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Reunion Edition



O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association News

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Notices

Please note that the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of either the Editor or of the Arborfield Old Boys Association and, therefore, no responsibility for these will be accepted. All contributions and articles for inclusion in OBAN are most warmly welcomed although text in Microsoft Word format and photos/images in TIFF or high grade JPEG format are preferred. Photographs or diagrams must be of high resolution if they are to look acceptable - aim for something at least 100kb in size.

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

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



I must pass on apologies for the length of time it has taken for this *OBAN* to finally reach publication – but there have been extenuating circumstances! The intention was to publish, as customary, before this year's Annual Reunion and with that in mind Peter Gibson dutifully downloaded all the files from my computer towards the end of May. It was at that point that Peter became heavily involved in the administration side of the Reunion, which involved many hours slaving over a hot database! This debarred him from his usual diligent work on bringing *OBAN* into publishable form on time. It was then decided that this *OBAN* would be delayed and be timed to cover the events of the 2011 Reunion – and this magazine is now the result. I do hope that its arrival is as welcome as usual – late though it is. I must once again pay tribute to Max Warwick for the excellent collection of Reunion photographs, from which just a small selection has been made.

At the time I first thought about my editorial notes, I had recently returned from my annual pilgrimage to North Wales for an Easter Week, a family tradition that has now continued since way back in 1975. Date-wise, this was the latest Easter we have ever celebrated and the weather was, in the main, pretty glorious. One memorable event was our visit to Pont Croesor, home to a pair of nesting ospreys, their nest being 'covered live' by a CCTV camera. An additional benefit is that the site is now also a station on the newly-constructed *Welsh Highland Railway*, which runs all the way from Caernarfon, through the Snowdonia National Park down to Porthmadog – well worth a visit for those enthusiasts amongst you!

It has been a time of much upheaval on the Gipton 'home front' these past few months, as we have finally moved from our Hampshire village of Greatham, having lived there since 1967 – almost 44 years in total. The village had, over many years, become victim to a regime of closures, resulting in no shops, nor a Post Office, and a bus service that was not that convenient – while those buses that did pass up our road were mostly empty of passengers. Even the purchase of a newspaper involved driving out some five miles to get one! We are now happily settled in at the new place and, all going well, your much-appreciated input to *OBAN* will continue and I will carry on enjoying putting together the Association's Newsletter for some time yet! My e-mail address should remain the same, while my new telephone number and postal address are as shown on the inside cover.

(P.S. The Officers' Reports that appear in this OBAN were originally written for publication in May/June, so may appear a little outdated. With the retirement of some personnel and the introduction of new Committee members, I thought it best to leave the original reports as a reminder of all the hard work put in by the original post holders where merited.)

Pete Gripton, 56B

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Cover photographs

Our front cover is that of Colin 'Titch' Cowdrey, late of intake 46B, who proudly served for 22 years as a magistrate – his obituary appears inside.

The rear cover photograph shows the parade at Wootton Bassett in honour of a REME soldier killed in Afghanistan, courtesy of *Craftsman* magazine.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Chairman's Message



As you all should be aware, this coming Reunion is expected to be the last time that the old parade ground in Rowcroft Barracks will be used. Indeed, the time is fast approaching when use of any facility at Arborfield will no longer be available to the Association. For some time now, there has been discussion regarding optional venues at which the celebrations and ceremonies associated with our Reunion weekend can be held. The success of such an enterprise will determine the continuation of our long-standing annual Reunion, with its increasing attendance.

There is no doubt that much of the attraction is down to the programme containing a 'curry night' at the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess; the parade with its inspecting officer, followed by the drumhead service; the barbecue and the evening dinner and speaker, and the closing Sunday Service. Perhaps needless to mention is the further attraction of cheap drinks! Any optional venue will have much to live up to!

During May, a large number of Association members, many accompanied by their wives, will try out a weekend at the Corton Coastal Village near Great Yarmouth, which is part of the Warner Leisure Hotels Group, where Fred Mills has agreed very reasonable rates with its management. We are treating this as a 'recce' for such a possible optional venue, at which the Association could take over the whole accommodation. I won't steal any more of Fred's thunder, but look forward to seeing photographs and hearing reports at the AGM.

Brian Hutchins, 61B

From the Retiring Honorary Secretary



Life at the moment is quite surreal. Headlines in the local press, reporting that Arborfield will close in 2015, are not ignored, but it is almost as if they are referring to another Arborfield in another place. Perhaps we are all in a state of denial. Anyway, we are all carrying on very much as normal in the absence of any definite news. My personal view is that there are so many studies currently taking place, on the future make-up of the services, all reporting against different time-scales and in most cases reliant on recommendations from other studies, that it makes it almost impossible to come to a firm decision any time soon.

"What has all this to do with the AOBA?" I hear you say. Well apart from our interest in the future well being of the Corps, it does raise the question of where we will be holding our Reunions in the future. As you are all aware, Rowcroft Barracks has been empty since 2004 and is in the process of being sold off for private development. Where we are at the moment in the scheme of things, and exactly when the old parade ground will be dug up, is unsurprisingly unknown. Hazebrouck Barracks also has its problems and accommodation is becoming more and more difficult to arrange. It is certainly the view of your Committee that it is now time to seriously consider moving the Reunion to pastures new and perhaps sooner rather later. This emotive topic will be discussed at the July AGM and a decision made. As far as this year's Reunion is concerned, I am currently working on the basis that this will be the last one at Arborfield. As such, I have had the old entrance gates painted and following the Drum Head service and group photograph, the plan is that everyone will march through the gates for the last time - including spectators. We will then move to the Mess to drown our sorrows. However, you should all bear in mind that we may well be doing the same thing in 2012 - only time will tell.

You should by now all have received the 2011 Reunion application forms. Apart from the sticky toffee pudding on the dinner menu, you will have noticed that it is a lot cheaper this year. This is because of the 'Pay as you Dine Scheme' recently introduced to serving members of the armed services across the UK. This also means that you will have to pay for your breakfast

meal in cash - £1.18 for a full fry up! My last point on the Reunion is that, apart from having a new RSM (ex-REME tradesman) I am very pleased to report that one of our distinguished old boys, Major General Ian Dale (74B), will be taking the salute. Apart from being the RSM of his Division, he was also awarded at his PoP the Award of Honour, the Chief Instructor's Cup and the Senior Education Officer's Cup - almost a clean sweep. In conclusion and on a personal note, I will be standing down as Honorary Secretary of the AOBA following this year's Reunion. I have considered the appointment very much as an honour and privilege and have appreciated very much your support and friendship over the last 13 years. I will always be a fully committed member of the AOBA and send my sincere good wishes and thanks to you all.

God Bless, Bill Cleasby, 61C

Web Developer's Report



For all those who wondered if the website would ever be a valuable tool for communication, let me say that it is now viewed by people all over the world, with over 3,000 pages being opened each day - yes that's right 3,000 - so many thanks to all who use it! Of course a lot of those pages are our very active forum - which goes from strength to strength - so, if you want to know what's going on in the AOBA world, you need log on.

By the time you read this we should have the 2012 calendar at the printers. This year we're having 150 printed, so as not to disappoint anyone at the Reunion in July - just make sure you've got your fiver ready - I don't take no for an answer!

God Bless, David (Tich) Schofield, 65A

Money Matters



The Association has received Gift Aid from the Inland Revenue for year 2010. The Honorary Secretary has sent, on your behalf, two cheques of £500 each - one to The Royal Chelsea Hospital and one to 'Help for Heroes'.

A member who has been in difficulty has also been given assistance from our Benevolence Fund.

A quick word about the Army Apprentice National Memorial - the base is now complete and the monolith has arrived at the stone mason's. Engraving of the commemorative tablets etc is in hand and the Memorial should be complete in July of this year. The Dedication of the Memorial will take place on 7 September.

All the best, Mike Davis, 60B

New Members

We warmly welcome the following 18 new or reactivated members who have joined the Association since the publication of *OBAN 50*:

Prince AC, 42A,	Farnborough;
Thorpe EA, 57A,	Stoke;
Eames BA, 61C,	Southwick, Sussex;

Gough TW, 61C,
Hill DA, 61C,
Molland AM, 61C;
Flynn JM, 62A,
Grove HC 62A,
Shephard PH, 62A,
Tonkin VP, 62B,
Wheeler W, 62B,
Stephens R, 66C,
Stanton RWG, 68B,

Nutt TJ, 69C,
Marshall P, 70C,
Maddox IA, 71C,
Feasey RD, 77C,
Smith IG, 78A,

Valencia, Spain;
Tewkesbury;
Petworth W Sussex;
Hermitage, Berks;
Hudson, Ohio, USA;
Vientiane, Laos;
Redruth;
Stirling;
Swindon;
Grampton Cotterell,
Gloucs;
Bristol;
Newton Aycliffe;
Dunbar, East Lothian;
Wellington NZ;
Exeter

Keith Evans, 45A, Retiring Assistant Secretary and Membership Administrator

Doctors' Reports

Last week, a man dashed into the A&E department and yelled, "My wife's going to have her baby in the taxi!" I grabbed my stuff, rushed out to the taxi, lifted the lady's dress and began to take off her underwear. Suddenly, after protests from the lady, I noticed that there were several taxis and I was in the wrong one.

At the beginning of my shift, I placed a stethoscope on an elderly and slightly deaf female patient's anterior chest wall. "Big breaths", I instructed. "Yes, they used to be", replied the patient.

One day I had to be the bearer of bad news, when I told a wife that her husband had died of a massive myocardial infarct. Not more than five minutes later, I heard her on her mobile phone reporting to the rest of the family that he had died of a 'massive internal fart'.

During a patient's two week follow-up appointment, he told me that he was having trouble with one of his prescribed medications. "Which one?" I asked. "The patch; the Nurse told me to put on a new one every four hours and now I'm running out of places to put it". I had him quickly undress and discovered what I hoped I wouldn't see. Yes, the man had over fifty patches on his body! Now, the instructions include removal of the old patch, before applying a new one.

Whilst acquainting myself with a new elderly patient, I asked, "How long have you been bedridden?" After a look of complete confusion, she answered, "Why, not for about twenty years - when my husband was still alive".

I was performing my rounds at the hospital one morning and, while checking up on a man, I asked, "So how was your breakfast this morning?" "It's very good except for the Kentucky Jelly. I can't seem to get used to the taste", he replied. I then asked to see the jelly and he produced a foil packet labelled 'KY Jelly'.

A nurse was on duty in the A&E when a young woman, with purple hair styled into a punk rocker Mohawk, sporting a variety of tattoos and wearing strange clothing, entered. It was quickly determined that the patient had acute appendicitis, so she was scheduled for an immediate operation. When she was completely disrobed on the operating table, the staff noticed that her pubic hair had been dyed green, and above it there was a tattoo that read, 'Keep off the grass'. Once the surgery was completed, the surgeon wrote a short note on the patient's dressing, which read 'Sorry, had to mow the lawn!'.

REME Shoulder Flash



Inveterate badge and memorabilia collector Barrie 'Eggy' Eggleton, 52B, sent in this copy of a shoulder flash that has made its way into his collection, but says that he never actually saw this particular flash (or title) worn on a uniform. Is there anyone out there who can say that they either saw – or even wore – this item?

A Right Old Wind-up!

by Chas Pepper, 43B

It was certainly after June 6th 1944. The invasion of France was well under way and the camp at Arborfield was now empty of D-Day preparations. The School 'dispersal' had ended and I found myself returning to the AAS, after leave I assume, as I was travelling as an individual. My train arrived and I entered a compartment, where I found myself seated opposite three young soldiers, each wearing a green beret and shabby, toil-worn battle-dress. The comparison could not have been greater with my outfit – all shiny buttons and smartly creased service-dress uniform, a replica pre-War soldier.

We have all been cornered by the proverbial 'old soldier' and his stories, but here were three 'not really that old' soldiers, who were but a few years older than me. They grinned mischievously at each other and launched into a description of events in the battle area they had been at, in France, not that long a time previously. There appeared to have been "blood and snot all over the place", ferocious attacks against determined Germans, and equally ferocious counter-attacks by Germans upon them! All this was accompanied by occasional cries of "Do you remember when?" They were enjoying themselves immensely and their chatter was obviously aimed directly at me – an innocent abroad.

There was even an exaggerated moment when one of the trio poked his

finger through a hole in his beret, explaining that he'd been lucky to survive, as the bullet had not hit his head. At this point in the story the train thankfully pulled into my station. Throwing out my kit-bag and slamming the door shut behind me, did I really hear roars of laughter ringing in my ears as the train departed? I'll tell you what – Arborfield seemed a quiet place after that!

Sprocket 'n' see!

1963 – 25 Battery, 35 Regt RA, Hohne, BAOR. It was a quiet day as the Battery's *Centurion* OP drew up to our work area. The Sergeant I/C asked if a damaged side-shield support-strut could be mended, as the OP was due to go out on a run quite soon. It was clear that the *Cent* had been reversed onto a bollard, pushing the strut forward and misaligning the bolt holes. To have sent the OP up to the main LAD would have required several hours work – time which the OP did not have and it was obvious that panic was already setting in.

The bent strut was adjacent to the sprocket and away from it. Aha! There was the solution – use the sprocket as a winch! The OP crew split the track, exposing the sprocket. We wrapped a rope around it and connected it to the strut; the driver flipped the appropriate steering lever several times and the strut was straightened. The track was re-connected,

the side-shield replaced and a relieved tank crew went on its way.

How I came to think of this procedure had me puzzled at the time, as I had never seen or heard of a sprocket being used in that fashion. On reflection, the idea may have come from the method used to return worn sprockets to the QM's Store. The entrance to said Store was down a flight of steps, at the bottom of which was a wooden door; thus a heavy sprocket had to be carefully lowered, under control, to stop the QM from issuing me with a bill for a new door! The method utilized was by tying one end of a rope onto the hand-rail and lowering down the sprocket on a 2:1 pull – no strain on us and never any damage to the door. So perhaps my 'original idea' wasn't so 'original after all' – no doubt there were others who had used the sprocket as a winch.

(In an accompanying note, Chas reflected upon the fact that, while writing down his memories, it always seemed as though the events only happened yesterday. His first little tale above reminded him of when the older A/Ts had to perform night duties on the main gate. No great strain on Chas's behalf – he used to love the sound of those great trees around the School rustling quietly in the breeze. "Simple pleasures for simple minds", he reckons – well, keep 'em coming Chas, always a delight to hear from you. Ed.)

When A Man Hath No Freedom

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbours;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
And get knocked on the head for his labours

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom wherever you can,
And, if not shot or hanged, you'll get knighted

(A rather cynical account of the glories of fighting for the freedoms if others, the above was written by Lord Byron (1788 – 1824) nearly 200 years ago. However, it could be seen as relevant to present times too! Ed.)

Ideal husbands...

While creating husbands, God promised women that in the future, ideal husbands would be found in all corners of the world - and then God made the earth round!

Fred H Ford, 39A

During the second half of August 2010, I received a folder of several pages of information, entitled *'A Miscellany of Memories'* – and I quote – *"compiled by an ex-Arborfield Boy Soldier Apprentice whilst in his 86th year"*. The contents of the folder had been sent in by Yorkshire-born Fred Ford, a name I recognized from the past, and included two articles that he had written for *OBAN* during its earlier days, *'Memories of early Arborfield'* in *OBAN4*, followed by *'Further Memories'* in *OBAN5*. Checking back through my list of *OBAN* articles, I recall that Fred had also had published some *'Jumbled Jottings'* in *OBAN9*. Furthermore, I had used Fred's very first article as one of my series of *'Archive Articles'* as recently as *OBAN39*.

Amongst the other items that Fred had sent to me were indications that he had led an interesting and active life, ever since those early days when he entered 'Boys' Service' as a 14-year old on May 3rd 1939. Prominent amongst the assorted items was a copy of a certificate that reads:

By the KING'S Order the name of
Craftsman F H Ford
Royal Electrical and Mechanical
Engineers
was published in the London
Gazette on
4 April 1946
as mentioned in a Despatch for
distinguished service.
I am charged to record
His Majesty's high appreciation

*(This was undersigned by the
then Secretary of State for War)*

Another item was a copy of a letter – 'to whom it may concern' – written at Nijmegen in January 2002. This was a 'letter of appreciation' from the

Foundation Committee of the 'Market Garden Old Comrades Foundation'. The letter paid tribute to both Fred and his wife Betty for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the Foundation, for many years after it was first envisaged in September 1944. Another quote here – *"his dedication,*



enthusiasm and hard work have resulted in a WWII Veterans' Association that, without hesitation, can be labeled as one of the most successful ever." At that time, Fred was reluctantly stepping down from his post as Secretary of the Foundation to take care of Betty, due to her illness. Sadly, Betty was to lose a long battle against cancer on January 25th 2003.

Just to remind myself, I looked up some facts on the Internet; many ex-boys will already be very aware of this, but 'Operation Market Garden', which included the Battle for Arnhem, in September 1944, was the largest airborne battle in history, being bigger than 'Operation Mercury', the German airborne invasion of Crete in 1941, which was the only successful strategic airborne operation of WWII. It was also the only real attempt by the Allies to use airborne forces in a strategic role in Europe. It was a massive engagement, its principal combatants being 21 Army Group under Field Marshal Montgomery for the Allies and Army Group B under

Generalfeldmarschall Model for the Germans. It involved thousands of aircraft and armoured vehicles, and hundreds of thousands of troops and was the only major Allied defeat of the Northwest European campaign. *(Anyone who has seen the film 'A Bridge Too Far' will have a good idea of the scale of this battle. Ed.)*

Fred's part in all of this was as a ground troop, having landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day + 10 and then fighting his way across France into Holland. Any personal memories he has about those momentous times have never appeared in print as far as I am aware. In his folder, Fred also included photocopies of two 'Invitations' he had received, of which he is obviously very proud. The first was to a 'Garden Party at Buckingham Palace' on 13th July 2004, while the second was to 'a Luncheon to be given in the Gardens of Buckingham Palace, by The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, on Sunday 10th July 2005, to Commemorate

the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II'. (The accompanying photograph taken that day shows Fred on Horse Guards Parade.)

It's in the book!

I recalled that I had included some of Fred's memories in the opening chapter of *The Arborfield Apprentice*, a book that relates the history of the 'boys' school' from cradle to grave, as it were. I include those memories below, a poignant reminder of life at Arborfield during its earliest days.

'Fred Ford arrived here at Arborfield when it was "so new that the buildings still smelled of fresh joinery and creosote". He recalls that workmen were still laying tarmac at the top end of the Parade Square. He remembers that the foundations for the Camp Hall were not even laid until well after his arrival. Once built of course, the building was also to serve as Gymnasium, Church, Cinema, Theatre and Dance Hall – what would be called today 'multifunctional'! Having

himself experienced what he terms “a fairly deprived childhood”, Fred is probably one of a minority in fondly remembering the meals provided at the Cookhouse as “wholesome”.

Fred recalls one retired officer, a very large and learned gentleman, who, with the aid of an immense model railway layout, demonstrated the ‘magical’ effect of the infrared light, that invisible beam that he would use to start and stop the model trains. ‘Magic’ then of course, but something we all take for granted today with our alarm systems and remote controls.

Due to the fact that Fred was in the first intake of 1939, he and those who joined at the same time are forever now known as intake ‘39A’. However, at first, intakes were generally allotted the titles of ‘No.1 Intake’, ‘No.2 Intake’, etc. This had always been a source of confusion to the unwary, and was finally abolished around

the end of 1944. After that, intakes became known as ‘45A’, ‘45B’, ‘46A’ and so on, with retrospective re-grading of the intakes of previous years, and this numeric tradition, with some dissent from older ‘old boys’ of course, has remained in force ever since.

Fred goes on to recall the wonderful cinema shows that were given thrice weekly as entertainment. He especially liked the Hollywood-style musicals and reckons that most of the boys of his day were madly, though secretly, in love with the beautiful singing star, Deanna Durbin. However, Sergeant (Sgt) Arthur Leatherland of the Sherwood Foresters, a permanent staff (PS) member who lived in a bunk in one of the ‘C’ Coy spiders, had his bunk walls literally plastered with pictures of another favourite, Alice Faye.

Many of Fred’s intake were the sons of servicemen, who arrived at Arborfield

with their in-built suntans from such far-away and exotic-sounding places as Gibraltar, India and Malta. He recalls that the Commandant had a “deep booming voice”, while cavalry-type breeches, with highly polished brown leather leggings and boots, always accompanied his mode of dress. Apart from gaining the boys’ respect and admiration, it certainly didn’t go unnoticed that Col Hilborn happened to have a rather charming young daughter!

It was soon after reading through Fred’s portfolio that I started to put together the articles for *OBAN49*, part of which was a list of ‘new members’ of the Association. And there cropped up Fred’s name again, this time as a ‘reactivated member’. All I can say now is, “Welcome back Fred!”

(Compiled by Pete Gripton, 56B, *OBAN* Editor)

The Union Jack Club

by WO1 (Corps ASM) S J Jones



One of my little-known responsibilities is to sit on the General Committee of the Union Jack Club (UJC), representing the Corps and wider CSS community. Having not made use of the Club for over ten years, I must admit to not really knowing what to expect. I was, however, very pleasantly surprised with what I found; essentially an excellent quality place to stay in London – and aimed firmly at the serving Soldier!

To give a bit of background (and a small bit of history!), the UJC is a private members’ club, predominantly for serving and former military personnel of the Armed Forces and their families to make use of its excellent

facilities. The Club is just a stone’s throw away from Waterloo Station, allowing easy passage to anywhere in the city.

