, and the vehicle became unmanageable, to ascertain how the tyres performed. Another was driving a *L-Rover*, around a circuit, trailing two old tyres in front of the trials vehicles, to simulate excessive dusty conditions. The trials vehicles had dust-collecting cylinders strategically placed to measure the quantity of dust entering the various compartments, assemblies and components. I recall this trial going on for hours - and hours and hours.....

The workload for the VMs (both military and civilian) was generally steady, more attention being paid to frequent equipment inspection, in an effort to enhance vehicle reliability. One of the 'Foxes' developed a crack in its hull. It was considered serious enough that the vehicle would be VOR unless it was repaired. If not repaired, it would jeopardize some of the scheduled trials work. But how to get it repaired? We had no suitable welding equipment. Enquiries in Mt Isa revealed that the local copper mine (to which the town owed its existence) had the necessary equipment and they agreed to effect the necessary repair. Permission was sought from FVRDE and the vehicle hull was stripped of its engine, wheel stations etc. and transported to Mt Isa. The repair was successful and once again the vehicle was roadworthy. Another annoying and re-occurring problem we had was the



WO1 (AQMS) George Scotcher, as he appeared in the local Mt Isa newspaper

premature life of 'Scorpion' track pins (*this would have serious consequences, see later*) and it was decided to change all track pins at an increased frequency to that which had been originally scheduled. For the most part, this involved drifting out each pin with a sledgehammer! A very tedious and labour intensive job, I recall everyone in the team taking a turn in this task.

Towards the end of the three months 'hot dry' trials it was time to conduct the firing trials. Permission was obtained from the Queensland Government for a suitable and safe area to conduct firing. The firing range allocated to us was an area that was flat, featureless and devoid of any vegetation (and obviously people), some 20-30 miles north-east of MK. Targets were manufactured and erected at various distances, along with hessian sun canopies for the vehicles and the people working on them at the firing point. All weapons were fired (main armament and co-axial), again following 'battlefield day' scenarios, along with accuracy trials. For the accuracy trials, the main armament was bore-sited onto the target for each shot fired and the results at the target end recorded. The 76mm gun performed well with no undue reliability problems. However, it was a different story with the 30mm *RARDEN*. I spent countless hours in the 'Fox' turret, attempting to rectify all manner of problems (feed, extraction and recuperator to mention a few), tweaking

this, adjusting that and fitting new components - but they had little effect on the weapon's reliability. Because of the problems we were having, RSAF Enfield decided to dispatch the *RARDEN* Assistant Designer out to us. He duly arrived; bring with him a number of recently developed modified components.

Working together, these were fitted, which resulted in slightly improved weapon reliability. Both of us would keep our fingers crossed when 'three rounds on automatic' was attempted. In all fairness to the *RARDEN*, it is a complicated piece of ordnance and both the weapons we had in 1969 were early prototypes, so some degree of unreliability was to be expected. This part of the trials was exhausting for all of us, it was extremely hot and the days tended to be long. The FVRDE photographer with us (Johnny Johnson) took film of us frying an egg on top of a vehicle turret roof. We left the trial vehicles overnight on the ranges, along with a night guard, whilst the rest of the team returned to MK, then it was back to the ranges the following morning.

Recreation was mainly the pool in MK, with the occasional Saturday shopping trip for bare essentials into Mt Isa. It was strange to see, on Saturday mornings, Aussie men queuing outside of the hotels and bars at 10am, waiting for them to open. However, one Saturday we were invited to the copper mine and given a guided tour and I was amazed how large the establishment was and how deep and long the mineshafts extended. This was followed by an evening invitation to the town's *Irish Club*, again a large place, and filled to the gunnels with people. It was said to me at the time that Mt Isa was home to 40 different nationalities and most of them had their own national social club! We were approaching the end of the hot dry trials and Christmas was upon us. George Scotcher rode on the top of a CVR'W' *Fox*, dressed as Father Christmas, into the car park of MK's *Bowling Club*, much to the delight of a dozen local children. For the generosity of this gesture, we were all amply supplied with drinks by the grateful parents.

By now the weather was on the change, it was the beginning of the rainy season in this part of Queensland. We had been warned that, once the expected heavy rains came, we might be cut-off from the outside world, because the roads (tracks) turned into mud. The next part of Ex Corinthian was the 'hot wet' trials and our base was to be back along the Queensland coast at a place called Tully. There was

