

**July
2012**



**Issue
53**

O B A N



Reunion Issue

Arborfield Old Boys Association News

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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In Memorandum

Deaths notified since last OBAN

D.o.D

N/A	Kitchin	CH	Christopher	57A	29/02/2012
2153	Dyer	RT	Rob	A-61B-B	03/04/2012
1647	Poulton	LH	Leonard	A-44A-C	07/04/2012
1986	Sands	FW	Francis	45B	25/04/2012
N/A	Dyball	K	Keith	64A	27/04/2012
1146	Wood	FT	Frederick	H-37B-A	18/05/2012
517	Liddell	RH	Robert	A-46B-D	03/06/2012

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 photo/images in TIFF or high JPEG formats are preferred. Photographs or diagrams must be 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 £20.00 for life membership, plus an website wvannual subscription of £20.00. Application forms are available by post from the Honorary Secretary, and on the website www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

Front Cover Photograph: Army Apprentice School Badge made in the 1950s, recently fitted to Mounting by Simon Gaylard 64c.

Rear Cover Photograph: The Centre Stone of the Army Apprentice National Memorial. Words by our very own Tee Cee (Tony Church) 55A.

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Committee Members Reports

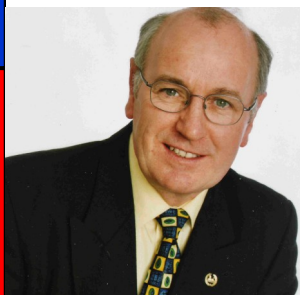


Chairman's Report

I think that we could all agree that it was quite a wrench moving the re-union venue from our ancestral home at Arborfield. However,

the choice of having a more central location in Hinkley with a superb backdrop of the National Memorial Arboretum was very well received. The attendance was very good with 175 members booking in, of whom 79 brought their partners. Nearly 200 attended the curry evening on Friday evening and more than 250 were present at the NMA. The timing of the AGM gave an opportunity for members to give their impression of the format so far, which was largely most appreciative, although some members would still be content with an alternative at Corton. However, the decision to repeat the same format and venue for next year was taken. The formal dinner saw 228 diners who were well entertained by a quartet and our own piper Alex Burt. The Association also

exported one of its best traditions to the hotel; nearing the close of the evening, its dining staff were asked to enter the hall and were then formally thanked for their service; this was indeed a first for them, and was much appreciated. Following this excellent dinner, I visited the many tables and received a very favourable impression of the week-end, especially from the ladies who were in attendance for the first time. It has to be said that not all members favoured the move away from what has almost always been a stag night, and that the committee had been rightfully chastised for changing to this format from what was expected and agreed at the AGM in 2011. However, it was most important that this move from Arborfield was seen to be a success and the attendance figures would be a good measure of that success, and which (in my opinion) a large part was due to the invitation extended to the ladies. I look forward to seeing them and as many as possible of you again in 2013.



Honorary Secretary's Report

Well, the 2012 Reunion is behind us and (for a few weeks anyway!) I can breathe again. I must admit to having more than a few worries whether we had got it right or not.

From everyone I spoke to the weekend was a great success and with the exception of some fine tuning provides the framework for future years.

I know a number were concerned about having our ladies with us for the duration, but as it turned out the Saturday night dinner worked out fine. All I spoke to were very happy to see the traditions of the evening had been retained, so I thank everyone for their kind comments.

I've received loads of feedback forms and most are thinking the same as I; Bar prices a tad on the high side (!), curry night needs improving along with the Pipe Band on Parade, lunch in the NMA and a bit more time for the AGM as a few examples. We are most grateful for your feedback and will take all your comments on board when looking at 2013.

On that point I can tell you we have a provisional

weekend of 19th to 21st July 2013. This is the only weekend in July when both the NMA and hotel are available, so it shows how quick off the mark we have to be! Anyway once we've sorted a bit more detail – like the bar prices!! – I'll confirm to you in the next copy of OBAN.