The original inspiration behind the UJC was to provide ordinary servicemen and their families with somewhere clean and comfortable to stay in London. Waterloo was chosen as the key location and the club was officially opened by King Edward VII. By 1939, it contained 800 beds and was in huge demand. During World War II, Waterloo was bombed severely and the Club did not escape unscathed. The decision was taken, in the early ’70s, to demolish the old Edwardian edifice, and a brand-new Club was built to the highest specification. This was formally opened by the Queen, the Club’s



Typical en-suite double room



The Front Entrance on Waterloo Road

Patron-in-Chief, in 1976.

The UJC has undergone extensive refurbishment and offers superb value for money accommodation in central London. More than 280 bedrooms and suites are available, with prices starting at just £37.50 for a basic single room. There are also luxury suites (with king-size bed, spacious separate living area, flat-screen television and a stylish bathroom with walk-in shower and large bath), as well as four fully furnished flats, so there is a lot to choose from. I have certainly ‘put my

money where my mouth is' and my family and I found our stay absolutely first-rate. The Club has the added benefit of having secure entry, so you have a little extra peace of mind. The food is also top-notch and the Club has a real 'Sergeants' Mess feel' to it. There are also excellent conference facilities and a reasonably

priced bar!

All serving REME men and women below Commissioned rank, including TA, are automatically full members of the Club and booking your room is easy. Simply visit www.ujclub.co.uk to book a room online, or phone reservations ☎ 020 7902 6000. For the price, you would be hard

pressed to find better quality, value or a better stay!

(The above article was published in the January 2011 issue of Craftsman magazine – and I thank both the CASM and the editorial staff for their kind permission for me to reproduce it in OBAN. Ed.)

'The Dukie With The Piccolo'

by Tony Head, 46A

Some sixty -five years ago, in February 1946 to be exact, a bewildered assortment of young boys arrived at the Army Technical School (Boys) to become intake 46A. I was one of those boys and was allocated a bed-space in a 'B' Coy barrack room, which was to be mine for the next three years.

Most readers will know that 'a Dukie' is the familiar name given to former boarders at the Duke of York's Royal Military School. That school had been established to care for, and educate, boys who had a military connection. In our barrack room we had three such 'Dukies', they were David Smalls, Reginald Barnes and Robert Chiverell. In addition to a well-rounded education, most of these boys had been taught at least the rudiments of a craft or trade, and many were also accomplished musicians. The diminutive Barnes played a saxophone that was almost as big as he was, while young Chiverell played the piccolo. Not only did he play that instrument, but he claimed that he could play, from memory, the regimental march of any unit in the British Army. Had he made that claim today it would be no big deal, considering our much-reduced Army of a few handfuls of regiments and corps. Chiverell's claim, however, was made just a few months after the end of World War 2, when I estimate that there must have been over two-hundred different serving formations. I can name at least fifteen Corps of that time and there were probably two dozen or more Scottish regiments; then add the numerous county regiments. In addition there were assorted Lancers, Hussars, Fusiliers, Guards, Rangers, Yeomanry, Rifles, Dragoons, and more.

At that time, our school at Arborfield had become almost a transit

camp for permanent staff personnel, many being posted in and out, often for short periods. For example, for a few months we had some 'Lovatt Scouts' working in the cookhouse. It was into this ever-changing environment that Chiverell's claim was really put to the test. It became a ritual for any new member of the permanent staff to be brought by his colleagues to our barrack room, to hear his regimental march being played on that famous piccolo. These friendly incursions carried on for many months, with Chiverell always coming up trumps. Sometimes he would even also play the regimental slow march.

Then one day we thought Chiverell's 'Nemesis' had arrived. The barrack room door opened and there stood Captain Gardner, the new OC of 'B' Coy, accompanied by two fellow officers. We peered at his cap badge and our hearts sank. His badge depicted nothing more than a sheaf of



corn, tied around the middle - no crown, no sword, no stag's head, no inscription - just this sheaf of corn. Then he walked down the room to Chiverell's bed-space and, as he passed by, our

hearts sank even further, for there on his shoulder we could read the name of his regiment, '2nd Lothians and Border Horse'. Although the Lothians had served with distinction in both World Wars, I doubt if any of us had ever heard of them.

So there, reminiscent of a gun-fighters' showdown, stood Capt Gardner and A/T Chiverell. It must be said that young Chiverell had a sense of occasion - he was also something of an actor and played the moment for all it was worth. He spent some moments peering at this strange cap badge whilst stroking his chin, and then did the same thing, inspecting the Captain's shoulder titles. We, in the meantime, looked on, all holding our combined breath. Chiverell then took his piccolo from its case, put it to firmly his lips - and delivered the goods! Capt Gardner was delighted; he congratulated Chiverell and left our barrack room beaming, accompanied by our wild applause and loud cheers.

Now to say that, after this incident, we became a little smug, well that would be an understatement! Other barrack rooms may have had a school champion boxer, swimmer or runner, but we had '**Chiverell**'! And so, as the months went by and the Army was gradually reduced in size, these visits became less numerous, but Chiverell was never bested. Eventually, after three years, came the time of 'passing out', and we were all posted off to join our new units. And, from that day on, I never met or heard of Chiverell again, and have often wondered what became of '*The Dukie with the Piccolo*'.

(That's a lovely story Tony, wonder if anyone knows what happened to young Chiverell? Ed.)

Recollections Of A Gun Fitter – Last Part Of 4

by Barry Baxter, 57A

Training in Canada

In May 1977, I think, the Regiment went on Exercise 'Medicine Man' to Canada. I couldn't get over the size of the training area - thirteen miles square and practically nothing in it. Map reading got really interesting! We saw one young officer taking a compass reading, sitting on top of his tank. He should go far, but probably not where he intended. I'm on the 432 now, having persuaded the Tiffy that it might not be a good idea for me to be swanning off on the ARV on a live firing exercise. One day I was in the back of the 432, the stores box on the roof meant it had to be battened down, when the Tiffy decided he needed a rest, so I took over commanding. Coming out into daylight, I hadn't a clue where we were, but he showed me on the map, great help, and off we went. We got a call to go to a dead tank and I tried out my map reading. By this time we had collected two more tanks and had the 434 in company. The radio went off net and, with nobody spare to retune it, we had to hope for the best. As we came round the side of a hill, there they were! I patted myself on the back and then the tank Sgt came over. *"Thank goodness you found us, we gave you the wrong location"*. I said nothing! One unexplained mystery - we kept picking up local radio traffic on our sets and, one day, heard a female voice say, *"Will you public service me?"* No doubt there was a rational explanation, but the ones we came up with couldn't be printed. Well, not then maybe, but now they'd be on prime time TV.

The Squadron was doing a battle run, that's live firing, when we were called up in a hurry. When we arrived, the door was opened and there was the SSM. *"Get your hammer"*, he said, *"you've got a job"*. Then I saw the tank! Its barrel had split from the muzzle, back about five or six feet, and opened like a pair of jaws. I put my hammer back in the toolbox. No-one was hurt, in fact the crew didn't know. They were battened down and had just noticed the bang sounded a bit different. It was the tank nearest them who called them - *"23A, stop, stop, stop. Your barrel's split!"* The reply was unprintable, they really shouldn't say things like that over the net. The message must have been convincing, because a turret hatch opened slightly and a pair of eyes looked out.

"Oh, shit!" That seemed to sum it up quite well. It was put down, as far as I know, to faulty ammunition, although I think it was a long drive in the dust with no frisbee on the barrel. For the uninitiated, that's a plastic cap that keeps dirt out of the barrel.

We got some time off before we went out to play soldiers, to sample the delights of Medicine Hat - and visit the 'Sin Bin' of course. For those of you not in the know, it's a bar, although it's reputed to sell more than just beer. I wouldn't know about that, I was a married man. They brought beer to the table in a large pitcher with glasses, but soon got used to British squaddies dispensing with the glasses and just ordering a pitcher each. I spent my 'R & R' with another lad in Calgary. It was just before the famous Stampede and we appeared to be among the few people not wearing cowboy boots and ten-gallon hats. One day we took a coach tour to Banff, in the Rockies. At one place, it stopped to let us wander up a path to admire the view. Before we set off though, the driver told us what to do if we met a bear. Basically it appeared to be 'stand still and pray'. As we came back down - no bears - we saw the coach drive off! Undeterred, we set off to walk, assuming the driver would notice he was two short. He did, and came back for us. His pay is docked if he loses paying customers - except to bears, that's allowed. On the way again, he announced to everyone, *"I've only had two bad days in my life - and today is both of them"*.

Back to BAOR

On return to Germany, the Regt re-rolled to Recce, with twelve *Scorpions* and vast quantities of *Scimitars*, I have a feeling it was forty. I could be wrong, but it was certainly a large number. I was moved to the main LAD and took over the 'Mashy' (machinery) Wagon, with opportunities for private jobs. I was given one odd job though - I was made Sgts' Mess caterer! I can't say I enjoyed it much, but it was an education. I think I was the first REME mess caterer the Regt had ever had. So far as I know, I was also the last, for which all the other REME Sgts should have been eternally grateful. I was in the Mashy Wagon one day when a Trooper came in with two *Centurion* 105mm tank gun brass shell-cases. Now

the British Army is very tidy-minded on the ranges and all brass is collected and returned. I think they must get refunds. Anyway, large brass cases are as rare as the proverbial rocking horse droppings. It turned out that the Canadians were firing (German) *Leopard* 1 tanks, which had the same gun as the old *Cent*. The Canadians weren't as tidy as the British, or maybe they didn't get refunds. The Trooper wanted me to make them into ashtrays. My price was 'a case for myself as an umbrella stand'. He thought that a good idea and came back with another two. He took his ashtrays but never came back for the umbrella stand, so I got both.

In one of the strange quirks of the private Armies, the QDGs' badge has a shield in the middle, with a coat of arms on it. Somebody must have offended somebody in the past, because the first thing a Trooper has to do is polish out the detail, to leave the shield plain! It says something about the British Army that nobody found that in the least bit odd. Officers have to buy a silver badge - but still have to remove the shield detail. I was working on the lathe one day, when a brand new 2nd Lt came in with his new badge, to ask if I could polish the detail out on his badge, using the grinder/buffer. I said that as soon as I'd finished the cut I was doing, I'd be glad to. I don't know why, but I said, *"The machine is there if you'd like to start it yourself, Sir"*. He switched it on and, before I could say anything, stuck his badge against the grind-wheel. Now, in a fight between a 4000rpm grinder and a silver cap badge, there's only going to be one outcome, although I did have to dress the grind-wheel to get the silver out! He, on the other hand, had to buy a new cap badge. Strangely enough, he never came back.

In early 1979, I got my final posting - another REME unit. Ah! Well, I'd not done badly. This one was to 10 Field Wksp in Tidworth. I took over a small A & G section. There wasn't much in the way of guns, just an occasional *Scorpion* - and I was bequeathed a slack handful of *Rarden* cannons. I'd not done them before, so I managed to arrange a course. Just as well, as they would be a big part of my workload in my first civvy job. I also got lumbered with lifting tackle, how lucky can you get? The most interesting job was making a Brigade badge, in brass,

as a parting gift for a Brigadier. It turned out that he'd been the Bty Commander of 'D' Bty 3RHA, when I was there as Bty gun fitter. It's a small world, even smaller Army. Finally it was time - Feb 1981 and my final promotion, to 'Mister'. I handed in my kit, but not even a demob suit these days. The weird ways of the Army lasted to the end, the only things they wanted back were my boots, the one thing they couldn't give to anybody else. Did I enjoy my time? As I tell people, I did, I just didn't realise it at the time. Actually, yes, I did enjoy my time - and I hadn't finished yet.

Bloody civvies!

Now I was a civvy, the Army declined to pay me. Well, they gave me a pension, which was very nice, but, wanting to live above the breadline, I found myself in need of gainful employment. 10 Fld Wksp being a mixed military and civvy unit, I asked if they had anything. They hadn't, but pointed me up the road to Ludgershall Vehicle Depot, where the workshop was in need of a gun fitter. So, in effect, I got another posting! I was a civvy now, but it didn't feel like it, just the ideal posting. No schemes, no duties and, if there was overtime, they'd actually pay me for it. Naturally, there wasn't much overtime. People asked me if I missed the Army. I watched the squaddies in the depot, doing their PE tests in the pouring rain, and thought, not really, No! My wife missed it more than I did. I felt as if I was still in it. It came as a shock when someone upset you and your immediate thought was 'bloody civvies', and then - 'hang on, I am one!'

At first there was very little gun work, in fact there was none - not that I was without something to do. The Admin officer, a civvy like me, had found out I'd done the lifting tackle at 10 Fld, so I got lumbered with it. It gave me something to do though. He said they'd had a bad report last time and I could see why. When I started, there were four F88 registers of kit. By the time I'd finished, there were seven. It meant that I got to meet everybody and find everything. Then, oh joy, gun work! It's a *Centurion* AVRE 165mm. That's good, I haven't seen one for twenty years. I consulted the EMER library, run, along with tools and equipment, by two women. They told me, with great certainty, that *Cent* was obsolete and that the EMERs had been disposed of. I refrained from asking about the 50-odd tons of 'scotch mist' sitting in the shop

outside, scotch mist was probably obsolete too! But I got by, dredging up bits of memory and consulting the inspector. He was the other half of the workshop gun staff. Soon the gun work starts in earnest, the variety is quite something; at least six different types of guns, on various types of armoured vehicle, plus of course all the general work that can't be pinned on anybody else. One job involved fitting skidding to the pack frames from Chieftain ARVs that couldn't be shipped fitted. The A & G charge-hand was guiding a crane operator, who was lowering one and didn't notice he was standing a bit close. His calls of, "Down, down" quickly changed to a higher pitched, "Up! Up!" as it descended gently onto his foot. As one of the other charge-hands said, "That's brightened the workforce up a bit".

Thank goodness for the *Rarden* course, as they turned out to be the bread and butter work. Climbing off the turret of a *Fox*, with a *Rarden* lower body, was quite a game. I should have practiced my ballet more! After about three years, the inspector moved on and I got his job. Most inspections are just like unit ones, but inspecting new vehicles that haven't been accepted was quite fun, since the maker had to repair them and wanted chapter and verse. Sometimes it turned out nobody had written the chapter yet, never mind the verse. At one time, a squadron's worth of *Chieftains* came though for one of the Gulf States. We had a REME Capt, who calmly told me that the first five had the wrong elevation boxes fitted, but he'd agreed that we would change them. I loved the 'We' bit!

As any gun fitter will tell you, elevation gearboxes are great fun. At least it wasn't 'work until it's done' - strictly normal hours. There are more advantages to being a civvy than not doing duties!

Challenger 1s were coming through from ROF Leeds and they sent a team down to do any work we found. Their team leader was a young man who thought he could drive a *Challenger*, like he'd seen our inspectors do. On the test track, while reversing, he had a fight with an old *Cent* ARV, dug in on the side as an anchor point. It didn't bother the *Cent* much and there wasn't much damage to the *Challenger*, its recoil system absorbed most of the impact! There was, however, a slight dent on the end of the barrel. 'Not a lot', as Paul Daniels would say, but they turned out to like it, not a lot. The dent was just enough to stop the gauge going in. Oh dear, new barrel. We didn't see the

young man again, he was probably making the tea. *Warriors* came through next - more *Rardens*. As I got older, I liked *Rardens* more, you didn't need a crane to pick the bits up. After the first few, we started to get the mid-life improved ones. I was talking to a bod from Tech Services one day, when he said that they'd be coming in soon. When I told him they were here, he panicked a bit - no books ready apparently. The best one was a call from this firm who made the *Rarden* for *Warrior*. The voice said, "Have you had breech ring No. 0015?" I checked my records and replied, "Yes". There was a moment's silence then just, "Oh, shit!" I didn't hear any more, but assumed that my breech ring No. 0015 wasn't the only one with that number!

One of the service engineers told us of when he was an ASM with a Cavalry Regiment - worth repeating. It was his last scheme and, in this regiment, the CO's tank was the rogue tank, there's always one. He was called, as expected, to the CO's tank, where the man himself was doing his nut. The ASM walked round the tank and, having previously got some blanks, said, "I'm sorry, Sir" - then pulled out his pistol and shot the tank in the final drive. Having been with a cavalry regiment myself, I know that if that's not true, it deserves to be.

The AS90 was now on the horizon, so a few of us were sent to Chertsey to have a look at the prototype. The division of labour at the workshop was different to a normal unit, where a gun fitter dealt with everything in the turret that he couldn't palm off on anyone else. At Ludgershall, they worked to the EMER, so the VMs did everything in the turret except the gun, traverse and elevating gears. Just as well from my point of view, as there were twenty-odd VMs but only one of me. All this changed when the VMs looked in the back of the AS90. Years of custom and practice were swept away with the words, "Bugger that, it's all yours!" A handful of us went later to Barrow-in-Furness, to the *Vickers* factory, to learn AS90. Four week course? No suck luck, we got three and a half days. The bod who was to teach me the gun turned out to be an ex-boy-RSM from Arborfield, one Mr. Massie. He was still there when I was, but a far senior Div to me. Once he found out I was a 'real' gun fitter, he passed me a great pile of draft EMERs and declared, "Off you go". In truth, he was very helpful and the one-to-one instruction helped a lot. We had our share of fun though. As someone was demonstrating power traverse at a low

angle, a scream of **"STOP!"** came from outside, where it seems someone's Mini was about to get into a fight with the gun barrel. Then back to Ludgershall where, six months later, the first AS90s arrived – *"Well, you're the experts!"* Then some clever dick, or possibly a similar name, tried to say that, since the gun had been test fired, we didn't need to inspect that bit. I pointed out that it had driven on to the transporter as well, so perhaps they didn't need to inspect the vehicle either? We heard no more. We had to be a bit careful inside the workshop during gun inspections because, with its high elevation, the AS90 was quite capable of picking a fight with the 25-ton overhead cranes. It did happen once while I was inside, fortunately not touching anything. It was a good test for the traverse-slipping clutch, but we decided against including it in the inspection schedule!

With the big 'drawdown', as it was termed, Ludgershall had to expand temporarily onto some spare ground, to accommodate all the extra kit that came in. Loads of stuff was being sold off and the place was rapidly becoming the 'Arthur Daley' of the tank world. People were buying all this kit and selling it on at a profit. I asked the Depot OC why the Army didn't sell it direct and cut out the middle man. As he said, *"Can you see MoD managing that?"* I took his point. It was proved when Sales Branch, at least I assume it was them, sold six serviceable *Abbots* to someone, then discovered that they didn't have the licence to hold them, and spent more to decommission them than they got for them! One character even managed to nick a tank. He was well known at the depot as a customer and had bought an old *Scorpion*, sight unseen, as they say. It wasn't located at the depot and, when he got it, he found it was a wreck. He had it on a truck and drove into the depot, as he told them, to collect some other stuff. He took it down to the hangers, selected a better-looking one, and repainted the vehicle numbers. His mistake was to select one earmarked for overhaul. Of course it was noticed. I got involved, to identify them by the gun numbers. MoD 'Plod CID' went to his base and were given a room in the local cop shop. One of the local lads asked what their suspect had done and was told, *"Stolen a tank". "Bloody hell",* he says, *"makes my 'theft of a mountain bike' look a bit tame!"*

Uncertain times

In November 1996 the axe fell and the

depot closed and I was made redundant – for the first time ever, but not the last. I was out of work for a whole week. My new job was with a firm who made military aircraft 'Stores delivery systems'. In old fashion speak, 'bomb release mechanisms'. It was different, that was for sure. I thought you just dropped bombs, but these days, as they hang them outside and they're aerodynamically shaped (big words for a gun fitter!), they have to 'throw' them away. Otherwise they tend to hang around for a bit. In some cases, they've even been known to have a go at the aircraft that dropped them, off-putting for the crew, to say the least. So, these days they're thrown away by an explosive charge, in effect a sort of gun. I felt quite at home. Later, I got sent on a course on an aircraft missile launcher, which worked in a similar way. The firm was modifying it and I got in at the interesting period. *"Try that and see what happens. Really! Well, try something else then".* A year to the day after leaving Ludgershall, the firm was sold and we were all to be made redundant – this is where I came in! One small section was going to the pyrotechnics site at Middle Wallop, only one fitter though, the charge-hand. Then he decided he didn't want the job and I was next in line. The mistake they made was that, instead of rewriting the letter for me, an assembly fitter on £13k, they crossed out his name and wrote mine. So they now offered me the job of charge-hand, on £18k – a difficult decision! Why, it must have taken me all of five seconds to make my mind up.

Middle Wallop was a nice job, much too nice to last, I could see that. The charge-hand part was no problem – I just bossed myself about. When I say there were seven people in the office and just me in the workshop, you can see why I didn't expect it to last. When we had any work, we made chaff decoy rocket launchers for naval ships. I had the set now, Army, Airforce and Navy. Before I really got started at Wallop, I was 'hired out' to the coy that bought the old firm, to help out with the launcher conversions I'd been working on. The company provided transport to take me from Tidworth to Wimborne, where they were based. I couldn't be that important, could I? Later, I even went to RAF Coningsby, to teach RAF fitters how to do the conversion. The boss took me to Coningsby and we stopped for a drink at a pub called the *'Jolly Scotchman'*. He made a joke about the name and was told it referred to 'the man who scotched wagon wheels on hills'.