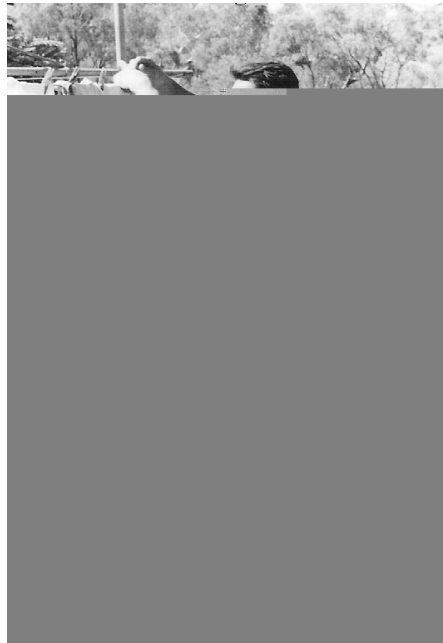
now an urgent need for us to finalise the trials, pack-up and head eastwards. 'Bomber' Harris, myself and a couple of others were nominated as the advance party and to told to proceed to Tully and prepare the camp for the main party, which was to follow a week later. We set off in two *L-Rovers* and it wasn't long before stretches of the road turned into mud and we came across a number large trucks and trailers bogged down axle deep. Somehow we managed to bypass the worst stretches by going cross-country, a thing some of the larger trucks couldn't do. (*Reminds me of that wonderful book 'In the Wet', by Neville Shute. Ed.*)

Tully

We arrived at our new base camp the next day, New Year's Eve. Our tented camp was actually a clearing in the rain forest, about 10 miles north-west of the small township of Tully, and 130 miles north of Townsville. As it was New Year's Eve, we deposited our kit, cooked a meal, showered and headed for Tully. We found the only hotel (bar) in town and by now the time was 9:30pm. The bar staff informed us that the hotel bar closed at 10:00pm! *"Where else can we get a drink to welcome in the New Year?"* we enquired? *"The RSL (Returned Soldiers League) Club (similar to our British Legion), just down the road"*, was the answer. So off we trotted to the *RSL Club* and, at the reception, we were told that we were welcome to come in, but only if we were wearing a tie, which none of us possessed. Ties were hurriedly procured for us from their cloakroom and then we were escorted to a table, occupied by an Aussie 'old soldier' (Ted) and his family. Having seen the New Year in, Ted invited us back to his house for more drinks. He enquired as to what plans we had for the next day (New Year's Day). *"None"*, we replied. He invited us to join him and his family to a 'barbie' on 'his' island, just off the coast. The next day, along with his family, we piled into his motor launch and he took us to a secluded beach on a small deserted island just off shore. What an idyllic place, a palm-fringed golden beach, a small wooden hut, 'barbie' and an upturned large cable drum for a table. Through conversation later, we learnt that he did actually 'own' the island. A great time was had by one and all, after which we thanked Ted for his generosity and hospitality.

During the next week we busied ourselves preparing the camp for the

arrival of the main party. The camp had been carved out of the rain forest, for occasional use by the Australian Tropical Trial Unit. But it was somewhat basic; tented accommodation and a diesel generator providing the power. An aluminium building was the only permanent structure, its roof collected rainwater in a tank for drinking (which was purified) and washing. The main party duly arrived, two days later than scheduled, their journey from MK had been difficult with washed-out roads



'Yours Truly', in his smalls, doing his smalls!

causing them a 200-mile diversion and the added inconvenience of continuously having to replace 'Scorpion' track pins.

Tully was literally a one-horse-town. The only place to get a beer in the town, as I recall, was the *Tully Hotel*, with its wooden veranda and hitching rail for your horse (shades of the Wild West). The bar inside was very spartan, with a stainless-steel bar counter and serving beer in 7oz glasses, unless you specifically asked for a Schooner. Only men were permitted in the bar, most Aussie men present were dressed in a vest, shorts and obligatory hat (but no dangling corks). Women could only be glimpsed by looking through a tiny hatch, in the wall between the bar and the 'Women & Children Only' room. (N.b. *Whilst on holiday in Australia in 2000, I purposely stopped-off in Tully and found the Tully Hotel along the main street - but for some reason, it didn't look the same. Inside I made some enquires and leaned that it had burned down some years ago and had been totally rebuilt.*)

'Hot Wet' Trials

This part of Queensland was ideally suited for our 'hot wet' trials. Temperatures during the day were in the mid-30°C range, with humidity around 80 - 90% and a high rainfall. The trials took much the same format as the 'hot dry' trials, many days of road and track work with the trials vehicles. A couple of exceptions: one, driving a 'Fox' into the thick vegetation of the rain forest and leaving it there for a month, to determine the effect of the tropical humidity on the components in the vehicle, especially new gun sighting equipment. The other was fording creeks and exiting up banks, of varying degrees of incline, observing how the vehicles performed. As in MK, I was once again responsible for recording trials data and with the added task of collecting daily meteorological data (max/min temperatures, humidity, rainfall, wind speed, hours of sunshine, etc.). We erected two weather stations, one in the base camp and one deep in the rain forest a few miles along a narrow track. I recall, once out of the sunlight and under the canopy of the rainforest, the temperature appeared to drop about 10°C.

About halfway through the trials, I was on radio watch back at base camp late one afternoon, when I received a 'No Duff' call from one of the CVR'T's being crewed by our attached Aussies. The vehicle had overturned as a result of a broken track and killed the driver, Tpr Joe Stalberg. Everyone in the team was both saddened and shocked. Joe was very much liked by us all, always smiling, a hard-working and real Aussie character. We said our farewell to Joe by providing a guard of honour, along with local RSL members, on Innisfail railway station, as his coffin was loaded onto a train for transportation back to his hometown of Bunderberg.