I'd like to make a personal thanks to both Gordon Bonner 49B and Mo Hope 59B, who went the extra mile and visited the NMA the day before. They found that our Memorial would not pass Commandant's Inspection so got buckets and mops out and cleaned it as only Apprentices know how! Made all the difference lads – WELL DONE!

Finally my grateful thanks go to all the well wishers who took the time to thank us all for the weekend – makes it all worthwhile.

God Bless

David (Tich) Schofield 65A



Treasurer's Report

A new venue for our 2012 Reunion and I think you will agree that it was a terrific success.

The accounts were presented to the AGM and accepted by the membership. The Chairman's charity was nominated for 2012 and the donation will be made in the near future.

Since our last publication of OBAN a Pay Pal account has been set up, and I am pleased to say that members are using it, especially those who live overseas. Just remember to quote your AOBA membership number, name and what the payment is for!

Don't forget if you require any shop items ie, ties, lapel badges, mugs, blazer badges (AOBA and or AAS) or DVD of the last Reunion to be held at Arborfield (2011) please contact me at my home address by whatever means is available to you and the items will be sent to your address. Cash please when ordering.

All the best,

Mike Davis 60B



OBAN Editor's Report

My take over from Peter Gripton went smoothly and is now complete. He has very kindly offered to be available for advice and assistance whenever I need it.

With the excellent Reunion weekend over and done, I trust everyone who attended, enjoyed it as much as I did. I look forward to seeing even more members attending next year. Hon Sec has just fainted.

As I announced at the AGM, this is a matter of me learning the job on the fly. As I learn, I will be trying to introduce new things, with the aim of improving the magazine. One new item will be TeeCee's poems, another is pictures of mystery objects. It will be interesting to see the sort of answers we get, and also whether I know the correct answer.

We now have my usual appeal for articles, not only but especially from our younger members. If you could submit your tales in either Times New Roman, or Verdana 10 point Font, it helps tremendously. Also please submit any photograph

separately from your articles, and not embedded within the text. It makes it much easier for me to enter it into the format of these pages. As stated in the last issue of the OBAN, any photographs you can include greatly enhances the appearance, of the finished article. Besides making it far more interesting for the readers. Page after page of text can get quite boring to look at. If you cannot send them to me electronically, then please post them. I will copy them, look after them as if they were my own, before returning them to you.

As I asked at the AGM, I am looking for someone who would be willing to investigate, and write an article about 'The Reds'. It surprises me that our younger members, have not heard it until they attend a reunion.

I sincerely hope that I can achieve a magazine that you will all be pleased with. If at any time you have any comments or suggestions to make, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. One final thing, if anyone has any items for inclusion in your OBAN magazine, please allow plenty of time before you want it published. Do not leave it until the last minute.

Take care my friends,

Ray Stevens 64C



Registrar's Report

Please let me know of any change of circumstances with regard to your addresses/ email addresses and Tele-

phone numbers.

Nothing further to report, Thanks,

Alec R Powell

No of new members since last OBAN: 1

2744 England PJ Peter A-42C-C 08/03/2012

No of Re-activations since last OBAN: 1

254 Blake D Donald A-51B-A 30/03/2012

No of Resignations since last OBAN: 1

1774 Braithwaite DM David A-56B-X 02/03/2012



Webmaster's Report

Both the AOBA website and Forum are running well with no problems at this time.

I am pleased to report that a number of you availed yourself of the recently added PAYPAL shopping options for the reunion fees and purchase of AOBA Sundries.

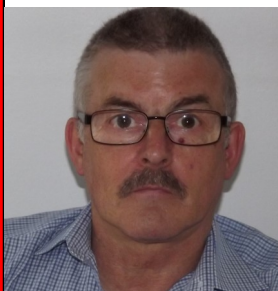
The number of members who opted to receive their Oban magazine electronically has now increased to 104, please consider this option, it isn't in fairness without some minor problems, usually down to Internet browser security settings, but we can usually manage to iron these out be-

tween ourselves, and this option is helpful in saving postage costs.