I then knew why he was 'jolly' – it was as flat as a pancake around there, must have been an easy job. The Wallop site was a pyrotechnics factory and, to work there, you had to pass a test. Since I wouldn't be working on pyrotechnics, I only did the half-day instruction and test – some were a three-day job. What amused me was that all the regulations were based on an Act of Parliament of 1875. The rules referred a lot to 'the Red Line'. It was on a map of the site and enclosed the danger area. No matches, lighters or fags in there naturally, – but also no food or drink. Thank goodness our department was outside. To be caught with any of those things over the line was to be straight out of the door. What I didn't realise, until I went onto the site, was that the red line wasn't just on the map – it was painted on the ground as well. I made use of my time there and got my fork-lift certificate, which proved useful. The whizz-kids at Wallop were developing a new type of rocket, to fire from the launcher we were making, so I got to go on the ranges to help when they test-fired it. Helping, I found, involved mainly looking for it afterwards! On one occasion, they decided to make life easier by firing at a high angle, so that the rocket wouldn't go so far. Unfortunately, they hadn't realised how low the cloud-base was. The rocket vanished into it, leaving us all wondering where it was going to come down. There was a small shelter, which rapidly became rather crowded. We never did see it come down – and we never found it either!

In November 2002 we were told we were to be made redundant. I was 61 now, so this could be a problem. But they moved fast when they wanted to. In February, along with the others, I was 'called in', to be told officially. They arranged a taxi to take me home that afternoon, but I declined their kind offer, as one of the others had offered me a lift. He'd got a bigger car for my 'Pound of Flesh'! This time it took longer to find something. With no offers after a couple of months, I took a job as a cleaner with a firm that cleaned for the MoD. And so, I ended up cleaning offices and loos in the workshops and hangers of 22 Engineer Regt. Guess where they were? Perham Down, my second adult posting. Not that I recognised the place, I think there was only one small hut left from my first time there. It's not the job I would have, chosen but 'needs must', although I found it hard cleaning loos in a REME Wksp. There was a lot of walking involved too and my wife noticed I was losing weight. I did

some sums and found I was walking over five miles a day, just between the hangers, and climbing fifteen flights of stairs. Every cloud has a silver lining, as I needed to lose weight! The job didn't pay enough though, so I tried the MoD on the off-chance, thinking I'd be too old, but got an interview at the Royal School of Artillery at Larkhill and a job back on gun fitting again. They'd been looking for two gun fitters, but we must be 'thin on the ground', because all they got were two well-worn ones, - me at 62 and a veritable youngster of 55!

There were only two types of gun to play with, Light Gun, which I'd not met before, and my old friend, AS90. I had an interview with the Wksp OC, a Major. He asked if I thought I'd get on OK? I said 'yes', but all the guns I'd worked on were on plinths outside buildings now. Then he asked what I saw as my career path? I said 'to survive until I'm 65, two-and-a-half

years from now'. He replied that I really should have an aim! What's with this man? Lasting until I retire is a career path!

The work was all right, it was nice to be back on guns. I was surprised how much I'd forgotten about AS90 but it soon came back and, of course, I'd never worked on second-hand ones. At Ludgershall, they'd all been new. One of the military gun fitters, a Corporal, taught me the Light Gun, it felt a little strange to be taught a gun by someone who wasn't even born when I qualified - but that's life. It was still a small Army too! One of the civvy VMs turned out to have been an apprentice at Arborfield while I was an instructor there. Before long, I realised that I could call everybody in the workshop 'young man', time was marching on. It was the L/Cpl gun fitter that made me feel old though. When you're a young soldier, you always get the old sweat who tells you, "I was in the Army before you were born, son". Well, I

wasn't only in the Army before the L/Cpl was born, I was in before his **father** was born!

Then it was really was 'time's up' and - a great farewell do. I tried to warn the youngsters how fast time goes. I said, "I'm 65 now, five years ago I was 40!" They don't understand - yet! But they will, and a lot quicker than they realise. So, I'm a pensioner now, bus-pass and everything, but strangely still a gun fitter. I'm helping someone do up an old, Gate Guardian 25-pdr. Still learning too! I've stripped this one further than I ever did one before. For how much longer? Well, to paraphrase Jethro again, if someone asks me if I've been a Gun Fitter all my life, I can honestly say NOT YET!

(Barry retired from RSA in February 2006. Thanks for all the tales over many issues Barry. Ed.)

England, My England

Goodbye to my England, so long my old friend;
Your days are now numbered, being brought to an end.
To be Scottish or Irish or Welsh - that's just fine,
But don't say you're English, that's way out of line

The French and the Germans may call themselves such;
So may Norwegians, the Swedes and the Dutch.
You can say you are Russian - or maybe a Dane,
But don't say you're English ever again

At Broadcasting House the word is taboo;
In Brussels it's scrapped, and in Parliament too.
Even schools are affected - staff do as they're told,
They must not teach children about England of old

Writers like Shakespeare, Milton and Shaw,
The pupils don't learn about them anymore.
How about Agincourt, Hastings, Arnhem or Mons,
Where England lost hosts of her very brave sons?

We're not Europeans, how can we be?
Europe is miles away, over the sea.
We're the English from England, let's all be proud,
Stand up and be counted - shout it out loud!

Let's tell our Government - and Brussels too,
That we're proud of our heritage - the Red, White and Blue;
Fly the flag of Saint George or the Union Jack;
Let the World know - We want our England back!

(Whilst on a late summer holiday in Devon during October 2010, I came across this anonymous but heartfelt plea, mounted upon a notice-board in the small village of Shaldon, just across the river from Teignmouth. There must be many who agree with the writer's sentiments! Ed.)

Getting Technical

Training Battalion prepares REME soldiers for challenges of service life

Demands for fully-functioning kit and equipment are part and parcel of everyday Army life, as the operational tempo in Afghanistan continues. Providing the hardware for troops in the heart of Helmand is one thing, but ensuring it is maintained to the impeccable standards required by the Service is another.

The Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers plays a key role in such a vital task and, for young soldiers joining this skilled arm of the military, the training is thorough to say the least. Craftsmen are put through their paces at 11 Training Battalion REME in Arborfield, an institution that is barely a year old, having emerged from the shadows of the School of Electrical and Aeronautical Engineering. The site teaches various technician trades and soldiers can spend up to two years learning the skills and drills they need for their chosen career path.

A raft of changes have been introduced at Arborfield over the past year and Commanding Officer Lt Col Ian Gibson explained how every effort is made to ensure personnel are fully proficient in their trade and as soldiers. *"Twelve months ago, our responsibility was for the welfare of the guys in the unit and we had no responsibility for the technical training", he told Soldier. "But the school was reorganized to give responsibility for the troops and their training to us. We are now taking a different psychological approach to the training and we are trying to treat this place like a posting. We want to give them a sense of belonging. We have also tried to rebalance the military element of the training, as before there was a greater focus on the technical aspect. We try and make sure that, for the two years they are with us, they maintain the skills from Phase One and, when they leave to join their units, they are fit for further military training".*

Lt Col Gibson described how the courses have clear military, technical and command targets that give soldiers an opportunity to progress in their careers. While the Battalion's charges join as privates, the officer explained that the aspiration is for every soldier to leave,

being able to perform to the standard required of a junior NCO. *"We make the judgment as to whether they have made the grade as NCOs. That is a big change for the guys coming through here", he said. "One of the most important things we do is to look after them - it is all underpinned by supervisory care. The best way to look after their needs is to know them. If you understand their normal demeanour and persona, you can help them much more".*

New arrivals at Arborfield start their training with key skills courses to ensure they meet national standards in literacy and numeracy. Various foundation, technical, electronics and command courses follow, to give personnel the skills they need to work on the Army's fleet of ground vehicles and aircraft. Inevitably, the work involves intense classroom sessions, but there is no shortage of hands-on practical training. *Soldier* witnessed small-scale projects to create GPS systems and remote-controlled aircraft; bench work to build part of an airframe; and electrical work on the hull of a tank.

Avionics students, who had been living in the field, were also sent to tackle a serial on a damaged Lynx helicopter. *"We get the guys used to working long hours in adverse conditions", explained S/Sgt Graham Lumsden (REME). "They are working constantly for three-and-a-half days. We run four-hour serials with minimum downtime. They have to administer themselves, feed themselves, get some sleep and be prepared to move. This is quite realistic. They are living in tented accommodation and working out in the field, just like they will be on ops".*

Cfn Jack Waterworth (REME) explained how the lengthy training cycle has offered clear benefits to his trade and he is now looking forward to putting his new skills to the test. *"It is really good", he said. "It has been a long 22 months but it is training I never thought I would do. They make it as enjoyable as possible and that puts things into perspective".* But Arborfield is not just about delivering a basic education. The facility welcomes back former students, who can improve their skills even further

on Upgrader and Artificer courses, training which is conducted to degree standard. While the site inevitably lends itself to technical-based activities, the Battalion ensures personnel enjoy sporting and adventurous training opportunities.

They also maintain the military skills needed for Army life. During *Soldier's* visit, young troops were put through their paces on the basic combat skills course, which teaches them everything from mines awareness techniques to command tasks. *"This is a two-week course at the end of the training, to enhance their military skills before they are posted to their units", said training officer WO2 Grant Davidson (REME). "It works well. They like being out of the classroom and in the field, doing stuff. They thrive on this. We wanted to make it very realistic and up-to-date, so my guys have done a lot of research to make sure everything we do is relevant".*

The Battalion has a clear focus on the work it does and Lt Col Gibson is determined to see soldiers meeting their potential and the needs of the Army. The CO concluded, *"The REME requirement is about supporting equipment capabilities on ops - and we are producing soldiers to meet that requirement"*

(The above article, from the October 2010 edition of Soldier magazine, was sent in by Colin 'Danny' Long, 49B, who hoped it would make an interesting addition to a future OBAN. I later sought permission to reproduce the article here and am grateful to acknowledge the author as Richard Long. I am also grateful to the editorial staff at Soldier for allowing me to use it.

Also thanks to UK MoD Crown Copyright personnel for their explanation of current rules! The final word must be with Danny, who quotes an RSM's words to the scruffiest A/T on parade - "You're smart, lad, but not as smart as the rest of us!" Danny cannot claim credit for making it up, recalling that the words were applied to a National Service conscript at one of the units with which he served. But Danny does claim credit for converting it to its AAS style! Thanks Danny. Ed.)

Craftsman Snippets

Apache given a REME make-over for desert operations in Arizona

654 REME CSS on 'Exercise Crimson Eagle' in Tucson, Arizona, have painted the tail rotor blades of an *Apache* AH1 Gunship in REME colours. The paint was applied in order to protect the rotor blades from sand erosion during training in desert conditions, in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan. The helicopters have been landing in dusty areas of the Arizona desert to simulate the 'brown-out' conditions common in Afghanistan, in which the helicopter's down-draft kicks up a cloud of dust, reducing the pilot's visibility to nil. Many forward operating bases have unprepared landing areas, and brown-out is a considerable hazard to inexperienced pilots.

Supplied with cans of red, blue and yellow paint, the REME team didn't take long to decide how best to paint the tail rotor; *'It had to be done'*, was the message! Unfortunately, the 'Esprit de Corps' paint scheme was only temporary, until the desert stripped the rotor blades and more black paint was sourced. 'Crimson Eagle' is a regular AAC Exercise to train pilots in 'Conversion to Role' and collective training to preparing them for operations in Afghanistan. 654 Sqn AAC and their REME Close Support Section, with support from 7 Air Assault Bn REME, will deploy to Camp Bastion in September.



Hundreds more to receive campaign medals

Hundreds more British servicemen and women will receive operational campaign medals under new plans announced by the MoD. At present, members of the Armed Forces who serve for 30 continuous days qualify for Iraq and Afghanistan campaign medals. Following a review, those who have served for an aggregate period of 45 days will now also be eligible. Examples of Service personnel who could now be eligible include members of the aero-medical evacuation teams, who accompany injured patients back to the UK. Under the new plans, personnel who deploy for short periods of time will be allowed to build up the accrued days to achieve their 45 days service.

Inheritance Tax exemption

Military personnel who die on active service will be exempt from Inheritance Tax. The move, which affects soldiers who are killed on operations or other military service the Treasury deems to carry the same risk, also applies to deaths caused by injuries or illnesses suffered in past campaigns, including the Falklands conflict, Korea and the Second World War. Personnel killed in action in Iraq or Afghanistan qualify for the exemption, but those who died during peacetime activities or on training exercises do not.

Defence Training Rationalisation (DTR)

On Oct 19th 2010, the Secretary of State for Defence announced the termination of the DTR programme, as the Preferred Bidder, *Metrix*, were unable to demonstrate that they could provide an affordable, value-for-money solution. However, the original concept remains valid and there will now follow a process of evaluation of alternative options. This process is expected to complete and report in Spring 2011. Training will thus continue at current training locations – as it would have done anyway. The St Athan site will continue to be an option for the future delivery of training and assessed alongside other options.

Wootton Bassett Salutes Matthew Thomas

The town of Wootton Bassett fell silent as the funeral cortege of Corps member, Cpl Matthew Thomas, was driven through the town. There were many serving and retired soldiers in the crowd, in addition to nine REME Association Standards from across the country. Matthew was killed in Helmand province, Afghanistan, when the vehicle he was driving was struck by an improvised explosive device – or roadside bomb. *(See photograph on rear cover)*

(The above were extracted, with kind permission, from recent issues of 'Craftsman'. The final paragraph was based upon the Craftsman report by Cyril Luger of the REME Association, Arborfield Branch. How wonderful it was to later learn that Her Majesty has recently agreed to confer the title of 'Royal' upon the town. Shortly before I was finalizing the articles for this OBAN, I caught sight of the intensely moving BBC TV programme about Wootton – relating how the repatriation parades grew naturally since 2007. It just so happened that the town's High Street was directly on the route between RAF Lyneham and the coroner's office in Oxford. With Lyneham due to close in September 2011, Wootton will once again revert to its own quiet nature, but the 'Royal' title will live long in the memories of all concerned. Ed.)

My Early Army Service (1948 – 1951)

by Eddie Broomfield, 45A

Into the REME

The morning after our Arborfield Passing-Out parade, we were dispatched to join our nominated Corps. At that time few, if any of us, were aware that, after spending three years together, we were now being split up and many of us would never set eyes on one another again. A small number that were to join the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and Royal Army Service Corps was taken in trucks to Wokingham railway station to catch trains to Woolwich, Chatham and Farnborough respectively. By far the largest contingent was to join the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), of which I was one. We were marched out of the Apprentices' School gates and less than a mile up the road to the REME Depot at Poperinghe Barracks, headed by the School Pipe Band. When we got to the barracks entrance, the Band marched past the gates and counter-marched back, to play us through the gates. We had now joined REME and were on man's service. Marched to the Camp Hall, we assembled inside, to be welcomed by the Brigadier in charge of the REME Training Centre. He gave a short address, welcoming us to the Corps, telling us that we would be a great asset to REME and very much valued. We were then sorted into trade groups and despatched to various training establishments within the Training Centre, for what was said to be continuation training to enhance our trade skills and acquaint us with REME methods and procedures. I was taken, with some twelve or so other fitters, to the Armament Training Wing at Blackdown, near Aldershot.

On arrival at Blackdown we were

assembled and given a right old dressing down by a REME Major, who told us that he had experienced ex-boy soldiers before! He regarded us as an unruly rabble and, if we didn't behave, he would show us no mercy. A little different from what the Brigadier had said a couple of hours before - how quickly things can change! We didn't let it bother us too much, as we were well accustomed to being kicked about by all and sundry. We had arrived at about eleven in the morning and, directly after lunch, we were in the lecture rooms receiving our technical training. To start with the training staff were very hostile to us, as we had been scheduled to start instruction that morning, so were already half a day behind. After the first few days they mellowed to us a little, when they found that a lot of what they were teaching us had been covered during our apprenticeship, which meant their job was much easier than they expected. The training was very good and enhanced what we had already been taught. Blackdown wasn't much of a place, with ancient barrack rooms, some of them 1914-style. The whole place was very bleak and situated on the edge of a large pine forest. The heating was by open coal fires, with a ration of coal far from enough to keep the rooms warm. We resorted to pinching coal from the coal-yard, which we soon became very expert at. The small village of Deepcut, alongside the barracks at Blackdown, had some eight to ten cafes, all tailored to meet soldiers' requirements.

There were several other barracks in the Garrison, as well as the large REME establishment, which also provided trade for the cafes. Our meagre wage of 35 shillings a week only stretched to the occasional cup of tea, but this didn't worry

us at all. We seemed to get caught for quite a lot of guard and other camp duties in the evenings. This was a bit of a bind, but in general we were quite happy, as we had much more freedom than we ever had in boys' service.

The course I was on was given the title of '42 Regular REME Craftsmen Course (RRC)' and there were twelve or so of us on it, all ex-apprentices from Arborfield. There was another course, made up of ex-apprentices from our sister (brother?) school at Chepstow. The purpose of the course was to extend our technical skills to meet the REME requirements. Our training covered repair and maintenance of artillery equipment, general engineering equipment, welding and metal work. After each subject, we were tested on what had been taught and completed practical tests to confirm our skills. This took some four months, after which we were moved to Vehicle Wing, which was then at Arborfield. Vehicle Wing was located in a relatively modern 'Sandhurst' block, built in 1938, a very nice clean bright building and sheer luxury to us. We were taught how to drive a vehicle and ride a motorcycle, with a short course on vehicle recovery; we also learned basic rudiments of waterproofing of vehicles for wading ashore from landing craft. This took about two months, after which we moved to another Wing at Arborfield, where we were introduced to the administration side of REME Workshops. It all seemed so complicated - one wondered how they ever got any work done! But it all fell into place and we finished up with a good understanding of how a workshop functioned, or should function. On completion, we moved back to

Blackdown, for a course on refrigeration equipment, which was most interesting and completed our technical training. The course had been very informative and gave us a lot more confidence in our technical ability.

It was now the end of October 1948 and we were more than ready to be posted to our first workshop. The results of our courses were now assessed and those that had achieved a good result overall were awarded a 2nd Class trade qualification. I'm pleased to say that I was one of these. We were then all interviewed to assess our career prospects and given our postings. Three of us were selected to go on a junior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) course with the Brigade of Guards, which meant staying on at Blackdown until the course started. They gave me a job in the refrigeration department whilst I was waiting, which was very interesting and most enjoyable.

In mid-November, I was sent to Arborfield to be processed before joining the Guards course. The course was of six weeks duration, only the second of its nature that REME had participated in. I met those chaps just returned from the first course and they summed it up as 'six weeks of sheer hell'! To attend the course, I was promoted to Local Acting Unpaid Lance Corporal, which was a great honour, but didn't ease the thoughts of what was ahead. It was stressed that, on this course, we were representing the Corps amongst other Regiments, so essential that we were a good example of REME. On a cold dreary Sunday morning in late November, six of us were taken by truck to Wokingham to catch a train to Aldershot, changing trains at Ascot. We arrived in the early afternoon and were taken by a Troop Carrying Vehicle (TCV) to Badajoz Barracks, to join the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards.

Training with 'the Guards'

Once we arrived there, life took off at a rate of knots. Our kit had to be changed to Guards style, ready for next morning. This included changing the colour of the blanco on our webbing equipment to that used by the Guards. There was a very small, cold, wet blanco room down in the cellars, with very little light, and we were all down there, blancoing our kit. I remember saying to myself, 'what a way to spend a Sunday evening?' There were about 100 of us on the course, from just about every Regiment and Corps in the British Army except the Brigade of Guards. The accommodation was a Crimean War style

barrack block, with an iron stairway on the outside, with long open verandas. The barrack rooms were long with high ceilings, in which there were about twenty bed-spaces and very little other furniture. Heating was dispensed by a large coke stove in the centre of the room. The wash room and toilets were very small and located at the far end of the barrack room.

A very dismal picture, but we soon learnt that we were not there to enjoy the comforts!

The instructors were Guards Sergeants and Warrant Officers, who had one aim in life - to give us as hard a time as possible, which they very much succeeded in doing. To their credit, they very efficiently taught us what was required to become an efficient junior NCO. They set out to brush up our drill, weapon training and field-craft, then taught us how to instruct on each subject. They gave us instruction on all aspects of being an NCO, including leadership, discipline, military duties and how to get the best out of our subordinates. It really was a super course for the likes of myself. The Battalion staff was a very able and experienced bunch of professionals, who all excelled in their posts. The Commanding Officer, Lt. Colonel Burns, was a very switched-on guy and finished up as Major General, heading the Household Division. The RSM was Charlie Smyth, who went on to be the RSM of Mons Officer Training School, replacing the notorious RSM Britten. The Company Commander was a Major Stilman MC, a very bold and alert gentleman who talked a lot of sense. The Platoon Officer was Lt. Hirst, a winner of the Sword of Honour at Sandhurst. I next met him at Tidworth some twenty years later, when he was Commanding the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards. The Platoon Sgt was Sgt Hagg, a very competent senior NCO, who led by his own example. We really did have a first class team to lead us.