For the 'hot wet' firing trials, we vacated our base camp in the rain forest, and moved up the coast 35 miles to the Australian Tropical Trials Unit at Innisfail.

This was a small unit, but with a few more permanent buildings and facilities. Our accommodation was still tents, but this time just a few yards from the Pacific Ocean. Not that the ocean was much use to us, as swimming in it wasn't advised, due to the presence of large quantities of painfully stinging jellyfish. However, the Aussies had provided a static water tank for having a dip in, with a sign on the side saying, *'Don't pee in our pool and we won't swim in your toilet'*. We had a short break from the trials, a few of us went off

for a long weekend in Cairns, culminating with a boat trip out to Green Island, a truly tropical island. Prior to the commencement of the firing trials, we 'reccied' the range. It looked as though the Aussies had just bulldozed a long narrow stretch out of the rainforest. Again the format for the firing trials followed those of the 'hot dry' trials. At one stage we had to work particularly hard to make sure everything worked as it should do, as we had a visit from the Director of Australian Armour (DoAA). We were obviously out to impress him and this time *RARDEN* didn't let us down - we were getting three rounds automatic fire away without too many stoppages, much to our relief. The Aussie crewmen assisting us

with the trials asked for interviews with the DoAA, requesting without exception, a second tour of Vietnam!

'End Ex'

As both the 'hot dry' and 'hot wet' trials had been completed, all that remained was to gather all the equipment together, pack it and prepare it for shipment back to the UK. We handed back the equipment we had hired and said our final farewells to our attached Aussie crews, with whom we had formed a great camaraderie. The six-months trials had been a bit of a blur, possibly because we had all had busy and challenging jobs, a changing environment and a daily variety of experiences and work. It was certainly

a valued experience and a little outside the normal REME remit and I enjoyed it enormously.

FVRDE to MVEE

Whilst away, FVRDE had changed its designation to MVEE (Military Vehicles Engineering Establishment). I was retained on its strength for a further 18 months on return from Australia. I was then joined by Sgt 'Slim' Seldon (Arborfield 54A, 'D' Coy) and between us we prepared AFV armament and sighting equipment for vehicles that were to undergo trials at home and abroad. Sadly, I learnt a few years later that 'Slim', whilst serving with an RA regiment in Northern Island, had been killed.

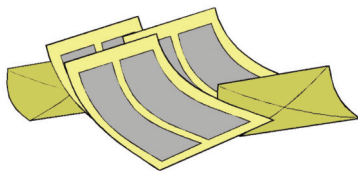
Spell It Out!

One beautiful summer's day, two English tourists were driving through Wales, when they decided to stop for a bite to eat. At Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwylllantysiliogogoch they pulled into the car park and entered the cafeteria. Having ordered their lunch and sat themselves down near the window, the waitress came along with their order and one of the tourists asked her, *"Before we eat our lunch, I wonder if you could settle an argument for us? Can you please pronounce where we are, very, very, very slowly?"*

The girl leaned over and said, in a lilting Welsh voice, *"Burr gerr King!"*

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.



**Tony Church, 55A,
e-mailed:**

I have just finished my read of the latest *OBAN*(49), as always most entertaining and improving all the time - you and Peter Gibson are doing a grand job! Having read your article on Ian MacHorton, I decided to put on record my memories of a remarkable man right away, while I remembered, so I've done it as an attachment. (Hope it works!) You should also be getting similar responses from other Pipe Band members of the middle fifties, as we all liked him. I think that the reason that you don't remember him very well is that you were probably HQ Coy or 2 Div when he retired. Keep up the good work mate!

OBAN LETTERS

Chas Pepper, 43B, writes:

I was browsing along happily through *OBAN*49 when I came across your article about North Devon (*D-Day cover up, page 18*). I am myself an ex-'Dukie' and, just as that great Scottish philosopher Rab C Nesbit would say, *"Just as you think it is all forgotten, along it comes and kicks you up the a**e!"* It would be impossible to tell of all the things that happened and could be seen at Saunton Sands in those war-

time days. There cannot be many of us left now, so perhaps we are just a little piece of history - the magazine is most useful in that respect, thanks to all the hard work that goes into it. What times we have lived through.

(Chas posted an article to accompany his letter. I shall be delighted to publish it when space next allows. Ed.)

Tony Domoney, 56B, e-mails:

I have just finished reading *OBAN 49* – a terrific read, which brings back so many memories. The article about 7 Flight AAC, written by Ron Ward, I found very interesting. I had a good laugh reading Mick Oulds's article, I think Mick certainly had his 'tongue in cheek' when writing!

I knew a few ex-Malaysia operations chaps that Ron may have known. Chris Dillon and Johnny Johnston BEM come to mind. Chris passed on some years ago and the last I saw of J Johnston, he was working in Queensland. I believe he is in New Zealand now, pace-maker et al. I was with 8 Recce Flight,

Kenya, when Ron was in Malaysia. I must write something about 8 Recce Flight one day. It would be good to hear from any 8 Recce Flight old boys, if there are any still out there!

(Look forward to that 'something about 8 Recce Flight' Tony, we editors need more like you! Ed.)

Trevor Stubberfield, 52A, e-mailed:

In the excellent *OBAN49*, you ask for contributions regarding Capt Ian MacHorton, Adjutant at the Arborfield AAS. You might like to contact Ted Blowers, who was on the permanent staff at the school between 1953 and 1955, and who spent six months as the runner for the Adjutant! Ted did have contact with him, post Arborfield, and I'm sure he would be happy to provide any information you may need. (Ted already has an article on the AOBA website in the 'Memories' section.)

(Thank you Trevor, hopefully I'll contact Ted and find out more for a future OBAN! Ed.)

John Houghton, 56B, e-mails:

Another great issue (*OBAN 49*) - keep up the good work! Your article, 'Tragedy of a D-Day Cover-Up', jogged my memory, as I had read a book a few years ago entitled 'The Forgotten Dead', written by an ex-policeman, Ken Small. The tragedy of what happened on the night of 27/28 April 1944 (Exercise Tiger) unfolded for Ken because, at the time, he was suffering from depression and, as part of his therapy, he went beach-combing along Slapton Sands. Over a period of time, he discovered numerous items of militaria in the form of ammunition, buttons from uniforms, etc. along this stretch of beach. This aroused his curiosity and he started to question some of the local populace, who confirmed that something tragic had happened during that fateful night.

The book tells an extraordinary story

of an obsession that would consume his entire life, with trips to America, badgering both the US and British governments, seeking out veterans etc. Ken's search for the truth would cost him thousands of pounds and eventually his marriage (his wife is said to have cited a *Sherman* tank in their divorce!). I would recommend Ken Small's book, it is an excellent, if not chilling, read.

Also of great interest was Ron Ward's (56A) article. Ron and I, as S/Sgts, served on opposite sides of the shop floor in 'A' Workshops, REME Wing, RSA, Larkhill, in the early Seventies. Ron looked after the School's 'A' vehicles, whilst I looked after the armaments side. We both bought our first houses (just a few hundred yards apart from each other) in nearby Warminster.

Brian Atkins, 43A, reminisces:

I spent all afternoon reading the latest *OBAN (49)*, and came across something on page 28 that brought back a lot of memories for me. I refer to the last paragraph of an article by Mal Tanner, 58B. I too was once stationed in Hadrian's Camp, Carlisle, but it was a fair while before he went there!

Upon my return to UK in 1954, whilst spending my leave with my in-laws in Eston, near Middlesbrough, I received notice that I was to be posted to 67 Training Regiment RAC at that very camp. I wrote back, saying that it would be far quicker for me to travel across to Carlisle via Newcastle, than to travel all the way down to Arborfield and then back up to Carlisle. But, no! The pen-pushers, in all their wisdom, insisted that I go via Arborfield. Then again, when I left Aden and was again at Eston, I received notice that I was to join the Royal Scots Greys at Catterick. This is even nearer to Eston

than was Carlisle – but once again my pleas were ignored and I had to go via Arborfield!

While on my Arm Art course, we had been informed that the *Daimler* Scout Car and the *Daimler* Armoured Car were being phased-out of service. So, in Malaya, the 13/18th Hussars had *Daimler* Armoured Cars and, when I arrived in Carlisle, lo and behold, once again there were *Daimler* Scout and Armoured Cars! Civilians coming into the service had their basic training on the square that we all know and then were taught to either (a) drive an Armoured Car (b) become a Radio Operator or (c) become a Gunner. The staff was derived from all of the Cavalry regiments. For example in HQ Squadron, the Squadron Leader was Major Jack Eggleton MC, 11th Hussars; the 2I/C was from the 15/19th Hussars; the SSM was Jimmy Godden, 12th Lancers; and the SQMS was Reg Utton, SQMC

Life Guards.

As I was in charge of the Workshops, the regulations at that time stated that I had to be a WO1, so up I went. This also meant that I was entitled to a married quarter, so, as a family, we moved into a 3-bedroomed house just outside the camp. Some of the 'little darlings', when being taught to drive, didn't like going out in bad weather, so they cleverly stuck a pin through the insulation of the HT lead from the coil to distributor, shorting out the lead. This came to a stop when we tumbled to the trick – and then charged them the price of two replacement leads, as well as confining them to barracks for 14 days!

A lot of the staff at Carlisle had been sent there from their regiments because of various types of trouble they had gotten into. One classic example was when one Sgt 'Curly' Watson (he was as bald as a

badger!) arrived from the 15/19th Hussars in BAOR. When he was asked what sort of trouble had caused him to be posted to us, we were told this simple story. He was a Troop Leader on patrol near the demilitarized zone, when he received a radio message that questioned, when he reached a certain map reference, he would be confronted by a troop of Russian T34 tanks – and what action would he take? His response was simple – he would order his troop to say, after him, “*Our Father, which art in Heaven*”! All but one person were highly amused but, unfortunately, that one person was the Brigadier, who had been listening in! Curly was sent for

and asked ‘what did he think he was playing at’ – or words to that effect. His reply was that he could only fire the Bren guns that his Troop were issued with – and that their bullets would bounce off the T34s like peas, while the Russian tanks could blow him away like chaff in the wind. He arrived in Carlisle two days later!