On the first morning we were chased around, getting sorted out. This included a full kit check to ensure that we had all required for the course. Anything we were short of was issued and the cost deducted from our pay. We were also given a Guards-style haircut - a very short back and sides, with very little left on top. We were kept on the go from Reveille at 0630hrs, to Lights-out at 2300hrs, starting with blanket shaking on the barrack square directly after Reveille. Everything had to be done properly and on time, nothing was allowed to lapse. A very rigid programme started with morning muster parade at 0800hrs on the barrack square with the

Band Corps of Drums on parade and the Officers perambulating at the edge of the square, whilst the parade formed up. This was a very purposeful event, to establish that all were present and up to the required standard to start the day. This was all over in less than a half an hour and we were then into our instruction. In the evenings, we had what were called 'Shining Parades', when we would sit on our beds cleaning our kit, whilst an officer would talk to us about military matters and military history, followed by him questioning us on the topics dealt with on previous evenings.

The course spanned the Christmas period and we were given two days leave for Christmas, from after duty Christmas Eve until first parade on 27th December. There was no let up for Christmas, we were programmed for Physical Training (PT) from 1600hrs to 1700hrs on Christmas Eve and we were there doing PT until 1700hrs. The morning after Boxing Day we paraded at 0800hrs, with the Band in attendance. This meant travelling back on Boxing Day afternoon to get ready for the next day. The discipline and incentive was such that nobody considered this to be at all unreasonable and nobody was late back. During the course we carried out several Field Exercises, when we would be detailed off to take charge of our group and be assessed on leadership ability. I did this on several occasions, without too many problems. I was in charge of a small group who came first in a day-long map reading exercise, which probably brought me to the notice of the Directing Staff. When it came to carrying out an exercise on the Field Firing Range, using live ammunition, the Platoon Officers took great care in their selection of the leader for this event. I was most surprised and horrified to be selected to lead the group that I was in. This was a frightening experience but, once it started, I was far too busy to worry about the outcome. I can remember leading a frontal charge under cover of a Bren gun, firing live rounds aimed just in front of us. It was very alarming, running towards bullets hitting the ground a few feet in front of us - it soon dispelled any fear of being 'gun shy'! It was also a bit of an experience for the man firing the Bren gun. One of the Guards Sergeants held on to a rope, tied to his foot, and carefully watched where he was aiming, ready to pull on the rope to stop him firing if his aim got too close. It was all a bit hairy and it still makes me cringe a little now, when I think about it!

They were very rigid on the course, but also kept our welfare very much in mind.

This was part of the course, to show us that as an NCO, one must always consider the welfare of one's men. The food was very plain, but always well cooked and nicely presented. We had the facilities of a well-equipped Corporal's Club, but were far too busy to take advantage of it. We were obliged to attend and take part in Mess Meetings as part of the course. On reflection, I enjoyed the course and was glad that I had been given the opportunity of doing it. In all I think I did pretty well and got a good report. The information obtained, and experience gained, set me in very good stead for the rest of my Army career.

The course finished at lunchtime on a Saturday in mid-January 1949 and it was with great joy that I boarded a TCV to leave the Guards barracks and head for Aldershot railway station, saying "Thank God that's over". We got back to Arborfield in the early evening, had a meal, and I went to bed and slept well into the Sunday.

Posted to Warminster

After two weeks at Arborfield I was posted as a Craftsman, having lost my temporary promotion on posting to my first unit, 27 Command Workshop REME at Warminster, Wiltshire. The Workshop was situated on the edge of town and the camp where we lived was four miles away, near the country village of Sutton Veny. This was the next village to Heytesbury, where my mother had first started her life in domestic service. The camp was a wartime brick built camp, at the bottom of a hill and in very poor repair. The huts were all detached and facing in different directions - open the door and you were outside! The washing and toilet blocks were all separate, so it could mean getting wet, going for a wash. It was often said that someone had simply stood on the top of the hill and scattered the huts. The huts and floors were built of hollow bricks and there was a metal coal stove in the centre for heating. Where, over the years, wood had been chopped for fire lighting, the floor bricks in front of the stove had been broken and had filled up with dirt and ashes - not a wholesome sight and almost impossible to clean out.

We were taken daily to the Workshop in the back of trucks, standing, as there were no seats. They were covered with a canvas canopy, to prevent us falling out. The drivers were, in the main, trained drivers - but a fair number were Vehicle Mechanics, who stood in as drivers to and from work. It was all a bit hairy and I can

remember a truck turning over on more than one occasion, luckily with only minor injuries. We would arrive at the Workshop in time to start at 0800hrs, returning after work ceased at 1730hrs. Twice a week we would set off early to be marched to work, so that our feet didn't get soft and to ensure that we kept a little fit. The Workshop itself was very good and I enjoyed the work. In one building there was a large assembly line, for reconditioning Bedford engines. I was employed in the Jig and Tool section, its main task to support the assembly line. I had some interesting jobs, designing and making special tools. The first one I did was a success, so after that I tended to be given the problem and left to get on with it. This gave me a great opportunity to practice and improve my skills at fitting, machining and metal work.

At lunchtimes we were given a snack meal in a disused hanger at the Workshop, laid out with wooden tables and benches. Each table would be set with two slices of bread per place, six places per table, a blob of butter and a piece of cheese, or Spam, on the bread, no plates - and usually a piece of slab cake. Each table would have some jam on a plate, available to only those who got there first! We kept an enamel mug in our toolboxes to take to lunch, so we could get a cup of tea from a large urn. Lunch took about 30 minutes, enabling us to finish work at 1730hrs. Our main meal of the day was at about six o'clock, after we had returned to camp. After several months in the Jig and Tool section, I asked for a move to the Gun shop, to get some repair experience on Guns. I intended to get on an Artificer Gun course as soon as I could, where I saw my future to be. This was granted and they welcomed me, as they were very busy. This suited me - I got stuck in and enjoyed the work, whilst learning a lot. The charge-hand was a reasonable chap and interested in his workers, seeing that I got a good spread of work to give me experience.

There wasn't a lot to do in the evenings at Sutton Veny, so I started preparing for my 1st Class trade test at Warminster workshop, where they had a Trade Testing Centre (TTC). After several months, when I thought I was ready, I asked to see the Trade Testing Officer and requested a trade test. He said they weren't very busy and could take me the next week, if I could be released from production. The Gun shop boss was very good and agreed to my release. It was a hard week, but very rewarding, as by the following week I was

a Fitter Gun Class 1. This made me the only first-class tradesman in the unit who was not an NCO, so my Workshop boss, very pleased with my progress, put me in for promotion to L/Cpl, supported by my military superiors. This gave me a start on the promotion ladder and was certainly the hardest one for me to obtain. Just as I was completing my trade test, who should turn up at the TTC but old friend Bill Jelley, to do his 1st class trade test. Our paths had crossed again and we were able to have a chat and catch up with events. He was stationed with a unit at Shrivenham in Oxfordshire. With obtaining my trade qualification, I now qualified to apply for Artificer training, which I duly did. After about 3 months, I was called forward to attend a week's selection testing, followed by an interview with a Selection Board. I completed the testing and was quite satisfied, but was told that I had passed technically but considered too young and told to come back in a year.

We would be at the Workshop Monday to Friday, with Saturday mornings being spent at the camp doing Parades, Inspections and Military training. This was when I could put my Guards training to good use and show my regimental ability. Once a month we were given a 48-hour pass, Friday evening to Monday morning. In those days very few of us had cars, so it was a case of having to return in time to catch the last bus to Sutton Veny on the Sunday evening. I took advantage of the passes to go home to Fawley, near Southampton, where my parents lived. On the Friday evening I would call at the NAAFI club in Southampton, where they would have dances, and I got to know a few people. On the Saturday and Sunday I would give my parents a hand on their smallholding, which was always very welcome, as it was a struggle for them to make a living. I tended to stay at home on Saturday evening or go to the local pub for a drink with my father. After lunch on Sunday I would have to get ready to return to Warminster in time for the last bus to Sutton Veny. In those days, each Army unit would be allocated one ticket for the FA Cup Final at Wembley. Members of our unit who were interested were invited to apply. Just about everybody put their names forward for it and a name was drawn from a hat by the Adjutant. I was the lucky one and had the weekend off, to go up to London to see Arsenal beat Liverpool 2-0 in the 1950 Final. This was a great event for me.

Detached from the Workshop

I made good progress working in the

Gun shop and was promoted to Corporal. This enabled me to be sent out in charge of a small working party to Territorial Army (TA) units, where it was more convenient to work on equipment on-site during the week. This would be for several days at a time and made a nice break from normal routine. This work was mainly on tank guns and saved having to transport the tanks to the Workshop. These TA units were in the Bath and Bristol area, and we would lodge with the nearest Regular Army unit and be given a vehicle to move us about. In the summer of 1950, I had a very interesting six weeks as NCO i/c the military increment to support the range maintenance staff at the National Rifle Association (NRA) range at Bisley. I had about twenty Craftsmen of various trades and we were attached to the 3rd Carabiniers Regiment, which was providing men to operate the targets at the range butts. It involved long working hours for me, in a supervisory and control capacity, as the Craftsmen were working in shifts, to maintain the range equipment and carry out repairs during silent hours. I was on my own, with no one to cover for me. It wasn't a problem, as I was able to do things during the day. For work, I was responsible to the NRA Quartermaster, who was very easy to get on with and, as long as the work was done, was quite happy to leave it to me.

The Carabiniers were a very proud lot and held a Ceremonial Parade for the King's Birthday, with their military band and all. They insisted on all the attached personnel being on parade with them and made up a troop of REME, RASC and RAOC, with me in charge. I went to see the RSM, to be told the form of the parade and what to do. To my surprise it followed very closely the parades we used to do at the Apprentices' School. The RSM was a bit cautious about me, being REME and not renowned for parade ground ability! He asked me a few pertinent questions and then said, "You seem to know what to do, we'll see how you get on at the rehearsal". I was very lucky and it all went well at the

rehearsal and the actual parade. The RSM had a word with me afterwards and said, "You weren't trained by REME". I proudly said, "No Sir, the Brigade of Guards!"

Nine months after attending Artificer selection, I applied again and attended another selection test and board, just about a year after being told to 'come back in a year'. This time I was selected for training, with a waiting time of about another year. I returned to Warminster and continued working in the Gun shop, doing more jobs out on site and getting more involved in the activities of the Workshop.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the Gun shop became extremely busy with preparing equipment for shipping to Korea. The Workshop coped by mustering all Gun Fitters available and introduced a night shift. I was given the job of running the night shift, without too many disasters. It was quite easy really, as everybody was working for a purpose. Late one evening, the Colonel came in to see how things were going and was quite impressed to see everybody getting on with their work. He told me that he had a vacancy for a Sergeant in the establishment and would put me forward to be promoted. Two weeks later I was promoted to Sergeant; I was then aged twenty years and nine months. Life in the Sergeants' Mess was a great improvement for me, both in the way of comforts and socially. This also brought extra duties and responsibilities, which my training at the Guards had well prepared me for. The Mess Members were a good bunch and made me very welcome.

They gave a little party for my 21st birthday, which was greatly appreciated.

I was sent to Bulford, on Salisbury Plain, for a few months, on loan to HQ Salisbury District, heading a small team of mechanics to carry out the annual inspection of the General Engineering Equipment in the District. This was quite an experience for me, involving the inspection and testing of all sorts of mechanical equipment, much of which I knew little about. This included cranes,

forklift trucks, tractors, dumpers, generators and compressors - plus many other odd bits of engineering equipment. On one occasion, at an Ammunition depot, I had to go underground to inspect a coal cutter! I learnt a lot and it made a very pleasant few months away from the routine of life in Workshops.

In the early summer of 1951, I spent a very nice long weekend in London, seeing the Festival of Britain. I stayed at the Chevrons Club in Baker Street for three nights and had a very enjoyable time. I spent two full days visiting the Festival and just about covered the mapped-out route, spending the evenings looking around the sights of London. This was really the first ever holiday that I spent completely on my own - and very much enjoyed. About a year after being accepted for Artificer Training, I was called forward to start my course. I had spent a very enjoyable two-and-a-half years at Warminster where, thanks to some very friendly and helpful people, I had become established as a member of REME. I hope that, during that time, I had managed to contribute a little towards the good of the Workshop. In September 1951 I left Warminster and set off for 18 months training on an Artificer Gun Course, assembling at Arborfield. If successful, this would qualify me as an Artificer Gun and promotion to Staff Sergeant.

(The above is extracted from Eddie's book, 'Life between the years (1930-2000)', which tells the story of his life and was recently published. Sadly, Eddie died at the end of 2010 and I therefore publish this small part of his life story as a tribute to him. Eddie must have been a Warrant Officer at 94 Locating Regiment RA, Workshop REME, when I arrived there in 1961 and he was always very helpful to newly-arrived ex-Apprentices. I didn't know it at the time, but Eddie had already qualified as an Artificer Weapons, prior to also becoming Artificer Radar - what a combination! Ed.)

What's In A Name?

A psychiatrist was conducting a group therapy session with four young mothers and their small children. "You may not have realised it, but you all have certain obsessions", he observed. To the first mother he said, "You are obsessed with eating. Why, you've even named your daughter Candy". He then turned to the second mother and stated, "You have an obsession is with money. Again, this manifests itself in your child's name, Penny". He turned to the third mother and told her, "Your obsession is with alcohol. This too shows itself in your child's name, Brandy".

At this point, the fourth mother quietly got up, took her little boy by the hand and whispered, "Come on Dick, this doctor has no idea what he's talking about. Let's pick Willy up from school and go home".

Rodney Smith, 56B

Pete Gripton, 56B

I am most grateful to Denis Woodward of intake 58A, for making contact and pointing me in the direction of a newspaper article that appeared in the *Bangor Daily News* – this ‘Bangor’ being located in Maine, USA. I extracted the following text from the article:

‘The President of the Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle (Maine) has announced a \$1.2 million donation to the NMCC from California resident Mary Smith. Mrs. Smith made the donation in honour and memory of the life of her late husband, Rodney Smith. The College will use the funds to establish the Northern Maine Centre for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education. Rodney Smith, a native of Oldham, England, despite an impoverished youth and against incredible odds, achieved extraordinary success in the United States, as a businessman and pioneer

in the semiconductor industry.’

Rodney Smith did indeed go on to achieve great things in the USA, but always looked back with pleasure and nostalgia to the days of his youth, including his 3-year apprenticeship at Arborfield, when he was better known to us all as ‘Smudge’! When I was researching my book *‘The Arborfield Apprentice’*, Rodney quietly ‘sponsored’ me in order to cover much of my travel time and expenses. He also personally hosted, at his own expense, two memorable reunions for 56B personnel, one in 1999 (forty years after our leaving Arborfield) and another in 2006 to celebrate our Fiftieth Anniversary of first joining.



Sadly, as many members will know from previous issues of *OBAN*, Rodney was killed in a road-traffic accident during May 2007 and his Obituary later appeared in *OBAN 40*. It is gratifying to know that the fruits of Rodney’s labours are still being used to great philanthropic effect.

The accompanying photograph hardly hints at ‘Smudge’s’ future fame and fortune! (He is on the right!)

Please support

The REME Association Shop

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



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Not Since 1955

A retired old soldier found himself at an evening gala event hosted by the local Liberal Arts College. There was no shortage of extremely young idealistic ladies in attendance, one of who engaged the old soldier in conversation. *"Excuse me, Sir, but you seem to be a very serious man. Is something bothering you?"*

"Negative, ma'am. I'm just serious by nature."

The young lady looked at his awards and decorations and said, *"It looks like you must have seen a lot of action"*.

"Yes, ma'am, quite a lot of action."

The young lady, tiring of trying to start up a conversation, said, *"You know, you should lighten up a little. Relax and enjoy yourself"*. The old soldier just stared at her in his serious manner. Finally the young lady said, *"You know, I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but when was the last time you had sex?"*

"Not since 1955, ma'am", came the laconic reply.

"Well, there you are. No wonder you're so serious. You really need to chill out! I mean, no sex since 1955!" She gently took his hand and led him to a private room, where she proceeded to 'relax' him several times. Afterwards, still panting for breath, she leaned against his bare chest and said, *"Wow, you sure didn't forget much since 1955!"*

In his most serious voice and after glancing down at his wristwatch, the old soldier replied, *"I should hope not ma'am – it's only 2130 now"*.

Forget The Bran Flakes!

The old ex-Arborfield boy and his wife were 85 years old and had been married for nigh on sixty years. Though far from rich, they managed to get by because they had both watched their pennies. And though not young, they were both in pretty good health, largely due to the wife's insistence on healthy foods and exercise for the last decade. One day, their good health didn't help when they went on a rare holiday and their plane crashed, thus sending them off to Heaven. They reached the Pearly Gates and St Peter escorted them inside. He took them to a beautiful mansion, furnished in gold and fine silks, with a fully stocked kitchen and a waterfall in the master bathroom. A dusky maiden could be seen hanging their favourite clothes in the closet. They both gasped in astonishment when St Peter said, *"Welcome to Heaven. This will be your home now"*.

The sceptical old boy asked Peter how much all this was going to cost. *"Why, nothing"*, Peter replied, *"remember, this is your reward in Heaven"*. The old boy then looked out the window and right there he saw a championship golf course, finer and more beautiful than any built on Earth. *"How much are the greens fees?"* he grumbled. *"This is Heaven"*, St Peter replied, *"you can play for free, every day"*. So they checked out the clubhouse and saw its lavish buffet lunch, with every imaginable cuisine laid out before them, from seafood to steaks, to exotic deserts, with free flowing beverages. *"Don't even ask"*, said Peter to the skeptical old boy, *"this is Heaven, it's all free for you to enjoy"*.

The old boy looked around and glanced nervously at his wife. *"Where are the low fat and low cholesterol foods and the decaffeinated tea?"* he asked. *"That's the best part"*, St Peter broke in. *"You can eat and drink as much as you like, whatever you like - and you'll never get fat or sick. Remember - this is Heaven!"* The old boy still pushed. *"No gym to work out at?"* *"Not unless you want to"*, came the answer. *"No testing my sugar or blood pressure or ...?"* *"No. Never again. All you do here is enjoy yourself"*.

The old boy glared at his wife and said, *"You and your bleedin' Bran Flakes. We could have been here ten years ago!"*

The Golden Years?

A row of bottles on my shelf caused me to analyze myself;
One yellow pill I have to pop goes to my heart so it won't stop.
A little white one that I take goes to my hands so they won't shake;
The blue ones that I use a lot tell me I'm happy when I'm not.
The purple pill goes to my brain and tells me that I have no pain;
The capsules tell me not to wheeze or cough or choke or even sneeze.
The red ones, smallest of them all, go to my blood so I won't fall;
The orange ones, so big and bright, prevent my leg cramps in the night.
Such an array of brilliant pills, they help to cure all kinds of ills.
But what I'd really like to know is what tells each one where to go?

(Kindly sent in by Bernie Mills, ex-Chepstow, 56B)

Reunion Report 2011

by Bill Cleasby, 61C

To start off with, some statistics for the 2011 Reunion that was held at Arborfield over the weekend of 29th to 31st July 2011. 246 members attended what potentially could be the last reunion weekend to be held at Arborfield, many accompanied by their wives, partners and family members. I have resisted the impulse to put mistresses on the list, not of course that we had any! Major General Ian Dale, 74B, took the salute and the Rev'd Canon Bev John, 66B, officiated at the Drum Head service. 150 members took part on the parade, while 200 members sat down for the AOBA Dinner. The Pipe Band was led by Alex Burt, 64C; the parade commander was Brian Hutchins, 61B; and the RSM (11 Trg Bn) was WO1 (RSM) Steven Deakin.

The format for the weekend was very much as in the past, apart from one notable exception – the marching out of the School/College Gates. This very moving ceremony followed the Drum Head service and ended with 'three cheers' from all present. Like all things planned, everyone did their own thing and all those who were told to go left out of the gates went right and vice versa - but at the end of the day it all worked. The one disappointing aspect of the march-out was the discovery that someone had pinched the brass plate that had been fixed to the right hand pillar depicting the history of the Apprentice. If anyone has a digital photograph of the said brass plate, I would be grateful if it could be e- mailed to me at the Museum for inclusion in the AOBA Archives.

As was expected, the AGM was

very well supported, with about 150 members in attendance. The great debate on where next to hold the reunion was a lively affair, with excellent presentations being given by Fred Mills and David Schofield. Each option being put forward i.e. Corton Holiday Village, Great Yarmouth and the Barcelo Hinckley Island Hotel, Hinckley, was given a full airing, but in the end it was



The Formal Handover Between Honorary Secretaries

agreed that Hinckley Island Hotel would be the venue for next year's gathering. I understand that we are looking at the weekend of the 1st to the 3rd June 2012.

Other matters discussed during the AGM were the new Management Committee appointments i.e. Major Russ Kenyon, 77C, replacing Lt Col Ian Cooper as Vice Chairman, David Schofield, 65A, replacing Bill Cleasby, 61C, as Honorary Secretary, Herbie Coles, 66B, replacing David Schofield as Webmaster and Alec Powell, 64C, replacing Keith Evans (45A) as Assistant Honorary Secretary. I am sure that I can speak for everyone in thanking Ian Cooper and Keith Evans for their valuable contributions as Committee members.