After being there for two years, I had to go to Catterick, where I was told that I was being posted to 73 Port Workshop as the only Regular, the remainder being all Reservists, having been called up for the Suez fiasco. The OC came from Kenya,

where he was a coffee planter and had little knowledge of how to get things working. Inevitably, I was left with a lot of work to do, especially when the rest arrived from all over the UK – but they all mucked in very well.

After that debacle, I went back to Carlisle - but only for a fortnight, before I was told that I was to head a REME contingent to go with the Armoured Car Squadron attached to Aden Protectorate Levies – but that in itself is yet another story!

(And are we going to be let in on that story Brian? Ed.)

Ted Blowers, ex-PS 53-55, emails:

I was born in London on February 21st 1935. I joined the Royal Fusiliers in 1952, stationed at the Tower of London and Canterbury. I missed the last draft to Korea through injury and was sent to AAS Arborfield, where I served until ‘demob’ in 1955. After the Army I worked at various jobs, until promoted to manager of a large builder’s merchants. I took up karate in the early 60s and, through that, joined the RSPCA. While there, I got involved in conservation and was ‘head hunted’ by a Canadian chap whom I had helped when with the builders. We weren’t that interested in going over there, until he sent us the tickets to go and ‘have a look’, which we did. He took us all over and, as a result, I found the attitude to wildlife and conservation very different from that in England. I told my wife we

were in the wrong place; thousands of people in England felt like we did, while in Canada not so many. Consequently, I took the job of field superintendent for his company that worked in the Oil Industry and moved to Canada in 1970. We left that company after a couple of years to run our own business, about two hundred miles NW of Edmonton - all the time working to help rehabilitate wildlife and try to change attitudes in regard not only to animals but also to habitat destruction. The result was that, in 1973, I was selected as one of the people to represent the Peace River Country at the NGOS United Nations Conference held in Vancouver, B.C. In 1986 I was given the prestigious Big Horn conservation award by the Alberta Government for my work. Four years ago, my wife’s health and my

own ageing dictated that we move back to the city, nearer to hospitals and doctors. We are now happy enough - our boys are here and our grandson. I am retired now, though still work as ‘Santa’ at Christmas and we are both active in the Legion.

P.S. Another thought about Ian MacHorton - he was always on at me to join Scottish dancing, which I think he had something to do with. In my ignorance at the time, I couldn’t see myself prancing about in a skirt - another lost opportunity.

(Ted kindly provided the above details, following my contacting him regarding his memories about Capt MacHorton, which should appear elsewhere in this OBAN. Ed.)

Barrie ‘Eggy’ Egleton, 52B, e-mails:

May I observe a technical amendment to my ‘Happy Recovery

broken bar (see attached), plus others, in an album I donated to the REME Museum. I also enclose a photo of the crew and some ‘dead’ tanks – from left to right are Cfn (later RQMS) Bob Smallbones, L/Cpl (ex-REME boy, a clerk, later RQMS of 3rd Carabineers) and L/Cpl (later Major) Ken Standon.



Days’ article in issue 49? I referred to the tow-bar on the ARV as an ‘A’ frame, so some technical perfectionist or nit-picker will make a comment! For their information, there is a photo of the

If possible, can I also include a ‘Wanted’ notice? To complete a board of AAS badges, I still need two collar

dogs (King’s Crown) and a set of black & red Sergeant’s stripes. Top prices paid!

(Happy to oblige Eggy – over to the readership! Ed.)



Gordon Bonner, 49B, e-mails:

Regarding our earlier phone conversation, here is the gist of which I was speaking! The Director of Music REME has very kindly agreed to provide musical support on AANM Dedication Day, 7 September 2011. May I please ask our members if it would be possible to borrow a 'Gazebo' (complete with sides) for the day, so that should it rain that day, I can provide shelter for five musicians. I will arrange for collection and return.

Reference ex-Apprentice award stories: You already have the story for Major Fletcher GM MBE (please note that Major Fletcher is deceased). I have now attached a further award story regarding Warrant Officer Class 2

John Henry Phillips DSC. These stories were composed at the request of the National Arboretum, for insertion into the NMA Guide book, along with the public brief, and for use with children who visit the NMA.

There are two interesting points: 1. Both men are ex-boys from Chepstow, although a generation apart. But what is really interesting is that John Phillips served in a bomb disposal unit at the time that George Fletcher was the Commanding Officer. What a remarkable coincidence. 2. I met John Phillips in London on Remembrance Sunday. He has seen and approved my draft, and has given permission for his

story to be used in our publicity campaign. Furthermore, Andrew Baud, MD, *Tala PR*, Oxford, intends to contact John in the near future for a short interview, which hopefully will be shown on national TV. Last but not least, the DSC is a Naval award and an Army recipient is a very rare occurrence. P.S. John was severely injured in the explosion and lost an arm. But he is at ease with himself, and talks freely about what happened to him.

(Thank you Gordon, I shall endeavour to publish both stories in the next OBAN. Good luck with the publicity campaign. Ed.)

Gordon Bonner, 49B, e-mails again:

In mid-January 2011, four 'Sept 49ers', Max Warwick, Pete Henry, Jeff Cook and myself, attended the funeral of our friend and colleague David Crowson, at the South Bristol crematorium. In the way that these occasions can, it was a lovely warm celebration of David's life. Sharon, David's daughter, told us that she had learnt an awful lot about her father during our visit. Firstly, with permission of the family, and on behalf of the Sept

49ers, I read out the eulogy during the committal service, which was very well received. Afterwards at the reception, we briefed the whole family on the Army Apprentice National Memorial, pointing out that David's name is to be found on a 'Comtab', thus the memorial, when dedicated on 7th September, would be a good place to visit. On behalf of the AOBA we presented Sharon with the AANM information pack, a full transcript of the text to be

inscribed on the memorial monolith, including 'TeeCee's' poem, a copy of the selected reading to be used during the memorial dedication service, and a copy of the eulogy. In addition, Pete and Max presented a set of digital copies of photographs taken of David during his apprentice training, several of which were new to Sharon. Finally, Jeff Cook, on behalf of the AOBA, presented to Sharon the family memorial scroll.

Pete Gripton, 56B, writes:

With the success of a three-day get-together at Nantwich, Cheshire, in 2009 still fairly fresh in the memories, seven members of 56B, along with their ladies, had a lovely early-September (2010) weekend down on Hayling Island, just along the Hampshire coast, eastward from Portsmouth. Hayling is by no stretch of the imagination a 'pretty' place, but the views across the water all round are well worth seeing. The accommodation was excellent - ground floor rooms with access to a paved area outside, complete with tables and chairs to sit outside and chat over a civilised glass of wine. I won't go into any details about the food - just to say that three fine dinners and three equally good 'full English' breakfasts were thoroughly scoffed and enjoyed!

On the Saturday morning, Joyce and I hired a couple of bicycles and rode up the 'Hayling Billy' trail to Langstone Harbour. This is the route of the old

abandoned railway that used to run holidaymakers down from Havant. That was away from all traffic, so fairly quiet and trouble-free. Joyce then decided she wanted to go along the coast to Emsworth - we had some problems in finding the best and correct route, but finally made our way there. Just got into the town centre - and there were our 'neighbours', the Howletts and Newmans (not Newmen!), sitting in the local open-air cafe! Needless to say, they provided us with a very welcome cuppa! We managed to pick up a much better 'marked' route back down to Langstone and then it was back down the 'Billy' trail once more. Must say that the narrow saddle left me with rather a bruised ego after four hours on it - but I'll comment no further! The weather was warm and sunny all day by the way.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, Joyce and I walked right along the sea-

front of the island, from Sinah Warren at the western end, where we were all staying, to Sandy Point in the east and back - we were walking for just over three hours in total. It actually rained during the second half of our easterly trek, but then came out baking hot on the return leg! There were four other couples turned up and, being from 'out of the area', some did a bit of exploring of the local area such as Pompey Dockyard, Chichester, etc. All in all, we enjoyed the whole weekend - and there was entertainment every evening too - quizzes, dancing, live bands, comedian (a 'Scouser') - so good value for money. My thanks to all who managed to meet up for the weekend, great to see you all again - 56B being represented by Johnny Bilcliff, Russell Dodds, Dave Howlett, Pete Langridge, Derek Newman and Tony Strong - along with the girls, who all get lovelier each year.

Mo Hope, 59A, writes:

Reference John 'Dinger' Bell (*Letters page, OBAN49*): I had a message on Facebook the other day, from his daughter Lynn, to say that he was due home for the Christmas period, but last week fell and broke his hip. The lad seems to have no luck at all, suffering from a long term illness, but he seems to be battling on with it. I uncovered the attached gem for you to see, I don't ever recall him looking

that smart when he was our Storeman!

(No, I certainly can't associate the photo with the scruffy denim-clad 'scally' I met on my first day at Arborfield! But I do recall that John always had a cheeky smile upon his face and was full of 'Scouse' humour. Not only that, but, like me, he's not just from Liverpool – but a true 'Walton Wacker'! Ed.)



Mark 'Spike' Yeoman, ex-Sgt Instruments, 77C, e-mails:

I've just been reading the recent OBAN issue (49) and was so pleased to see the reunion pictures. This was the first - and certainly not the last! - reunion I attended and I was overjoyed to meet old friends from my intake of 77C. We managed to muster eight colleagues and have promised that we will double our numbers for the next one, as it is a little special for us, as we will all have reached – or soon be reaching - the big 50! Yes we really are that young! Thank God for being the 'jeep' company - Bob Feasy has even said he will be attending from NZ!