The AOBA Dinner was a splendid affair, with the 61ers in pride of place on the top table. (My thanks go to Alan Woolley for chasing up the 61Cs.) It was very pleasing to see two Apprentice RSMs sitting down to dinner, our own Brian Hutchins, 61B, and Bernie Eames, 61C – I am not sure what happened to 61A! I had a few complaints about the sticky toffee pudding and the loss of dentures but in general everyone enjoyed the evening and the occasional swinging of the lamp. Members will be pleased to hear that I later presented Zena and Carol with bouquets of flowers, in grateful thanks for all that they have done for the AOBA over many years of reunions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank on your behalf General Ian Dale for his attendance at the Reunion, RSM Steven Deakin for putting the Mess at our disposal, and for all the background administration in setting up the weekend. I would also like to thank WO2 (CSM) Kerry Porter for trying to keep us in step and his team of volunteers - Sgt Bysh, Sgt Powell, Sgt Davies and Sgt Craft. Their efforts were very much appreciated. I would like to end by thanking everyone in the Association for their support and friendship during my time as your Honorary Secretary and for the splendid gift of decanter and glasses presented at the end of the dinner. There is no truth to the rumour that I was bit wobbly on my feet or had just imbibed a glass of 126% proof whisky. Gentlemen, it has been a privilege and honour to have been your Honorary Secretary and I look forward to renewing friendships at the next Reunion.









Past Apprentice To Present Portreeve

by John Northam, 47A

Apart from the Arborfield Garrison Remembrance Day parade, when a committee member lays a wreath on behalf of the Association, and during the annual reunion weekend when the Standard is paraded in front of assembled apprentices and spectators, the Association has never, to my knowledge, been represented at a purely public event, especially one occurring outside Arborfield. That is until Sunday 29th November 1992, when representatives of Princess Marina College and the AOBA were invited to play a prominent part in the inauguration ceremony of Bill Ward, 47A, as the 1172nd 'Portreeve of Ashburton, Devon'. The 1172nd WHAT? If, like me, you've never heard of a Portreeve, let alone know that there had been 1171 before Bill Ward – then read on!

(*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*): "Portreeve (Hist.) – Chief Officer of Town or Borough" – the name being derived from the Saxon words 'port', which means a market town, and 'gerefa' – an official. Tradition has it that the first Portreeve of the Borough of Ashburton was appointed in 820 AD and, although the responsibilities of that office in Saxon times would have primarily been as a witness and recorder of sales of property and cattle that could only be sold in a 'port', these days the courts over which he presides, under the Administration of Justices Act 1977, although having no legal or administrative function within local government, do have a means of influencing local authorities for the good of the town, through the 'presentments' they make annually on the day of inauguration.

The involvement of the College and OBA began in March 1991 when Bill, then Bailiff of Ashburton, accepted the nomination to become the town's 1172nd Portreeve. The whole ceremony is held over two days in November, with the fourth Tuesday being reserved for the inauguration in the afternoon, followed by a formal dinner in the evening. A Portreeve's service and parade, involving all the local groups and associations, from the Royal British Legion to the Brownies, takes place on the following Sunday.

It is customary at the Portreeve's dinner for a prominent person familiar with his background to propose 'the toast' to the new Portreeve. Bill Ward, mindful of his apprenticeship at Arborfield and "of the disciplines taught at that time and the esteem in which I hold the College", wrote to Colonel Peter Gibson asking if he would, as present Commandant and Chairman of the AOBA, honour him by being his proposer. Not only was Colonel Peter happy to oblige, he also gave permission for Pipe Major Graham Marr to play after dinner, to the delight of all present.

Guests at the dinner included the Lord Abbot of Buckfast and the Town Mayors of Buchfastleigh and Ashburton. The Commandant also gave permission for the College Bands and the AOBA Standard to lead the parade on the Sunday. The duty of carrying the Standard was given to A/T/CSM Michael John Dingley (90C 'A' Coy), who did so faultlessly – a credit to the College and AOBA. Michael left the College at the end of the year and is now continuing his training as an Electronics Technician at SEE. We wish him well. The Chairman and Membership Secretary provided the escort for the Standard, thus representing the College and AOBA.

Following the parade and in spite of damp weather, the Bands entertained the local townspeople to a programme of music in the square, after which the Portreeve presented a framed letter of thanks to the Drum Major from the Portreeve and people of Ashburton (sealed with the ancient seal of Ashburton, believed to have been last used in 1892). A duplicate letter was placed in the town archives. Afterwards, the Band were entertained to lunch in the Town Hall, courtesy of the local branch of the Royal British Legion.

Colonel Peter and Mrs Di Gibson, June and I all enjoyed our visit to Ashburton and participation in the events of the week. Our collective thanks for their kindness and hospitality go to Bill and Joan Ward – may they have an enjoyable and successful year as Portreeve and Portravene.

(It was early in a snowbound

December 2010 when Bill Ward telephoned me to remark upon my query regarding OBANs 1 – 49 i.e. "Who has the whole collection?" He had obviously been looking at previous issues and came across John Northam's article - re-published above. He thought it likely that John would definitely have the whole set – and would ask John to contact me. This John duly did – but explained that having 'downsized' a couple of times in recent years, insufficient space for an OBAN collection had been found! Don't worry John – it was great to chat with you once again. It was these conversations, with both Bill and John, which geed me up to submitting the 'archive' article that appears above. As a final thought – the old Saxon word 'gerefa' mentioned in the article must surely have also been the derivative of 'sherriff' (?) – it certainly sounds so. Below is what I later read on the Ashburton website in December 2010. Ed.)

From the Ashburton web-site: An important part of Ashburton's history is the Office of 'Portreeve', not least because this ancient Saxon office is still kept alive today. Dating back to 820 AD, the office is the only one now held by Act of Parliament, although it exists in eight other towns in England. The chief duty of a Saxon Portreeve was to represent the King in legal transactions and he was often the only person who could read and write, especially when all legal documents were in Latin.

Today's Portreeve is upholding an ancient tradition and is still appointed with his Bailiff, Ale Tasters, Bread Weighers and other ancient offices each year in St Lawrence Chapel, on the fourth Tuesday in November at 4.00pm. The Court Leet elects the Portreeve, who is then sworn in at this ceremony and makes presentments on matters of local interest. This court is composed of freeholders of the Town and also elects the other offices. The Court Baron is made up of tenants of the town and elects the Viewers of the Market, Viewers of Water Courses, Tree Inspector, Searcher and Sealer of Leather, Scavengers and Pig Drovers.

Return To The Far East

by John Hernon, 60B

My return to the Far East, as a civilian, gave me an opportunity to view first-hand the Indonesian side of the former confrontation situation that had existed between Malaysia and Indonesia in the mid-sixties. This unique chance came about because of my marine experience in West Africa, working on *Volvo Penta* and *Perkins* marine diesels. At the time that this chance arose, I was filling in on a crew in Oman, which had become very quiet since my first visit there in 1970, when there was an insurrection against Sultan Qaboos. On this second occasion, life was very laid back, with no rebel threat since the Sultan's successful 'hearts and minds' campaign had taken dissident tribesmen off the Jebel and resettled them within the country - the 'Jebel' being a range of hills between Oman and Saudi Arabia, from where the rebels had been supplied and funded. The campaign had been fought with British assistance and the help of contract troops hired by the Sultan, many of them Buluchistani, with either Rhodesian or New Zealand contract officers.

At that time, the Trucial Oman scouts had been disbanded or incorporated into the Omani Army, a few had become ARO's (Arab Respective Officers), who played a liaison role between the expatriate drilling companies and the various tribal groupings which abound in Oman. One such character was an ex-Royal Signals sergeant named Rex King, based at Ibri, who used to come on the radio schedule with the call sign "*King of Ibri here*". There were several other flamboyant ex-officers who led a colourful existence, but also had an intimate working knowledge of the tribal areas. Sultan Qaboos had deposed his father because, as a Sandhurst-trained officer, he wanted to drag his country out of the feudal state his father insisted on maintaining. The laws were so stringent that the gates of Muscat, the capital city, were closed every night after sunset and anybody moving around had to carry a lantern.

However, back to marine engines, which was the reason for my trip to Irian Jaya, in an attempt to salvage a sunken supply vessel's running gear. The company was operating out of Singapore and had purchased a second-hand ocean-going trawler as the crew supply ship. The logistics of this exercise takes some

contemplation, when you consider that Irian Jaya is only 400 miles from Darwin. Regardless of this, the operation commenced and the supply ship departed from Singapore, only to lose the starboard engine reduction-box a few days out and the Dutch Captain continued at half speed, with one engine, in the monsoon season. It was quite a feat of seamanship, as the South China Sea can become extremely rough with violent tropical storms.

Arrival was at the base camp on the Fly River, which forms part of the border between Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya: a place where, reputedly, Rockefeller's son was taken by a crocodile in the early sixties while working on an anthropological survey. The Dutch trawler captain and the young crew party manager, fresh out of university, went head-to-head, because the supply ship arrived three months late. That, notwithstanding the fact that it had arrived at all, was little short of a miracle, but our 'Young Turk' could not see the skill and seamanship involved and, in a bout of alcohol-fuelled revenge, the Captain opened the sea-cocks and sank the vessel!

Culture shock

My return to Singapore, where I had spent time in the Army on training courses, after some five years, was a total culture shock: the city I knew had been virtually run by the military and had consisted of a sprawling hotch-potch of two-storey shop houses, interspersed with a couple of good hotels. It boasted several palatial government buildings, then mile after mile of barracks or naval establishments. Following independence from Britain, and subsequently from Malaysia, the Premier, Lee Kuan Yew, had transformed the city, draining the malarial swamps in massive land reclamation projects that provided space for low-cost high-rise housing. Industrialisation had provided the wherewithal to increase the standard of living and education to one of the highest in Asia. They had constructed a network of motorways and flyovers that eliminated the traffic chaos that had existed previously under colonial rule. Tourism was the new watchword, along with a sanitization policy that eliminated one of my old haunts, Bugis Street, and most of the brothels that had proliferated in the previous decade. The vigilance of

the police probably went too far, as a couple of our surveyors were apprehended for having long hair and, when they refused to be shorn, were made to report to a local police station every twenty-four hours. My fleeting visit was merely a stopover and it was then on to Jakarta, which was totally and utterly reminiscent of everything Singapore had previously been. It still had Sukarno's stamp of megalomania on it, in the form of the architecture and monuments scattered around a city that was, at that time, probably forty-percent slum: in the middle of which were huge statues of workers, proclaiming their freedom from colonial rule.

Traveling through the islands

Journeying down through the islands of the Indonesian archipelago was an eye-opener, very fraught and a sometimes downright dangerous experience. On a *Mandela Airways* flight from Jakarta to Ambon, the *DC6* never gained altitude, the lights and air-conditioning did not work in a sweltering 95 degrees Fahrenheit. The ancient machine was dangerously overloaded as we skimmed over the jungle, with the engines alternatively roaring like a bunch of unchained banshees or fading to a gentle murmur that seemed only a few revolutions above tick-over. Landing was more like a controlled crash and I almost got trampled to death in the rush to disembark. After a night to recover in the company staff house, we returned to the airstrip the next morning, replete with the traditional breakfast of cold rice and two equally cold fried eggs, washed down with coconut milk. Sitting next to the statutory Russian helicopter, which seem to adorn every airstrip in the country, looking very forlorn with its moldering rotors touching the ground, was our next transport. It was a four-seat *Cherokee Piper* that had obviously seen better days, along with its equally dilapidated pilot, who turned out to be American.

He had a local co-pilot who seemed to have no English or any other saving graces; after a half-hearted attempt at cranking the engine, the battery died. Completely nonplussed, the pilot called over the pick-up truck and hooked up a set of jumper cables. He then proceeded to disconnect each fuel line on the *Lycoming*

flat-six engine and prime the fuel injectors. Some time later we were airborne, but once again my attention was drawn to the paucity of servicing when the transfer fuel pump cratered and the co-pilot began hand-cranking fuel from one wing tank to the other at a furious rate! We arrived at a bush strip on the main island of Irian Jaya just before dusk or the fuel ran out, to another rough landing that had my head making dents in the roof or being slammed to the bottom of the seat.

Any thought that I might have been contemplating of finding a cosy billet was sadly dashed as we trekked through the jungle in pitch darkness to a nearby creek. There we were met by personnel from the base camp, who guided me to a waiting dinghy. Once seated, the two forty horsepower *Johnson* outboards, which had been idling over in a cloud of two-stroke exhaust fumes, roared to life. I was thrown back in the seat as the aluminum *Frazier* dinghy took off like a gut-shot rat into the night and was planing a few yards from the shore. We traveled down the creek at breakneck speed, following the glimmer of light from another dinghy in front, the only other illumination on that moonless night being the contrast between the thick vegetation on either bank and the lighter shade offered by the starlight in a cloudless sky. From previous experience in West Africa, I was fearful of partially submerged logs or the debris that accumulates where the freshwater creeks meets the sea water and, sure enough, as we reached the transition zone, there was an almighty bang from the starboard engine. It bucked up against the transom, with the engine screaming at full throttle, as the propeller chewed fresh air. The driver slewed into a half turn that had the gunnels shipping water and throttled back the second engine. Debris hitting the prop had broken the shear-pin but, in a matter of minutes, we were on our way again - only this time the ride was much rougher,

as the dinghies traveled parallel to the coast, bouncing and crashing across the incoming tidal swell. After an interminable time, we arrived at our destination and I staggered ashore in the dead of night, unable to see where I was going, tripping over rickety bridging constructed from branches.

The following morning I met the party manager, who was the epitome of every cocky little second lieutenant I had ever encountered and who introduced himself as having obtained '*a first at Manchester*'. I informed him that I had two 'O'-levels and a budgerigar and from there on it was all downhill. A survey of the 50-foot trawler, or rather what could be seen of it at low tide, revealed both engines and reduction boxes to be seized solid. As it had been submerged for three months in a salt water creek, there was little that could be salvaged. Re-floating the hulk was a lost cause, due to the bilge planking and hull rubbing strip having become detached, which led me to believe the vessel may well have hit a fish-trap on the way and opening the sea cocks had been an exercise in bravado on the part of the Dutch captain, as the vessel would have sunk anyway. This devastating news was a major blow to the crew operational supply situation, of which the young party manager had no experience with and so he was rapidly replaced.

The concession area was one of the most daunting that any geophysical crew could be faced with, as the surface geology was basalt rock that had been volcanically erupted thousands of years ago, covered with a layer of primary jungle. The basalt ridges rose to two or three hundred feet high, at a maximum interval of five hundred foot separation, and the top of each ridge was razor sharp, so it was like traversing a giant set of piranha teeth that had never been flossed. To lay a recording cable and geophones in

a straight line over this natural land barrier required a five-hundred strong team of front cutters, armed with machetes, and five hundred strong back-crew, making ladders and bridges from bamboo and laying the cable. It sounds difficult dealing with that number of people, but they employed a system of headmen who ran their own hundred-strong crews on a sub contract basis, so the company representative only ever dealt with ten headmen at most.

Once geophone array had been deployed, a pattern of dynamite charges was set off and the speed of the returning shock-wave recorded electronically. After interpretation, the speed of the returning signal determines the nature of the area sub-surface geology and where basement is, it also reveals any formations or salt domes that potentially contain pockets of oil or gas. Having started, the line had to be completed due to security precautions, as leaving pre-loaded holes with detonators and one-kilo sticks of blasting dynamite lying around, is not permissible.

This meant the recording and survey crews remaining in the jungle on a semi-permanent basis, housed on recording platforms constructed by the cutters and porters. These platforms also served as drop-zones for the *Bell* bubble helicopter, which was flown by an American fresh out of Vietnam; but nobody had told him the war was over, as he insisted on making strategic approaches to the DZ to avoid incoming - a very dangerous practice with two sacks of rice hanging on the skids. The work done by this crew got a write-up in the *National Geographical* magazine for record production of five kilometers in one month, a world record at the time and probably not much different today in that inhospitable terrain. For comparison, a desert seismic crew average three hundred kilometers a month but then again, barring sand storms, Mother Nature is on your side.

Love

What shall a man remember in days when he is old;
And Life is a dying ember – and Fame a story told?

Power – that came to leave him? Wealth to the wild waves blown?
Fame – that came to deceive him? Ah, no! Sweet Love alone

Honour and Wealth and Power may all, like dreams, depart -
But Love is a fadeless flower, whose roots are in the heart

(This sentimental verse regarding memories was written by Victor James Daley (1858 – 1905). Victor was born in Co Armagh, went to school in England, but spent all his adult life in Australia. The words certainly reinforce what is important in life. Ed.)

“Tea And A Wad, Guv?”

Although we have all used it during our serving days, not many know the origins and depth of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI). As it will be 90 years old in 2011, perhaps some recognition of this unsung organisation is long overdue. Initially, NAAFI was created by the British government in 1921, to run recreational establishments needed by the British Armed Forces. It has since gone on to become a broad supplier of facilities to servicemen and their families. NAAFI is a non-profit making organisation that has to pay its own way. Although providing an essential service to all three arms of the forces, it does not receive any funding from the MoD.

It runs clubs, bars, shops, supermarkets, restaurants, cafés and other facilities on most British military bases, along with canteens on board Royal Navy ships. NAAFI personnel serving aboard ship are part of the Naval Canteen Service (NCS), wear naval uniform and have action stations, but remain civilians. NAAFI personnel can also join the Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI), which provides NAAFI facilities in war zones. EFI personnel are members of the Territorial Army serving on special



NAAFI/EFI providing sustenance during the Korean conflict

engagements; they bear ranks and wear uniform. NCS personnel can similarly volunteer to join the Royal Navy when it goes on active service. Although their prime role is to man the canteen facilities, there are instances of NCS members being involved in operations.

In the 1982 Falklands War, Petty Officer John Steven Leake, NCS canteen manager on board *HMS Ardent*, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) for his courage while manning a machine gun.

Prior to 1914, each unit ran its own canteen, mostly contracted out to private firms. In Victorian times, they had a reputation for being expensive, corrupt, unpleasant, and selling inferior goods. In 1894, three Army officers founded the Canteen and Mess Co-operative Society, which improved the situation immensely. It bought canteen goods in bulk and sold them on to the regimental canteens. During World War 1, the Expeditionary Force Canteens were created for service overseas, run by uniformed members of the Army Service Corps and absorbing the Canteen and Mess Co-operative Society. On 1st January 1917, the Army Canteen Committee was created, to take over canteens at home, later becoming the Navy and Army Canteen Board. In 1919, this also took over the Expeditionary Force Canteens. On 1st January 1921, the Navy and Army Canteen Board formed the nucleus of the NAAFI.

NAAFI's greatest contribution was during the Second World War. By April 1944, the NAAFI ran 7,000 canteens and had 96,000 personnel (expanded from fewer than 600 canteens and 4,000 personnel in 1939). At the time it also controlled ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association), which provided the forces with in-station entertainment.

Male EFI personnel were members of the Royal Army Service Corps until 1965 and then the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Since 1993, they have been members of the Royal Logistics Corps. Female personnel were members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service until 1949 and then the Women's Royal Army Corps until 1992, whereupon they joined the RAOC and later the RLC.

Doubtless we all have our own personal experiences of using the NAAFI facilities during our service. The first memory I have is of the Iserlohn families shop in 1947, two years after the war in Germany had ended. My father was stationed in Menden and it was customary to visit the Iserlohn families shop once a month to stock up on the items that could not be obtained locally. As the situation in post-war Germany was still dire for the Germans, it became necessary for them to take every opportunity available to them of obtaining food and other basic items in order to survive. A manifestation of this

was that the families shop was constantly besieged by throngs of hungry people, begging for any hand-outs they could get. In order to get to our transport, we had to be escorted by gun-bearing guards, otherwise any purchases would be snatched prior to disappearing at a great rate of knots. The most enduring memory was that of the kids begging for cigarettes for 'Papa' and chocolate for 'Mama'.



The Iserlohn 'Married Pads' families shop

Another somewhat hilarious incident occurred in the sixties, whilst on the ranges carrying out a very tactical exercise. Having taken great care not to be detected (night moves, camouflage, no generators, painted faces etc.), it was with great amusement that, bang on 11am, a NAAFI canteen truck rolled into view and parked up slap in the middle of our position prior to opening up for business!



A typical NAAFI canteen truck

At the time, it was our great misfortune to have an ASM who, it was rumoured, had never been blessed with a mother and a father and that, if he had, then he had probably murdered them. In a blind rage, he launched himself at the truck, pointing out, in no uncertain terms, that we were all in imminent danger of being annihilated by the enemy, thanks to their indiscretion. To us the message was quite simple. All the Russians had to do if they wanted to know the whereabouts of the British Army at any time, was to follow the NAAFI canteen trucks delivering tea and wads to the lads!

In more recent post-Cold War times, the quantum change in the structure of the three services has presented a major challenge to NAAFI and its 'modus operandum'. In the past, NAAFI was geared up to serve a peace-time group of services, accompanied by their families and spread over a wide number of different theatres. Currently, the bulk of our forces are deployed in the biggest military operation since the Korean War of the early fifties - and the families are back in the UK while it goes on. To its credit, NAAFI has risen to the challenge and continues to provide the services with those little extras that make life more bearable. Well done NAAFI, long may you continue.

'Craftyman'

Scouse Vasectomy

After having their eleventh child, a Liverpool couple decided that enough was enough, as 'the social' wouldn't buy them a bigger bed - and they weren't strong enough to nick one. The husband went to his doctor and told him that he and his wife didn't want to have any more children. The doctor advised of a procedure called 'vasectomy', which would fix the problem, but it was expensive. However, a less costly alternative was to go home, get a firework, light it, put it in an empty beer can, then hold the can up to his ear and count to 10.

The Scouser said to the doctor, *"I may not be the smartest guy in the world, but I don't see how putting a firework in a beer can next to my ear is going to help me"*. *"Trust me, it'll do the job"*, said his doctor.