You mentioned in your excellent editorial that OBAN50 will be published

soon, so if it could be possible to add this little note in the special edition, that it was a true honour to attend the reunion and serve the port at the back of the three-storey block to all the old boys who took part in that parade. We saw this young recruit in combats, trying to serve port to a long queue of very thirsty, alcoholic, old boys about to go on parade. So, knowing our place in the pecking order, i.e. 'the jeeps of 77C', we helped serve the port! And, of course, that meant we had full access to all the bottles of port and by the time the parade started we were quite head spinning ... fantastic! Even Geordie Wright managed to get into the reunion photos, see first page, bottom left

picture – he's the short one with lots of medals weighing him down!

Lastly I would just like to wind up the senior intakes who say they had it hard Well, putting things into perspective, when they joined up all those years ago, they all moved into brand new accommodation. When we joined in 1977, just a few years prior to demolition, the old spiders were literally falling apart, so WE had it hard! Hope that will make someone bite? *"Thank God for jeeps, every senior intake should have one!"*

(Nice to hear from the youngsters – keep it up lads! Ed.)

Richard Ormiston, 59A, writes:

(Richard had first left a query on the AOBA Website, asking if I was the same 'Scouse' Gipton he remembered from boys' school and then instructed him on his Tiffy course at SEME Bordon in the early 1970s? Having replied in the affirmative, he contacted me directly as follows)

The AOBA cropped up because, when I attended the Mid-Kent Golf Club Annual General Meeting, a chap sat down next me that I didn't know. Halfway through the meeting, my first, I remarked that it was "just like a mess meeting". The chap next to me then asked who I had been with in the forces and it turned out he was ex-Chepstow from 52B, by the name of Claude Buttle. Anyway, my memory had been tickled and the following day I looked up Arborfield on the net and found the AOBA Website. Looking around the site, I found Bren Stacey's 59A photo album, where one of the photos was of the

59A seniors in Junior Company, 1959/60. I was gob-smacked, as it was taken of us sat on my bed in my bunk. He didn't have all the names and one he did have was wrong. It should read:

L-R: Bob Yeomans, Ginge Calender (sadly he was killed on his last MTC course just prior to his passing out Dec 61), the chap at the back is Taffy Martin Jones, Richard Ormiston and Bren Stacey.

Ginge and Martin were close friends of mine. Ginge is buried in the military cemetery on Gun Hill at Aldershot, about 400 yards from where Para Workshops used to be. I was based at the Wksp for just over 3 years and used to visit him.

(Having seen the photograph on the Website, I was then able to recognize 'young Ormiston'! I e-mailed him back to explain my present role in the AOBA and pulled his leg about having survived my instruction! He wrote again:)

Yes I survived the Electrics phase, obtaining 100% in DC but only 90-something in AC. I was an ex-Tels Tech, taking an Art Vehicles Tiffy course. Looking again at the photo, it was taken on my bed - but we did not have any stripes up yet, so we were definitely still Senior A/Ts, so it would not have been inside a bunk. It was my bed-space on the ground floor of the newly opened Junior block (at the top of the Square) - quite plush after the spiders! Yes, I read somewhere on the AOBA screen that you had written the History, it would make interesting reading. When I join the AOBA, I will try and get one.

(The above certainly proves the ability of the Website to pull in new customers – I do hope that Richard now goes ahead and re-joins the Association – I mean, 100% in DC is a fine recommendation! Pete Gipton, Ed.)

Malcolm Hay, ex-Chepstow, 53A, emails:

My latest *OBAN* (49) proved another good read. I suspect that I will not be the first “sad spotter” to point out that the vehicle being worked on, illustrated on Page 40, is a ‘Jeep’.

(Thanks for that Malcolm, as an ‘X’ tradesman, I never got that close to either a Champ or a Jeep! Ed.)

Ron Ward, 56A, e-mailed:

I recently came across the following information on the ‘September 49ers’ web-site:

REORGANISATION: Changes were in the air in 1960. The intake was to be increased from two to three a year. The Vehicle Mechanic apprentice was to undergo a two-week driving course as part of his training in his 8th term.

There seems to be some confusion about just when the 3-term year started. I was intake 56A, but we passed out after a shortened Christmas leave in December 1958; this to make way for that 3-intakes-per-year start in **1959**. We reported back from leave on December 30th at No.1 Training Battalion REME at Blandford, Dorset, with ‘BFT fitness tests on the 31st’. Much to the Permanent Staff’s disgust, only about one or two out of 120 failed the 5-mile part. To add insult to injury, we then invited them to walk into Blandford town (a mile or two downhill and back uphill) with us that evening for a New

Year’s drink - which most declined. They had completely underestimated their enemy and continued to do so.

We completed our Regimental Training phase under CSM Hancock. Well known by us for his ‘Hancock’s Half Hour’ (0800-0830) on a Thursday morning, the CSM would march our Company around the camp, showing that we could put one foot in front of the other in a military manner - a bit of a cheek, as we learned all of these skills at Arborfield and Chepstow Apprentice Schools. 1 Battalion at that time was mostly National Servicemen under Basic Training and poorly paid - so we ex-boys, with a few bob in our pockets, were welcomed with open arms by the NAFFI manager.

Chepstow 56A were also in the group. It’s been said that the ‘Local Bobby’ bought himself a new note book based on past experiences from dealing with ex-boys, but with us it didn’t get used. The previous ex-boys were those who

had been ‘evicted’ for bad behaviour and were a bundle of trouble - and looked for it. We just buckled down and only looked forward to finish with a pass - and once we’d ‘trained’ the staff, we sort of enjoyed it.

(That website entry was taken from Bryn Richards’s brief College history, upon which I based the subsequent book, ‘The Arborfield Apprentice’. I bow to Ron’s experience of dates above and recognize that 1959 did indeed have three intakes – 59A, B and C. I must therefore confess that, on page 209 of that book, where I wrote ‘intake 60A’ in the first paragraph, I should have said ‘intake 59A’. Following that up, at the beginning of Chapter 6, 1960-64, I had changed Bryn’s ‘changes in the air in 1960’ to ‘changes in the air by 1960’ – so I appear to have got that right! Perhaps there are others out there who can confirm- or deny! - that the 3-term year did start in 1959? Ed.)

Chas Pepper, 43B, writes:

Reference Eggy Egleton’s query about shoulder titles (*OBAN*48), we wore shoulder titles on our SD jackets, they were of a printed material, not woven, with a brownish background colour and ‘ARMY TECHNICAL SCHOOL’ printed in black. I can remember being the butt of a joke from two girls, who remarked on these titles, saying something like “Look – he’s in the *ATS* (women’s services) - what’s it like, mate?” I also recall a photo published in an earlier *OBAN*, of two young ladies on a sledge – where ‘*ATS*’ was the answer to the query. Perhaps that’s the reason why the boys were glad when the school changed its name from ‘*ATS*’ to ‘*AAS*’!

Deaths Notified Since Last *OBAN*

HES ‘Harry’ Shaw, ex-Jersey 38B is reported as having passed away
(from Keith Evans) – no further details

Ronald William Ward, ex-Hilsea 1938,
died 11th October 1995 (belated report by Trevor Stubberfield, 52A)

John Harry Pelham, October 1939,
died 1st December 2004 (belated report by Trevor Stubberfield, 52A)

Derek Williams, 45A, died 20th November 2010
reported by Eddie Broomfield (see next entry)

Edwin 'Eddie' Broomfield, 45A, died at Bournemouth Hospital on 30th December 2010

Roger Carew, 47B, died on Christmas Day 2010 – reported by his brother

David Crowson, 49B, died at a nursing home in Bristol, January 3rd 2011
following a long illness

Paul Bennett, 54B, died 19th August 2010 (from Craftsman magazine November 2010)

John 'Peat' Moss, 55A, died at Nova Scotia, Canada, in November 2010

Brian Strachan, 59C, died from cancer on 12th January 2011

Phil 'Wurzel' Talbot, 60C, passed away peacefully on New Year's Day 2011
(from David Schofield)

A Bening, 63B, died recently – reported by Mike Davis through cancelled direct debit instruction

Andrew Clifford, 63B, died suddenly during January 2011
at his home in Merthyr Tydfil – reported by his son Chris

John Laughlin, 63B, died 31st October 2010 –
reported by his brother Bill Laughlin, 65C

(For those who knew him, **Major General Dennis Shaw** has also just died through cancer.)

Bob Luck, 57A

Bob Luck of 57A worked in the Satellite Industry and dreamed of living in Spain when he retired. This he achieved. However, after nearly 3 years in Spain, he was diagnosed with cancer at the bottom of the esophagus where it joins the stomach. Complications set in and Bob died on 21st December 2009. The family members living in Spain decided to have a cremation service, then return to England with the ashes, so that both sides of the family could have a memorial service on 6th January 2010 and scatter Bob's ashes. Unfortunately, on the day of the memorial service the weather took a turn for the worse with heavy snow and blizzards. The majority of



the family abandoned travelling, so again only a small part of the Luck families attended the service.

Because the majority of the Luck family hadn't had the chance to formally say a farewell to Bob, Ann Luck (Bob's wife) asked if the whole family of fourteen could attend the AOBA Memorial Drumhead Service at the last Reunion. Normally only NOK of the deceased are invited to attend our memorials, so special permission was requested and granted in these circumstances.

Some words from Ann Luck: "My children and I were very touched at the thought of a memorial for Bob and would like to thank you and all concerned for the

Certificate of Remembrance. Please would you pass on our thanks to all those who thought of us at this sad time. We give permission for any photos to be used and again would like to thank the Association for giving us a wonderful memory about Bob."

(The above few words and photographs were kindly provided by Roger Traves, 57A – see also the rear cover photograph of the Luck family gathering. Ed.)