So the man went home, lit a banger and put it in an empty beer can. He held it up to his ear and began to count: *"1, 2, 3, 4, 5"*, at which point he paused and placed the can between his legs, so he could continue counting on his other hand.

(This procedure also works in Leatherhead, parts of Bradford and anywhere in Wales!)

Home At Last

He's home at last, a mother's son, a fine young man, his duty done;
Yet not for him the fond embrace, a loving kiss, a smiling face -
Or cries of joy to laugh and cheer the safe return of one so dear;
It is his lot to show the world a soldier's fate, as flags unfurl
And Standards lower in salutation - symbols of a grateful nation

Sombre now, the drum beats low, as he is carried, gentle, so
As if not to disturb his rest, by comrades, three and three abreast.
Who now, as quiet orders sound, they one by one then move around
To place him in the carriage decked with flowers, in calm and hushed respect,
Preparing for the sad slow ride, through silent crowds who wait outside

So the Warrior now returns to native soil and rightly earns
The great respect to one so young, though sadness stills the waiting throng;
While flowers strew the path he takes, as the carriage slowly makes
A final turning to allow the veterans standing there to show
The soldier's pride, a silent, mute, proud and respectful last salute

Yet while onlookers stand and see the simple, moving ceremony
There is a house, a place somewhere, where sits a waiting vacant chair;
And one great yawning empty space in someone's heart, no last embrace
To bid a final, fond farewell to one will forever dwell
In love and cherished memory - a husband, son, eternally

So we who see should not forget that, in this soldiers'; final debt
And sacrifice for duty's sake, it is the loved ones who must take
The hurt, to bear as best they can and face a future lesser than
The one they dreamed in bygone years - now to regard with bitter tears,
And slowly, as time intervenes, the thoughts of how it might have been.

(Written by our own Tony Church, 55A, in due and fitting respect of the current repatriation ceremonies by the good people of Wootton Bassett. Ed.)

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.

Retirement - What Is It?

by Tony Domoney, 56B

Most folk have the presumption that retirement means putting ones feet up in a lazy-boy chair, watching TV with beer in hand and having the wife do everything to make her retired man happy. Hmmmmmm - a misnomer to be sure! Retirement for me is a change from Aviation engineering to horticulturist, domestic animal and 'fixer' of family issues. At the ripe age of 69, I have done my bit for Aviation - 50 plus years and I have had enough. It was a career that has seen me practicing in many countries and working with many ethnic and cultural groups. From Arborfield to Bridgetown, the Aviation 'ladder' has supported, nurtured and provided me with an incredibly diverse and satisfying, if not at times stressful, career whose memories will stay until the final 'clarion call'. Sometimes I wish I had the computer facility of the *Delete* key, so that I could get rid of 50 years of Aircraft Engineering and Legal regulations. I guess other professionals have the same problem! Now, of course, I wish I could remember all the Latin names/terms of the wonderful flowers I produce! I suppose senior moments take over? So much for old age eh?

So what of the future? Well, certainly NO more Aviation! Heather has that never-ending list of 'little' tasks for me to address - something I am a little slow in performing. We are currently renovating our home, adding a master bedroom and en-suite, as well as modernising the kitchen and bathroom from the 1985 style to 2010. Yes sir, I am also adding a cellar for the 600 plus bottles of very good wines which are presently occupying two wardrobes. Actually we have some 1999 vintage which are drinking well - maybe that's why I am a little slow in performing essential tasks! Our 4.8 acre plot supports a large orchard of avocados, cherries, apples, peaches, macadamia nuts, mulberries, nectarines and other fruits. We also grow grapes and raspberries, all types of veggies, terrific roses and exotic plants. Most beds are reticulated (*that's the Aussie automatic watering system. Ed.*), so this lessens the work-load. I haven't mentioned the 100 'chooks'

(chickens) and two sheep in the paddock - nor the blooming parrots that compete with us for the fruits and win most of the time!

For socializing, I have joined the 'old farts' club, which meets every Thursday for coffee and discussion on world affairs, which we solve but the 'Pollies' never listen! Only the over 60s can join. Then there is the *Bridgetown Club*, which sports a very large bar and an excellent *Guinness*. If one wants any help, there are locals drinking there who give good advice. It used to be a men's only club and is furnished rather like the old Colonial clubs. It is open every evening it is a very

must either travel to Bunbury, 100 kilometers away, or combine the pleasure with a trip to Perth. Peter Drake (ex-boy, 57A) and Heather's family live there, so we have accommodation as and when needed. For myself, I enjoy the cricket at the *WACA* (West Australia's test ground) and being an ex-umpire and country lad, I get a special reduction in costs. I will be at the third test against the Poms in mid-December.

Music has played an important part of my life. Having played trumpet at Arborfield, I continued on and off over the years. Now I play piano most days, concentrating on jazz and classical sonatas. There is no brass band in Bridgetown, so I vary rarely play trumpet. Heather enjoys my piano playing, so that is a bonus. Telisha, my four-year old grand-daughter, takes an interest in playing the piano, so there's another project for me to teach her. The Stock Market supports Heather's superannuation. My job is to read Company reports and Stock Market news, to recommend to Heather stocks to buy or sell. So far we are in front! In retirement, one must ensure that there is money in the bank. I have been fortunate in belonging to a Government-sponsored superannuation scheme that moves with the cost-of-living index. That, plus my UK pension, pays for all daily bills. So we are reasonably safe from inflation and money worries. We own all assets and get a very good discount being pensioners - here's to the next cruise!



nice social meeting place. Wednesday evenings, I get the green pass from Heather and, on Friday, we go together.

Our four grand-children live within 3 kilometres, on a 42-acre farm. Our daughter has a chicken egg business, at which we assist when needed. On the domestic front, I do my bit. In fact I enjoy cooking and seem reasonably good at it. BBQs of course attract our many friends and we entertain quite often. Trips to Perth (250 km North) are like a vacation for us, Bridgetown being a rural farming community of about 3,000, with no city facilities. To go to the cinema, we

Did I say retirement? Really, it just a change from working for a commercial boss for wages to working for one's domestic boss for free! Plus enjoying the pleasure of doing the tasks when I want - and at my own pace.

(Having enjoyed Tony's articles over the years, in OBANs 17, 27 and 37, I asked him how he was finally settling down to retirement back in WA. Thanks for getting back to me Tony! I have also added the accompanying photograph, showing Tony (on left) and old mate Klaus Pennington, when they were both members of the Band back in 'the good old days'. Ed.)

Passing-out Ceremony, 31st July 1963

Kindly provided by Hugh Collins, Intake 60C

Passing-out Ceremony 31st July 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 S Williamson
Pipe Band: Pipe Major D R Carver, Royal Highland Fusiliers
Apprentice Drum Major J A Rowsell; App Pipe Major R J Thomas
Corps of Drums: Sgt B R Conway, REME; App Drum Major J A Shields; App Bugle Corporal P M Galloway
Commanding the Parade – A/T/RSM A J McConville

Major Awards

‘Award of Honour’
For the Apprentice who comes nearest to achieving the School’s aim of producing a well educated Soldier, Tradesman and Leader – A/T/CSM C G Ambler
‘Commandant’s Cup’ (for the Best Soldier and Leader) – A/T/RSM A J McConville
‘Chief Instructor’s Cup’ (for the Best Tradesman) – A/T/Sgt K L Thrower
‘Senior Education Officer’s Cup’ (for the Best Educational Attainment) – A/T/CSM C G Ambler

Individual Prizes – Senior Division Prizes for technical ability

Control Equipment Technician – A/T/CSM E C Stanford; **Tels Tech** – A/T R C Johnson
Radar Tech – A/T/CSM K D Brown; **Electrician** – A/T/Cpl W E Coxon
Vehicle Mechanic – A/T R H Strugnell

Prizes for education

Mathematics – A/T/Sgt R S Leighton; **English** – A/T R F Evans
Science – A/T/Sgt R S Leighton; **Map Reading** – A/T M J Amos
Best all-round progress – A/T/Cpl D J Collett

For Weapon Training

Best Rifle Shot – A/T D A Legall
Best LMG Shot – A/T D A Legall

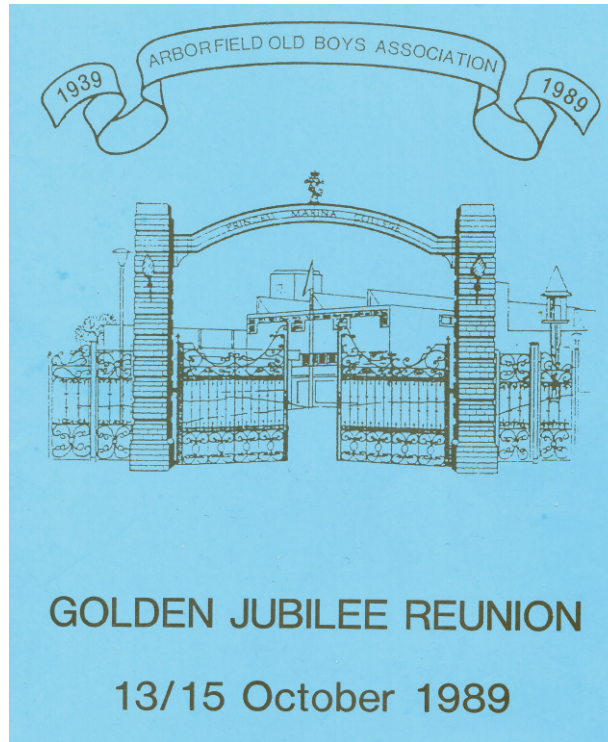
(It is noted that the Reviewing Officer for the above Parade/Ceremony was Maj Gen (later Sir) Leonard Atkinson OBE, B Sc, MIMechE, MIEE, who was DEME at that time. Many thanks for the contribution, Hugh – I hope that other programmes will be forthcoming in future OBANs. Ed.)

Golden Jubilee 1939 - 1989

Can it already be over twenty years since we celebrated a full fifty years of 'boys' school'? Keith Evans, 45A, recently sent me his treasured copy of the programme (see attached copy of the front cover) that was issued for the Old Boys' Reunion of that year, in which Colonel Phil Kay OBE, the then Commandant of Princess Marina College, wrote as follows:

"I would like to welcome you on behalf of all members of the College to this, the 26th Reunion Weekend of the Old Boys' Association. As you know, 1989 marks the 50th Anniversary of apprentice training at Arborfield and it is fitting that our final celebration of the year should include students, past and present, and our President, Major General Dennis Shaw CBE."

In August 1972, the Quarter Master General, Major General Sir Anthony Read GCB CBE DSO MC ADC (Gen) was the Reviewing



community, where standards are kept high and nobody tolerates sloppy performances at anything. You have learnt to use the mind constructively and the body properly. This is the beginning of service to the Queen, your country, your unit, and not only yourselves."

These standards and attitudes to duty have been maintained by apprentices past and present. Your commitment and loyalty to your alma mater have made the OBA the strong organization it is today. Your support at Reunions, and particularly at our Golden Jubilee Parade have helped to "foster Esprit de Corps and comradeship among all old boys of the Army Apprentices' School (Boys) and its successors", which is the main object of the OBA.

Officer at the Passing Out Parade. In his address he said:

"You have lived in a disciplined

(The words written above are as fitting today as they were those many years ago. Thanks for the reminder Keith. Ed.)

To the Unknown God

O wilt thou on the day when all is sifted,
All heights of heaven, all depths of Hell laid bare,
When from the vexed world's heart thy veil is lifted,
And men shall see the dayspring hidden there;

O wilt thou give to each whose course has drifted,
The thread, the clue by which his feet may fare,
To tread at last with sight supremely gifted,
The path he missed in darkness and despair!

This is the hidden secret of the strife -
To find your life and live it - This is Life!

(Written by George Essex Evans, 1863-1900, the son of a British Member of Parliament, but who, after his father died, spent most of his short life in Australia. I hope readers will, like me, find its words inspirational. Ed.)

Warrant Officer Class 2 John H. Phillips DSC RE

“Resolution on reflection is real courage”

Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Oxford, 1717-97

John Henry Phillips enlisted into the Army Apprentices School, Beachley, Chepstow, in August 1958, aged 15 years. On completion of his apprenticeship, he joined the Royal Engineers in June 1961.

As with any regular soldier, trade and military training is a continuous process and, among other disciplines, WO2 Phillips became qualified in the art of bomb disposal. In April 1982, 49 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron, Royal Engineers, in which WO2 Phillips was serving, deployed on ‘Operation Corporate’, as part of a British Expeditionary Force sent to the South Atlantic to retake the Falklands Islands from the Argentines.

On 22nd May 1982, WO2 Phillips and another NCO were tasked to deal with an unexploded bomb in the boiler-room of *HMS Argonaut*. A second

unexploded bomb lay in a flooded missile magazine nearby. Working in extraordinarily cramped conditions and in very unfamiliar surroundings, WO2 Phillips and his colleague, using a remote method, successfully defused the bomb, which was later removed from the ship. This action enabled the damage to the boiler-room to be repaired, so that *HMS Argonaut* regained propulsion and was able to manoeuvre defensively in further air attacks.

On 23rd May 1982, WO2 Phillips and the same NCO were tasked to neutralise two unexploded bombs on *HMS Antelope*. The first bomb could not be approached until extensive clearance of debris had taken place. They therefore addressed the task of defusing the second bomb, located near the centre of the ship. The bomb itself had been damaged and was assessed as being in a highly unstable, dangerous condition.

They tried three times to render the bomb safe using a remote method, having to approach the bomb after each attempt to adjust equipment, but on each occasion

the fuse could not be withdrawn. After a fourth attempt was made, using a small charge, the bomb unexpectedly exploded. Despite a blast route of open doors and hatches up through the ship, the fully clipped door at the forward end of the passageway, where the bomb disposal team was standing, was blown completely off and bent almost double. WO2 Phillips was seriously injured.

The citation for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to Warrant Officer Class 2 John Henry Phillips stated that he displayed courage of the highest order and persevered with attempts to defuse the bomb in *HMS Antelope*, fully aware that its condition was exceptionally dangerous. Subsequent to the Falklands campaign, WO2 Phillips continued to serve and was appointed to a commission in 1985. He retired from the Army in 1989, in the rank of Captain (QM), to Marton, Warwickshire, after 31 years of service.

(Compiled by Gordon Bonner, 49B, to provide part of the guidebook at the National Memorial Arboretum)

Major George Fletcher GM MBE RE

Seven Seconds to Run

George Raymond Fletcher enlisted into the Army Technical School, Beachley, Chepstow, on 29th June 1938, aged just 14 years. On completing his apprenticeship, he joined the Royal Engineers and, in 1944, took part in the Normandy landings and the advance to the Rhine. Appointed to a commission in 1947, he specialised in bomb disposal. In 1952 he represented the Royal Engineers on a scientific exhibition to North Greenland and was awarded a Polar Medal. He then moved to Benghazi, Libya, where, as Garrison Engineer, he was involved in rebuilding roads and bridges. He was appointed a MBE in 1960. Back in the UK, he returned to his bomb disposal duties.

On 1st October 1969, he led a bomb disposal team to a building site in Burghley Road, Camden. In an excavation about 10 ft deep, lay a ‘Type C’ parachute mine. Nine feet long, and packed with 1,500lb of explosive, it had been dropped on London during the 1940 Blitz. Fitted with multiple detonators and a clockwork bomb fuse, the mine was in a highly volatile condition, because the clockwork fuse, set to detonate in 17 seconds, had stopped with 10 seconds still on the clock.

It was calculated that to dig down and neutralise the fuse, before steaming out the explosive, would take up to 40 hours and expose the entire team to danger. Maj Fletcher decided to leave the mine embedded in the clay with the fuses intact and, accompanied by Sergeant Major Stephen Hambrook, removed the filling plate of the mine at 4 pm and began to steam out the explosive, knowing full well the effects of the steam and that any change in temperature might restart the clock. If the clock did restart, they would have just 3 seconds to ‘kill the fuse’ or ‘seven seconds to run’.

The steaming process took all night, during which time the two men had to approach the site to make regular checks. By 7 am, the bulk fill had been removed, so they were then able to detonate the dangerous fusing system and declare the mine safe. The citation for Major Fletcher’s award stated that he had been exposed to a great risk over a long period. Sergeant Major Hammond was also awarded the George Medal. Major George Fletcher retired from the Army to Whitstable, Kent, after 41 years of service to King, Queen and Country.

(Compiled by Gordon Bonner, 49B, to provide part of the guidebook at the National Memorial Arboretum)

Memorial News – From Maurice Hope, 59B

When it comes to coverage of the Dedication Day, it may be of interest to our readers to know exactly who was in attendance. This is by no means 100%, as many visitors that know the site passed straight through the visitor centre without 'Signing In' at our visitor desk - but at least the membership will have a good idea of the numbers etc. A good level of the amount of people in attendance can be judged by the fact that we had 500 souvenir programmes printed and every one had gone even before the service started, so obviously we had far more interest shown than we had anticipated.

A four-minute documentary slot was aired on BFBS, which is well worth people seeing who have not seen the Memorial; it can be accessed on www.bfbs.com/news/media/video/51349/13881.

Apprentice Attendance, Army Apprentice National Memorial, Dedication Day 7th Sept 2011

Representing Arborfield:-

Allcock, Keith, 57B;	Barnett, Barry, 52B;	Breeze, Derek, 53B;	Castell, Robert, 64A;	Coxon, Bill, 60C;
Foad, Bernard, 66C;	Forde, Declan (for father, Declan);		Glossop, Brian, 57A;	Hatt, Geoffrey, 64A;
Henry, Peter, 49B;	Hollingsworth, Charles, 58A;		Hudson, Elaine (for Paul Hudson), 58A;	
Jackson, David, 59C;	Kitchen, Alwyn Ernest, 59A;		Malbeath, John, 49B;	Manser, Dickie, 59C;
Mayfield, Jack, 52B;	Owen, John, 64A;	Rose, Neil Matthew, 54A;	Thorpe, Eric, 51A;	Tilson, Ian, 62A

Representing Carlisle:-

Amor, Ann (for Roy F Amor), 63C;	Carver, Kenneth, 67C;	Clarke, Gordon, 63A;	Cross, Roger, 64C;
Day, Chris, 64A;	Gammish, Robert B, 62C;	Lunnon, Derek, 67B;	Ord, Jim, 64C;
Spence, David, 67C;	Watson, Trevor, 63A;	Winter, Peter, 61B;	Wormald, Ron, 61A

Representing Chepstow:-

Aire, Terry, 57A;	Bell, Jeff, 51A;	Brice, Chris, 54A;	Castellon, Rev Derek, 58B;
Cranshaw, Alan, 55A;	Crotty, Jim, 55B;	Dolphin, Peter, 58B;	Gibbens, Bob, 47A/C;
Hardie, Stuart (for Andrew Hardie), 43B;		Hasnip, Joe, Permt Staff;	Hicketts, Jim, 75C;
Moffatt, James, 62B;	Pitt, Anthony, 72C;	Rice, Yvonne Robinson (for Alan Rice), 42A;	Irwin, Brian, 58B;
Scott, Gerry, 80C;	Smith, Frank, 51A;	Stanley, Gordon, 42A;	Rider., Reg, 54B;
		Start, David, 54B;	Wodehouse, Herbie, 56B

Representing Harrogate:-

Aston, Ronald, 59B;	Brinklow, Paul, 60A;	Carslake, Fred, 57A;	Cawthorne, Terry, 54A;	Chell, Simon, 88C;
Cooper, Frederick A, 49B;	Crooke, Michael, 58A;	Cross, Rob, 58B;	Eastwood, Patrick J, 54B;	Hacker, Ron, 53A;
Hooker, Ian, 59A;	Hough, W, 49B;	Hume, Derek, 61C;	Lawson, Ian, 59B;	Lowbridge, Ted, 58A;
Martin, Robert C, 54B;	McGilvray, Gibby, 50B;	Napier, Bill, 59B;	Parsons, Peter, 57A;	
Pratt, Diane (for William L Platt), 49B;		Prior, Martin, 59C;	Stokes, Stephen P, 57A;	
Tramasuer, Roderick L, 54A;		Treharne, Dewi, 50A;		
Webster, Eric, 51B;	West, Peter, 54A;	Woodfield, Ron, 51B		

Representing Taunton:-

Hawton, Terence Brian, 47B (also Harrogate);	Jeffries, Anthony C, 47B
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Representing Deepcut:-

Airlie, John

Official Guest List and Affiliations

Trustees of the Army Apprentice National Memorial

Major General Gerald B Berragan CB, Patron, Arborfield, 48B and Mrs AH Berragan
 Major David 'Tiny' C Chapman, Chairman, Chepstow, 60A and Mrs C Chapman
 Mr Keith 'Percy' Thrower, Vice-Chairman, Arborfield, 60C and Mrs R Thrower
 Major Gordon G. Bonner, Honorary Secretary, Arborfield, 49B and Mrs M Bonner.
 Major Michael J 'Paddy' Davis MBE, Treasurer; Arborfield, 60B and Mrs EA Davis
 Mr Max Warwick, Webmaster, Arborfield, 49B and Mrs T Warwick
 Mr Maurice 'Mo' Hope, Trustee, Arborfield, 59B
 Mr Johnny McGahan, Trustee, Harrogate, 59A and Mrs M McGahan
 Mr Colin Weir, Trustee, Chepstow, 55A and Mrs J Weir
 Mr David 'Ted' Cooper, Trustee, Carlisle, 61C and Mrs W Johnson.

Civic Dignitaries

Cll'r Les Ellington, Borough Major of Harrogate and Mrs C Ellington, Lady Mayoress of Harrogate.
 Cll'r Henry Hodges, Mayor of Chepstow
 Mr John Kaiser, Chairman, Arborfield & Newland Parish Council and Mrs G Kaiser

Representatives of the NMA

Cdr Charles Bagot-Jewitt, Chief Executive Officer, NMA
Mr Paul Kennedy, NMA Curator

The Clergy

The Rev Canon Bev John, Padre to Arborfield Old Boys' Association and Mrs S John.
The Rev Garry Kelly, Carlisle, 67C and Mr B Gray
The Rev Geoffrey R Blease, Carlisle, 61B and Mrs J Blease

Stonemason

Mr Keith Rackham, Perfitt's Stonemason (Diss); Mr Andrew Rackham, Stonemason.

Service Guests

Brigadier Martin J Boswell ADC, DEME (Army), REME (Apologies received for absence)
Brigadier JR Drew CBE, Association Chairman, REME
Colonel Ian Gibson, Regimental Colonel, REME and Mrs S Gibson
WO1 (C) ASM Stuart J Jones, Corps Artificer Sergeant Major, REME
Colonel Peter J McCall, Regimental Colonel RLC (RASC)
Colonel Terry W Canham, Gen Sec Royal Signals Association
Lt Colonel John R McLennon, Controller Royal Engineers and Mrs A McLennon
Mr Patrick Warn, Royal Artillery Association and Mrs P Warn

Widows Representative

Mrs Margaret Murrant (Major Ivor Murrant, Chepstow) and Mrs T Ashmore, daughter

Standard Bearers

Mr Trevor Guest, Arborfield Old Boys' Association, 60A and Mrs I Guest
Mr Stuart W Walker, Beachley Old Boys' Association, 55A
Mr Barry Morgan, Beachley Old Boys' Association

Piper

Mr Eric Luckman, Carlisle, 61B and Mrs M Luckman

The Sponsoring Associations

Arborfield

Colonel Brian Hutchins, AOBA Chairman, 61B and Mrs J Hutchins
Lt Colonel William 'Bill' Cleasby, AOBA Honorary Secretary, 61C
Mr Keith Evans, AOBA Membership Secretary, 45A
Mr Russell Dodds, Member, 56B and Mrs M Dodds
Mr Anthony 'Tee-Cee' Church, Member (Wordsmith), 55B and Mrs J Church
Mr Roger Traves, Member, 57A
Mr Guy Always, Member, 55A and Mrs S Alway
Mr George Marshall, Member, 46B and Mrs J Marshall.

Carlisle

Mr Colin Taylor, BEM, Honorary Secretary, 61B and Mrs J Taylor
Major Malcolm Davison, Member, 61B and Mrs S Davison
Mr Graham Moore, Member
Mr Alan Stothart, Member, 65B and Mrs S Stothart
Mr Michael Evans, Member, 58B and Mr D Hunter
Mr Robert 'Bob'.Stone, Member, 64C and Mrs B Stone.

Chepstow

Colonel Alan WR Holman OBE, ex-President Beachley Old Boys' Association and Mrs Holman
Lt Colonel Syd 'Taff' Thomas, President BOBA, 47A and Mrs G West
Major Brian Henderson, Chairman BOBA, 65A and Mrs MM Henderson
Major Derek Walker, Honorary Secretary BOBA
Mr John Phillips DSC (Special Guest) and Mrs C Phillips
Major Malcolm Hay, Member, 53A and Mrs IL Hay
Mr Maurice Murtagh, Member, 43B and Mrs M Hodson
Mr William 'Bill' Blackman, Member, 57A and Mrs L Blackman
Mr William 'Bill' J Kimber, Member and Mrs E Kimber

Mr Barry J Hunter, 'Videos-4-All', Member and Mrs ME Hunter
Mr J Barry Middlemass, Artist, Member, 60A and Mrs V Middlemass
Mr Gary White, Member

Harrogate

Major General John Stokoe CB,CBE; President Harrogate Old Boys' Association
Mr Maurice Snook, Honorary Secretary, 59C and Mrs S Snook
Mr Michael Brazier, Member, 59A and Mrs P Brazier
Mr Douglas Dickason, Member, 54A and Mrs S Dickason
Mr Colin Robinson, Member and Mrs L Robinson
Mr Robert Victor Huxtable, Member, 59C and Mrs A Huxtable

(I am much obliged to Maurice for sending me the above information. I have 'edited down' from his original copies, so any mistakes are down to me – but I think all the relevant information is included! Ed.)

One Of Those 'Dukie Boys'

by Brian Conway, 42A

As one of those 'Dukies', transferred from the Duke of York's Royal Military School at Dover up to the Queen Victoria School in Dunblane (Scotland) during 1940, I found the article 'Tragedy of a D-Day cover-up' (see *OBAN* 49) most interesting. Unbeknown to me, my father had also been stationed not so far away, on the Shetland Isles – although I learned later that he had been notified that I was now at Dunblane. Those Dukies whose homes were in areas not likely to be bombed were sent home.

After a few months at Dunblane, we were re-assembled in new accommodation at Cheltenham (believed to be the present site of the present Government Intelligence Centre), although our sojourn there was to be short-lived.. Once again we were dispersed – some back to their homes, but me back to Dunblane to be re-assembled once again and sent, this time, to the Saunton Sands Hotel at Braunton, North Devon – about ten miles from Barnstaple. My most unforgettable memory whilst in North Devon – which I wish I could forget! – occurred when our Band and Drums were being driven, in Army trucks, through the streets of Ilfracombe. We were going to 'head up' a parade of troops and civil service volunteers as they marched through the town. We cheeky Dukies were making rude faces and gestures at those marchers, when I suddenly saw my father, an RSM, at the head of one marching column! I was left wondering whether or not my father had seen me.

My father had made an appointment to see our Commandant (Col WAT Bowley CVO, CBE, MC), in order to discuss my future, as I was nearing the age of admission into the Regular Army

boys' service. I had set my heart upon becoming an Army Musician and, hopefully, of becoming a Bandmaster one day. But father had different plans for me! These entailed me "*learning a proper trade*" at Chepstow, where he had been an Electrical Instructor, and where my elder brother, Peter, and I had both been born. Actually, this was at the married quarters in Tidenham, Gloucestershire, where some of the Chepstow staff lived. Being an electrician by trade, my father had always told me that I was "*his first shock*" – surely that couldn't be true; after all I had two brothers older than me!

However, the Commandant and my father, working together, convinced me that I should forget music and concentrate on learning that proper trade. Thus, in January 1942, upon leaving the Dukies and passing through the hallowed gates of the Army Technical School at Arborfield, the very first member of staff I encountered was the Bandmaster! This was 'Shiner' Nell, 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, who asked of me, "*Name, boy?*" And, recognising that he was a Warrant Officer, I answered, "*Conway, SIR!*" He then ran his fingers down his list of names and exclaimed with glee, "*Ah! You were in the Band at the Dukies, weren't you?*" With equal glee, I answered, "*Yes, SIR!*" "*Well, you're now in the Band here as well – report to CQMS Hall of 'B' Company, who is in charge of forming the Corps of Drums*". CQMS Hall was a former Drum Major of the East Yorkshire Regiment. Apart from being an excellent flute player and drummer, the other thing I noticed about him was that his collar badges were exactly the same as those we wore on our scarlet tunics at the Duke of York's School, showing the 'White Rose of York'.

During those wartime years our three bands, Military, Corps of Drums and the Pipes and Drums (mainly ex-Queen Victoria School boys) were in constant demand at weekends, playing in various local towns. To our detriment, this did tend to interfere with our trade training, so this entailed a great deal of extra trade training hours. At around Easter time in 1944, we Arborfield Apprentices were dispersed from the School, its accommodation being required to house troops moving south in preparation for the D-Day landings upon the beaches of Normandy.

By this time, I had progressed to Senior Division and we were ready to prepare for our trade test. For this, we were transferred to the Motor Fitters School in Aldershot, billeted at Clayton Barracks, home of the RASC, for a period of four weeks. From there, we were moved to the 14th Transport Training Centre at Ashton-under-Lyme, near Manchester, to undergo motor-cycle and vehicle driver training, this for another four weeks. There followed another four weeks of infantry training at Colchester, handing in our service dress uniforms in exchange for battle-dress. Then, in my case, I was posted to No.1 Command Workshop REME at Catterick in Yorkshire. I later saw service in India, Egypt and at Mogadishu, in the former Italian Somaliland, before being returned to the UK to serve with the 7th Royal Tank Regiment. It was here that I met my wife-to-be, Pam. We were married at Torquay in 1950, only for me to be posted to Korea just two months after our wedding (Boo-hoo!) Thankfully, this was only for a year.

I was then posted to an RASC (TA) Tank Transporter Unit, as a Technical

Instructor, for one year, then back to my old school at Arborfield as an Instructor, Motor Vehicles, from 1954 to 1957, being provided with married quarters in Biggs Lane. During this spell, I was able to form a Corps of Drums as an 'extra curricular activity' for the boys. There then followed a 3-year posting to the LAD at 624 Ordnance Depot, Benghazi, Libya. After that, at my own request, I returned to my instructional post at Arborfield from 1960 right through until 1967, where, would you believe it, we were allocated the very same married quarter! I was also able to re-form my beloved Corps of Drums during those last

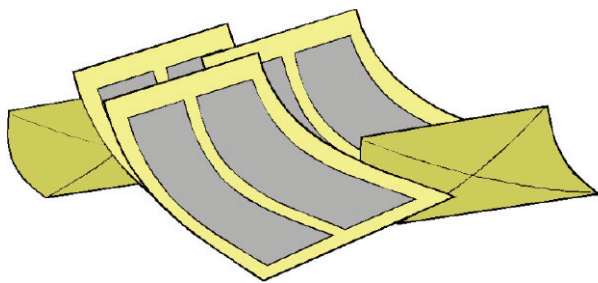
seven years of Army service.

Upon leaving the Army, I entered the Teacher Training College at Roehampton, commuting daily from our home in Wokingham, with the chance to occasionally pop in to the Sergeants' Mess at the old school. At one of my later 'overseas occupations', in Saudi Arabia, I was delighted to meet up with my last Commanding Officer at Arborfield, Colonel Paris, and his wife. He and I were both then employed by the same company. If you ever perchance attended the Army Dental Centre at Arborfield during your apprenticeship, you may well

have met my wife Pam, who was the 'chair-side assistant'. Whenever the Colonel had an appointment at the Dental Centre, he always made a point of calling in at my classroom, when I was lecturing, to inform me that he "had a dental appointment" and to just let me know that he "fancied my wife"! And, on that romantic note, I shall close this little tale.

(As reported elsewhere in this issue of OBAN, Brian recently left for that 'great bed-space in the sky'. Thus I publish his final words here in tribute to his wonderful career that was involved so much with Arborfield over many years. Ed.)

OBAN LETTERS



Chas Pepper, 43B, writes:

I found Ted Blowers' tale about his relationship with Capt Ian MacHorton (see *OBAN50*) quite touching – it's amazing the remarkable acquaintances one makes during one's service! I have sent another little 'snap-shot' of those turbulent far-off days that covered the most impressionable

years of my life, 1939 to 1945. I just remember so much of that period – everything afterwards slowly became more routine – though much of it was also very interesting. Keep up the good work!

(Thanks Chas – you are like one of those conjurers who keeps on pulling yet another white rabbit from the top hat! Your latest offering will have to join the queue for now – but please don't stop! Ed.)

Norman 'Nory' Wilson, 53B 'D' Coy, e-mailed:

I have been meaning to do this for quite a while now! What happened is that when I opened *OBAN Issue 37*, on page 8 was a photo - and I shouted to my wife and asked her who it was? She immediately said the same as me – "ASM Williams" (or "Daddy" as he was known). This photo of 'Daddy', which I have now sent in, was taken in 1959 of the LAD personnel of 6th Field Regiment Royal Artillery at Munsterlager. Perhaps having served with him for 3 or 4 years in '59 to '62, and seeing the posture of Fred Mills in uniform with the Poppies, the likeness was to us unreal and I thought it would be nice to point it out, hoping it didn't upset

anybody!

(There you are Fred – what do you think of the 'Mk2' version? Ed.)



Mike 'Tanky' Muir, 59A, e-mails:

I am yet another of the 59A crowd who were in room E1, with you as Room Corporal, just prior to your passing out in the summer of 1959. Today I received my copy of issue 50 of the OBAN and I was delighted to read that you have been contacted by Richard Ormiston, who is one of the many 59A Div I have been trying to find in my capacity of year co-ordinator for the AOA. To this end could I ask you to let me have Richard's contact address, or at least pass my address to Richard?

(I forwarded Mike's e-mail to Richard – hopefully they will now make contact! I later realised that Mike and I had briefly crossed paths at 94 Regt in Celle, probably around 1962 – it's been a long time Mike! Ed.)

Mal Tanner, 58B, e-mailed:

Regarding the article on grape picking by West Robertson in *OBAN50*, I note that he refers to 'Berncastle, a pretty, old, typically German town'. I was in 40 Regt RA in Munster and our LAD OC, Capt Pettifer, as Officers' Mess Caterer, used to send us on driver training trips to Bernkastel-Kues to obtain the wine for the Mess. Work-tickets were signed as Ex-Bluebell 1,2 or 3 etc. Very nice weekends they were too! We also camped by the

river when visiting the German Grand Prix at the Nurnberg Ring. The attached pictures are both of Bernkastel – one just a scenic view, the other showing a bunch of happy squaddies, of which I'm the tallest one!

Here is a copy of an article from *KEYNOTES* magazine (2 Div) from 1962 that may be of interest.

GUNNERS GET THE GRAPE

A mixed party, consisting of a main body of 22 soldiers from 40 Regt RA, left Portsmouth Barracks, Munster, on



the morning of 7th November en route for Bernkastel-Kues on the Mosel, to aid the local farmers with the annual grape harvest. What started with an 'interest visit' four years ago has now almost become a tradition with the Regiment, this being its fourth successive year. The party arrived in good heart that same evening and was met by a vast crowd of local farmers. The scene that followed resembled a slave auction, the soldiers being lined up and chosen by the farmers, who appeared to argue amongst themselves as to whom they were to have! Things however were soon moving and many soldiers were seen trundling down the road, perched on the back of tractors or sitting in trailers.

For most of the men, work started next morning about 7 am and continued (well-lubricated with wine!) with little break until 5 pm. In the evening, the grapes were taken to the farmhouse for pressing, a job which took them up to 7 or 8 pm. They were long hours indeed and the prolonged bad weather didn't help - but not a grumble was heard; on the contrary, it was mostly laughter as both soldiers and Germans strove to make themselves understood. The friendliness of the local population was without reserve and the Englishmen were soon part of the families with whom they were staying. The fortnight was

interspersed with amusing incidents. The visit by an ITN cameraman on 16th November caused great interest and a short film was made depicting the soldiers at work. At one stage, a soldier carrying a vast quantity of grapes in a container on his back misjudged the weight when tipping the grapes into a vat and both the soldier and grapes fell headfirst into the vat.

The only complaint was "Zu viel essen!" (too much to eat!) and many a large 'wurst' (sausage) found its way into a denim pocket, later to be buried in a vine-yard. A happier bunch of chaps one could not hope to meet and there were sad expressions on most faces when the party returned to Munster, laden with bottles of wine and schnapps, to await next year, when perhaps again we may re-visit the friendly little town of Bernkastel-Kues.

The following letter was received from the Mayor of Lieser: "Dear Sir, We, the village of Lieser, as well as all estate-owners around Lieser, would like to thank you most heartily for the great help your soldiers have given us, when bringing in the grape harvest. Your men have not only been excellent workers, but were extremely well behaved, courteous, modest in their demands and never sought for reward. We are convinced that this partnership will be of great value to both our countries".

Maurice 'Mo' Hope, 59B, e-mailed:

Let me please clear up a couple of points that came up regarding Ron Ward's query in *OBAN 50*. To the best of my knowledge, 1959 was definitely the first year that saw three intakes at Arborfield. My own intake, 59B, was the first Easter intake and also the first group to occupy the new 'Jeepland' accommodation block, at the top of the square. We stayed there for just one term and then moved over to the top wooden spider, on the 'A' & 'B' Company side of the square. In our room's bunk we had A/T/Sgt Bob 'Geordie' Ord and the room NCO was A/T/L/Cpl Monty Makin, the adjacent room had A/T/Cpl Blackman as the room NCO in their bunk. I well recall the night before we moved down to the 'Companies', we all sat on the end of our beds, while Bob Ord and Monty Makin proceeded to go around the room, forecasting what they thought each of us

would all achieve with our careers. I would love to be able to remember their predictions and find out how accurate they were!

With us being an interim intake, we were far smaller at the onset than most previous intakes and, when all our Armourers etc disappeared off to Carlisle, after that opened, it meant that at our Passing-out Parade, we had a ridiculously low figure passing through those gates at the march-off. This could perhaps explain why, as an intake, we have only got about six signed up to the AOBA and why, in the next twelve years, I only ever came across one other member of our intake (A/T Dixon, 'D' Coy) - and that was only for one day, at an accelerated promotion board at Detmold.

I hope to see as many of our number as possible on September the 7th at the

National Memorial Arboretum for the dedication of our very own memorial.

(Thanks for that Mo – I certainly have no argument with your memories as stated above! Ed.)

Mal Tanner, 58B, e-mailed again:

After reading about Eggy Eggleton's 1961 experiences in Kuwait, as told in *OBAN50*, he (and other readers) may be interested to see the accompanying photographs, which were taken at 10 Vehicle Company RAOC, El Adem, Libya, in 1968, just before Colonel Gaddafi took over and threw us all out!

In August 1961, the 'Cold War' was



just arrived at the REME Depot as fully fledged Craftsmen, to await posting to the Regular Army after completing their apprenticeship.

Almost without exception we were all going to BAOR. Our hopes of sunny,

exotic, tropical foreign climes were dashed, except for one individual, an Armourer named Tom Corrigan. His posting was to 3rd Carabineers, who were then on their way to Kuwait, if not already there, as part of the force rushed there to forestall an invasion by Iraq. For the next few days until we shipped out (via Harwich and the Hook), he made our lives a misery with his "active service"

Several years later in '68, I was serving in Libya. We provided equipment for units training in the desert of Cyrenaica, rather like Suffield today. Part of the stock we held was a squadron of mixed 'marks' of *Centurion* tanks and at least one, according to its documents, had taken part in the Kuwaiti operation with 3 DGs. Further to Eggy's tale, we also had a couple of ancient *Antars*. As El Adem was part of the Near- and Mid-East theatre, which also included Bahrain, Muscat, Sharjah, Cyprus and Malta (Aden had closed in '67), equipment tended to move around so these *Antars* could also have been Eggy's. They were so unreliable, with broken prop-shafts and coolant leaks etc, that we often used a *Diamond-T* as back-up. When a crew



blowing hot and the Berlin Wall had just been erected. BAOR had been gradually reducing in size since the end of the war, but now suddenly it needed reinforcing in order to stand up to the mighty Red Army. Luckily, the 58B group of Arborfield, Chepstow and Carlisle apprentices had



posting. Whether he made it or not, I never found out. I did read that so many of the infantry on the Kuwait-Iraq border went down with heat exhaustion, that they rigged up lorries with racks for stretchers and packed the casualties in with loads of ice to bring their temperature down.

went into the desert to bring a tank back, they took rations for a week to cover a seventy-mile trip to the Advance Base Unit. (P.S. The RAF was still using *Hastings* aircraft for Air Despatch and transport in Borneo in 1966.)

Tony Domoney, 56B, e-mails from Perth, WA:

Pete Drake (57A) kindly passed this photo to me to forward on to you. Pete Corbett (also 57A) and his wife Pat were over from San Francisco late last year, visiting Fred Ordynski (57B), whose story you published in the last *OBAN*. So we all met up and killed a few beers together over a most enjoyable lunch. Of course we all went down 'memory lane' a few times and had some good laughs. I was 'young' Corbett's room NCO and remembered him well. From the left are yours truly, Pete Drake, the other Pete and Fred.



Fred Brunger, 42C, e-mailed:

Problem solved?

I started my Army life as a boy apprentice at Arborfield in 1942, eventually retired as an ASM in 1967 and am now an in/pensioner at the Royal Hospital at Chelsea. I was posted to the Korean theatre after that particular war was over in 1954 and spent the year in the British Commonwealth Base Workshop in Kure, Japan. The workshop had two locations, one in Kure (where the main workshop and gun shop were) and the other in Hero (about ten miles away), where there was an assembly-line for 'B' vehicles and the tank repair shop, among other things. The gun shop was headed by a Canadian WO2. I was a 'just qualified' Gun Artificer S/Sergeant, while all the workforce personnel were Japanese. I spent part of my time at Hero. One *Centurion* tank was almost completed and on its way back to the park, but the electrical control people could not get the gyroscopic gear to work within the required limits. I was therefore asked to look at the elevation gears, to find out why it was a little stiff. I discovered that the left-hand trunnion had been sheared off, I don't think that I would have seen this but for the fact that the tank was outside the workshop and in a bright light. Thus I could see between the turret and the left side of the mantlet; the mantlet and gun was elevating and staying in place, with right-hand trunnion only and the mantlet being lightly supported on the turret. There was no external damage to indicate that the tank had been hit. I could not imagine how this could have happened and, for 57 years, this



remained a mystery to me. Then I saw this photo.

Having recently read Andrew Salmon's account of the 'Breakout down route 11', in his book *'To the last round'*, I later spoke to Carl Borley, a fellow in/pensioner at the Royal Hospital, who in fact was driving one of the *Centurions* with the 8th Hussars. Carl showed me the photo he had taken when they went back to find and properly bury their dead – and the penny dropped! The barrel was well dug into the bank and the timing is about right. That was the thing that could have sheared the trunnion. The vehicle was recovered.

The second photo could be the tank in question. It is certainly me - sorry about the moustache - and I cannot imagine how I got my overalls that dirty! Once I discovered the fault and reported it, that 'was the end of it' for me. It

could be that other people had worked all this out or if that was indeed the same tank. I would be interested to know and know whether the tank was ever repaired.



Mike Evans, 58B, e-mailed:

I have just received my first 'proper' newsletter from the Association and read with interest Malcolm Tanner's reminiscences of his transfer from Arborfield to Carlisle. The photograph of Duncan Chattin also evokes memories. We were both on the same Armourer Class One course at Bordon in that freezing winter of 1963. We were both still

very young - the youngest ever Class Ones on the Armourer Roll. I was few months younger than Duncan and, as far as I know, that at nineteen and five months old, I am still the youngest Class One. Duncan, Malcolm and myself were part of the 'seed corn' harvested from Arborfield to set up Carlisle. Whilst there were some Chepstow lads also imported, Carlisle owes most of its early Apprentices to

Arborfield.

Monday 11th January 1960 was cold, dry and overcast. We had all been up most of the night checking our kit was ready to go, saying good-byes to friends and wondering what the future held for us. I was leaving 'D' Coy, but Carlisle was only to have three Companies and I was destined for 'C' Coy. We paraded early for

breakfast as I recall and, upon the advice of older heads, I collected sufficient extra sausages, bacon and bread to make several sandwiches for the journey. The anticipated 'haversack rations' were rumoured to be quite insufficient for the journey, and no feeding was available on the train. Armed with my goodies and the issue ration bag, I stuffed it all away in my webbing, along with the two packs of cards and a couple of books that I had. I sneaked a quick run to the NAAFI and bought four bottles of *Coca Cola* from the vending machine and added them to my hoard, just in time to be herded onto a fleet of raggedy old coaches for the trip to Reading railway station. We were all allocated seats by intended Company lines and then we set off. A military low priority troop train, 'direct' to Carlisle, it was shunted into sidings, made to wait for other priority trains and hauled by a huffing and puffing old steam locomotive that I reckon

Stevenson would have recognised! By lunchtime we had barely cleared London. By this time, most of us had devoured the haversack rations and the only drink was water, in those big old tea urns, one of which was allocated to each end of each carriage. These carriages were the old eight-seat compartmented rolling stock and, whilst many of us explored the length of the train, we were by now pretty much settled in our compartments. Cards were played, those of us with reading material read, mainly I saw, were comics. I didn't share my *Cokes* but, along with another farsighted lad, we shared our extra purloined rations.

By the time we got to Shap Fell, it was dark, and we could see the glow from the engine as it struggled up the highest point in England. After that it was downhill all the way to Carlisle. Our arrival was far more up-market than our departure. The Mayor of Carlisle was there, a band and loads of onlookers. After hanging around for a

couple of speeches, we were again embussed and taken to Hadrian's Camp. Although of similar construction to Arborfield, timber construction spiders, it had undergone considerable refurbishment and was far better than the rooms we had left behind. Even our beds had been made down for us. By whom I have no idea, but it was welcome, easing into new accommodation. We were very soon summonsed to the cookhouse for a late meal, it being around 21:00. Thick meaty soup, tea, bread, butter and jam, as much as we wanted. I'll never forget that meal, for it was the first one in my Apprentice experience where I wasn't 'gypped' by Senior Division. That didn't last of course, but it was nice while it did! By 22:30 we were all a' bed and soon asleep. Hadrian's was to be my home for another two years, some of it harsh, most of it brilliant - and I graduated as A/T CSM of 'C' Coy. I was, and still am, quite proud of that.

Les Cable, 45B, writes:

I came across a copy of the *Corps Journal* of the RAEC from October 1955, which contained the accompanying photograph of the educational staff at boys' school at that time. Most of us ex-boys have difficulty in recalling the names of permanent staff personnel, so perhaps this will assist in jogging a few memories! Many thanks for your editorial work – and all the best for future editions.

(Many thanks for the photograph Les – I'm sure there will be a few remarks and/or recollections following its publication these fifty-odd years later! My attention was immediately drawn to the 'flyaway' beret worn by the guy at the extreme left-hand end of the front row – none other than the infamous 'Stan' Cocking. If memory serves me right, many of us referred to him as 'The Mekon'

– Dan Dare's extra-terrestrial enemy in 'The Eagle comic! There must be a few stories to be told about him, on top of

those that appear on page 205 of 'The Arborfield Apprentice' – any offers? Ed.)



Charley 'Gigs' Leah, 57B, writes:

It was sad for me to read in the last *OBAN* about the passing away of Bob Luck (57A), as Bob and I were both members of the School Pipe Band. I played Tenor Drum, while Bob was master of 'the beast' – the Bass Drum. Normally the Military Band played the

'slow-march', but when it came to the 'quick-march', that's when the Pipe Band came into action. The quick pace was supposedly 60 beats per minute, but I reckon Bob's watch ran on a different time-scale to everyone else's. His notion of '60 per min' was more like double that

– quickly bringing chaos to the march past! More Light Infantry I suppose? Anyway, RCM Sallis, much like Queen Victoria, 'was not amused' – and neither was Pipe Major 'Jock' Massey. At the next band practice, Bob was sacked and, because of his height, became 'A'



Company's right-hand marker on subsequent parades.

Much to my chagrin, the Pipe Major

'promoted' me to Bass Drum. Being the second smallest member of my 180-strong intake, this was quite a problem! There was a sort of harness that supported the drum but, being such a short-arse, I couldn't even see over the top. Thus, when the bands marched off the Square, I had to sort of 'sidle' my way along to see where I was going! The RCM, as eagle-eyed as ever, got straight onto my case, with the inevitable 7 days jankers as my reward. Doing my 'sentence', along with show parades, then brought me into a 'close encounter' with Provost Sergeant Fred Silver. Because of some slight misdemeanor, I was soon invited to scrub Fred's Guard-room floor with my one and only toothbrush!

At the same time, Larry Jarvis (56B), who was a 'bit of a lad', was languishing in one of Fred's hotel rooms. Now Fred was an avid gardener, but when it came to weeding his plots at the rear of the Guardroom, it was Larry who was delegated to the task. Inevitably, Larry

'weeded' everything in sight, including any vegetables and flowers – more time in solitary I think. As an aside, Larry and I later both attended Senior Regimental Course 17 and became good pals. On the 3-day 'escape and evasion' phase, I rescued a very large plastic bag – originally used for animal feed I think – in which we both were able to sleep. Being November in wet and wintry Wales, this proved invaluable.

Another 'blast from the past' was to read about Fred Ordynski, as we shared the same barrack room at boys' school. Well done Fred (see *OBAN* 50), that was some achievement – enjoy your well-earned retirement mate! Finally, when I finished my service, after some 24 years, the first thing I did was to join a civilian pipe band – as the bass drummer of course! The accompanying photograph shows myself – the short one! – with 'Andy' Andrews, back in the 'Good Old Days'.

Deaths Notified Since Last OBAN

George 'Nick' Farrant, ex-Hilsea '39, aged 86 years, died on February 14th 2011 at Poole Hospital, after a short illness

Leslie Norman Wiffen, 39A, died in New Zealand on 5th July 2010 – as announced in *Craftsman*, January 2011

Ian Rea, ex-Bramley '38, Arborfield '39, passed away peacefully 'down under' on July 14th 2011, reported by his son

Esmond 'Joe' Crowther, 1939 intake, died in July 1982 – belated entry from his son, Peter Crowther

Gerald Johnson, 39A, died 26th March 2011 – notified by RSM, Chelsea Hospital

William John Burch, 42B, is buried in the British Cemetery Erimi, Limassol, Cyprus – belated entry

Duncan Ross, 42C, died on 7th August 2011 at Lincoln, reported by his widow

Douglas William Boucher, 43A, died in hospital at Portsmouth on 14th April 2011, reported by Keith Mitchell, 43A

Jim Morgan, 43A, died 18th June 2011 at Middlesborough, following long illness – report from Bob Jones, same intake

William 'Bill' Jelle, 44B, died in December 2010

Cyril Cowdrey, 46B, died at Southampton on 8th March 2011, after a long illness - reported by telephone by his wife

PJ Maddams, 47A, died recently – reported by Mike Davis through cancelled direct debit instruction

SC 'Stan' Horne, 47B, died on 9th February 2011, as reported by Dudley Wood of the same intake

Terry King, Harrogate 49A/Arborfield 49B, died 22nd February 2011 - notified by John Kelly, 49B, Chepstow

Peter Brian Wood, 50A, died in July 1988 – belated report from Trevor Stubbington, 52A

Jack Bonser, 51B, died back in November 2004 – belated entry from Bill Butler, also 51B

Peter 'Pip' Piper, 51B, date of death unknown, reported by Bill Butler, also 51B

Allan J Delbridge, 54A, died on March 1st 2011 (apologies for incorrect intake number reported in last *OBAN*)

Roy Durston, 54B, died at his home in Stone, Staffs, on 19th May 2011 – reported by Brian Edminson, same intake

James 'Jim' (or 'Jock') Massie, 55A, died of a heart attack on 25th July 2011 – reported by his son

Dougie Taylor, 55B, died 20th June 2011 – reported by Paul Wiggins, 58A, later confirmed by Doug's son

Fraser Smith, 55B, died 13th April 2011 after a long battle with cancer – reported by John Reynolds, 55B

Jim Woolam, 57A, passed away in hospital on 2nd July 2011, following a short illness – reported by Roger Traves, 57A

Joe Boshier, 59C, died during February 2011

Ian 'Robbie' Mindham, 59C, died 22nd May 2011 – reported by Mo Hope, 59B

AG 'Lathe' Latham, 60B, died on 17th February 2011 after a long battle with cancer – reported to Mike Davis

Alan J Delbridge, 63B, died on March 1st 2011

Brian Lee, 65B, died May 6th 2011, following a long battle with asbestosis – reported by Frank McKenna, 66C

L/Cpl Johnathan Gouldsmith, 04A, died in a road traffic accident 3rd April 2011 – as reported in *Craftsman* magazine

Austin 'Ginge' Latham, 60B

It is with deep regret and a profound sense of loss that I report the passing away of Austin Latham, intake 60B 'B' Company, Arborfield; he died on the 17th of February 2011 after a long fight with that scourge of our time, cancer. Our deepest sympathy lies with his wife Lynne, daughter Barbara and all the family at this time.

Austin (aka 'Lathe' by some!) was a fine soldier, a staunch colleague and good friend throughout our Arborfield experience, which left its indelible print on all of us - but none more so than Austin, who even named his house '**Arborfield**'. He left the Army quite early and transferred to the Prison Service, in order to be able to care for his daughter Barbara. Austin's prison officer career was orientated towards the rehabilitation of young offenders through the medium of physical training and, with him, they could not have had a finer role model. He was the quintessential sportsman and excelled at gymnastics, as I recall from our Arborfield days, where he could compete with and outstrip the permanent staff PTIs with skill and ease.

Generous of heart and spirit, he gave far more than he got from life; he was always cheerful in the face of adversity, never once complaining of the hand that fate had dealt him. The word tenacious must have been coined to describe Austin's single-minded sense of purpose, portrayed so vividly quite recently in his mammoth cycle-ride from John O'Groats to Land's End, in between major surgical operations. It was a sponsored event for Cancer Research, on which he was accompanied by a long-term colleague and friend Ron Meatcher, also ex-60B. This he eclipsed by a further sponsored event - canoeing across Poole Harbour, once again while still under treatment - he quite literally refused to give up.

Austin, or 'Ginge' as we all knew him at Arborfield (because of his shock of red hair, which the camp barber made short work of!), fulfilled a long-term wish recently, by attending last year's fiftieth Arborfield Old Boys' Reunion for our intake. It was an event he had set his heart upon, even though the severe toll that cancer was taking on his health was beginning to manifest itself. Fortunately, the series of 60B private reunions and meetings, prior to the official 'fiftieth' ceremony, revived the *esprit de corps* that the Army, and Arborfield in particular, had instilled all those years ago - and served to focus Austin's single-minded intention to be there.

In all and every way, Austin Latham was a 'diamond geezer', whose like we rarely see and which makes his passing a far more poignant departure from this mortal coil than most. He will be sadly missed, may he rest in eternal peace.

John Hernon

Cyril 'Titch' Cowdrey, 46B



Titch had many stories to tell of his time at Arborfield, including breaking out of camp with his mate Doug Foster and arriving at the station to find that the last train had gone, leaving them to break back in again! Also, taking part in the 1947 Royal Tournament and being billeted next to the Scots Guards pipers up in the roof of Earls Court - he never did appreciate pipe music after that!

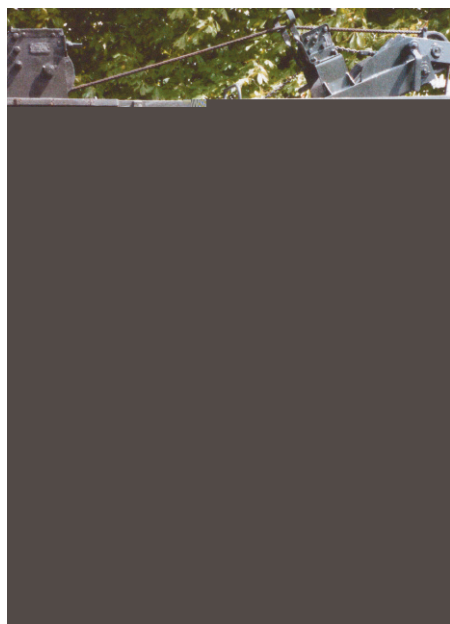
Titch was posted to REME and was made a Sergeant at the age of 19, as can be seen in the accompanying photograph. A promising career was cut short by a nasty accident, when he and his large motorbike did not fit into a 6-inch gap left on Maidenhead bridge by an American Army truck. A year in hospital resulted in his being invalided out. The one good thing to emerge was

that his solicitor was so incensed, that he took the case to Parliament and the Visiting Forces Act came into being. Told that he would 'never walk again without leg irons', his usual determination saw him do just that! He married 'the girl across the road', Audrey, and took over a small family coach-hire firm, with one respectable and four elderly vehicles, building it up from the 30-shilling local pub darts team outings to a wide range of British and Continental touring holidays. He reckoned that his Army training stood him in good stead for driving and maintenance, while Audrey's library assistant experience meant that she knew how to find out about destinations etc!

Their family grew with three children, two girls and a boy, with seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Titch became a magistrate and served for 22 years, having first been Chairman of Gosport and then South Hampshire. He was well-known locally for his many charity fundraising events, including the promotion of professional wrestling. He developed Parkinson's Disease and then Cancer, and passed away on 8th March this year. Tributes were paid at his cremation service, which was attended by close on 200 people, and he will be sadly missed by his wife and family and by his many friends.

(Kindly contributed by 'the girl across the road'.)

Douglas William Boucher, 43A



It is with great sadness that I report the death of 'Doug' Boucher at hospital in Cosham, Portsmouth in April 2011. He had suffered a long illness, following a stroke in August 2007. Doug was born in Portsmouth on June 7th 1928 and had his early schooling in nearby Horndean. He joined the Army Technical School (Boys) at Arborfield on April 29th 1943, shortly before his fifteenth birthday. He served his three-year apprenticeship to become an Armourer and was a smart and well-built boy Sergeant – although to look at his appearance on the front cover of 'The Arborfield Apprentice' would raise some doubt!

Although his number was but 3 digits above mine, he was in a different Company and, apart from our later shared evacuation to Bury, Lancs, during 1944, we were rarely together. Being of different trades, we never met during our later man's service years. We were 'ships that passed in the night' and I missed him by months at his last overseas posting at 40 Base Workshop, Singapore. Doug's personality was strong, reliable and forthright – and it was he who persuaded me to become a member of the Arborfield Old Boys' Association (AOBA). His memory of names and occasions was phenomenal, especially concerning his fellow Armourers. At one AOBA Reunion, many will recall his falling into a 'monsoon drain' *en route* to his billet from the Mess

Dinner – and the colourful description of barrack paths and lighting that followed!

From 2001, we met up frequently at his 'home patch' in Clanfield, as well as at the annual Reunions. We were both privileged to represent intake 43A at the final Passing-out Parade of the then Arborfield Technical Foundation College in 2004 (*see accompanying photograph*). Alan Rice was a close friend of Doug and together they shared an enthusiastic love of 'birding'. They both decided to join the Chelsea Pensioners, roping me in as 'referee', but sadly Doug became too ill to attend his interview. The many facets of Doug's life – his travels Army-wise and extensive birding jaunts around the globe – are only just surfacing. He appears to have been a man of many talents that, I believe, include being a Freeman of London. His daughter Carol has been his rock over the past few trying years, and all who knew Doug express our sympathy to her and her family.

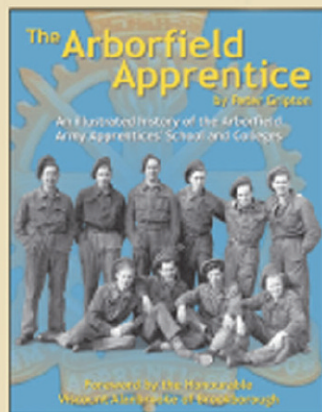
Time's melt

*Old photographs, I strain my eyes to see faces from the past, looking back at me.
How strange when looking at photographs, remembering dreams, some sadness – and the laughs.
Faces oh so young smile across the years, evoking for me the laughter and the tears;
Old Boys together, the memory days are made at Arborfield Reunions, with thoughts that never fade.*

*Photographs in time are frozen – no growing old for them; young lads pictured there are now much older men
Scenes of long ago, smart uniform and belt, bearing witness of time's relentless melt.
The photographs of comrades; friendships that still last and help to bridge the gulf between the present and the past.*

Kevin 'Mitch' Mitchell, 43A

THE ARBORFIELD APPRENTICE



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

This important historical record written by ex-boy Peter Gripton was published in September 2003. With an introductory foreword by the Honourable Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookborough the book chronicles junior soldier tradesman training over a period of 60 years. Starting with the Army Technical School in 1939, and culminating with the Army Technical Foundation College, the book is an important archive for all those who served an Army Apprenticeship or served at Arborfield. The book is published in hard-back form and contains over 500 pages with more than 200 photographs. Peter Gripton has done a great service to all Arborfield apprentices and staff members in writing the history and he certainly deserves the accolades of the many old boys who will welcome this rendering of their story. His light and readable style gives all the appearance that he enjoyed writing this history. But, bearing in mind the dictum 'that which is written without pain will be read without pleasure' - there is ample evidence that Peter took great pains to ensure that his readers will enjoy his book. Many of his readers will have actually made the history that he has so faithfully recorded. The author has been punctilious in awarding an equal

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

SUPPLEMENT - THE FINAL CHAPTER

A 'Final Chapter' has been written as a supplement to 'The Arborfield Apprentice' that covers the period of time encompassing the last few years of the Army Apprentice Training at Arborfield. This supplement is available free of charge to those who have already purchased the book, but we would ask for a small donation of, say, £2 or £3 to cover part of the production and postage costs.

THE FORGOTTEN PUNCH IN THE ARMY'S FIST

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

The story of the war in Korea and of the part played by the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, REME, from 1950 to 1953 as told by various individuals of that Corps, makes fascinating reading. The support and devotion to their colleagues is most apparent, but typical of the British soldier, these experiences are balanced with a sense of sympathy for the unfortunate Korean population caught up in the conflict, and it wouldn't be a true story of the British soldier without its sprinkling of 'squaddie' humour. John Dutton has provided an excellent compilation of personal accounts in this comprehensive story of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers at war, where the positioning of Light Aid Detachments and Field Workshops was just as important to senior commanders in their tactical planning as was the medical back-up of a Regimental Aid Post or a Field Ambulance.



Both of these books are available from the REME Museum Association Shop at Arborfield. Telephone: 0118 976 3223.

'The Arborfield Apprentice' is available for just £18.50 + £7.70 p&p whilst 'The Forgotten Punch in the Army's Fist' is £12.50 + £3.00 p&p. Cheques should be made payable to 'REME Corps Account No 2' and credit cards can be accepted for telephone orders.



FAREWELL TO ARBORFIELD 2004 VIDEO

Narrated by John Smithson

This video is a comprehensive record on film of the 2004 AOBA Reunion held at Arborfield in June 2004. It covers the Reunion from the Saturday morning to the Sunday church service. It does great justice to the last Reunion to be held on the Rowcroft Barracks site, with most of those who attended being recorded on film.

The film also includes a clip of the final Passing Out Parade on the 12th August 2004. To top and tail the movie, two black and white historic movie-tone clips of the early days of the Army Apprentices School are also included. The movie is available as a DVD or VHS video tape and can only be obtained from the Association Shop at the REME Museum of Technology in Arborfield. The cost of the DVD is £14.00 and the VHS tape is just £10.00. Please telephone the shop on 0118 976 3223 to enquire about postage charges and to place an order.

ASSOCIATION TIES

Available in the