I may consider using an external website for downloading electronic Oban in the future, as it may well prove to be less problematic. Older copies can still be available on the AOBA site as before.

Photos, stories, and any other articles are always welcome for publication on the website, and you can always pull up a tool box, and join in the banter on the AOBA forum if you are not already a member.

Best wishes, **Herbie Coles.**



Recruitment Officer's Report

To date recruiting has proven to be challenging. I am trying to make inroads into encouraging many of the younger element, PMC and the latter

years of our old alma mater, to join our esteemed ranks.

I have noticed from a number of their sites that a proposed reunion is a non starter. Many of them will be attending the Corps Weekend (16th June). So I will hopefully make my presence felt.

I have also 'attacked' several other sites. I have a few more 'irons in the fire', hopefully more will come from these.

For the near future I have enough to keep me off the streets, but I am open to any suggestions?

Barrie Parker

From the Corps Archive. By Colonel (Ret'd) M E Sibbons, 61C

Corps Archivist

The Corps Archives, which are located in the REME Museum at Arborfield, contains a wealth of information on the Corps' heritage. This article tells the story of three REME Warrant Officers (WOs) who were captured by the Germans during the fall of Crete and confined in Stalag VIIA, near Munich, and later in Stalag 383, Nuremberg. This account of their experiences is a reminder of the way in which a combination of technical ingenuity and will-power can produce gratifying results.

"No News is Bad News!" Any griff?

In September 1942 three REME WOs (Eric Mills, Ted Haydon-Pyg and Bill Cheevers) from an independent Infantry Brigade Workshop, along with 5,000 other British and Commonwealth Warrant and NCO rank prisoners of war, were moved to Stalag 383. They were divided into Companies for administration and each of these Companies was headed by a Warrant Officer. Shortly after the camp had settled down, it was announced that a radio set had been smuggled in by one of the new arrivals; it was rumoured that the set was built into an accordion! The set's morale value was beyond description. Soon, full BBC bulletins were being run-off on duplicators made from food jellies from Red Cross food parcels and being read by selected individuals to the inmates of each hut in the camp. The cry of "Any griff?" was, at last, being satisfied!

DIY Preparations

Stalag 383 was located in the centre of a large German training area and, fortunately, a number of the guards were open to bribes. As a result, all kinds of goods began to appear and Stalag shopkeepers turned the camp into a miniature Petticoat Lane! From this 'racket', the REME WOs acquired a pair of surgical scissors – to use as tin-snips – a small flat file and a pair of pliers; altogether they made a handy toolkit by Stalag standards.

During the winter of 1942, several budding 'sparks' began to experiment with crystal sets, which had the code name of 'Canaries'. A simple coil on a cardboard tube, in series with an 'ersatz' crystal and a bent wire 'cats whisker', was built into an innocent looking container that was carried in a pocket by day. At night the earphones were brought out from their hiding place and connected up, using the negative of the electricity mains as an aerial! This crude assembly gave snatches of news bulletins from the European Service of the BBC.

Two of the WOs were radio 'tiffies' and it was only a matter of time before they were manufacturing tuning condensers, using flat tins from food parcels to make the vanes; coach bolts to act as spacers; and the gears from an old alarm clock to construct a slow-motion tuning mechanism.

The first home-made set

A syndicate of six was formed: the three tiffies to construct the radio and a further three whose efforts were concentrated on either bribing the guards or convincing the other prisoners, by friendly persuasion, to part with useful materials. How the bribery squad went about their business would make a separate article! They had already obtained a number of useful items (such as valves, rectifiers and headphones), but it was a long and tiresome task. It was therefore decided to locally manufacture as many items as possible.

A second variable condenser was constructed to act as a volume control. In the absence of a transformer and, on the pretext that they were required for amateur dramatics, 750 watt bulbs were obtained and joined in series, to reduce the mains voltage to suit the valves; the AC current being converted to DC by a rectifier valve. Security became an obvious problem, as the 750W bulb, when alight at night, was reminiscent of Piccadilly Circus – as a result, the blackout had to be perfect!

The greatest problem was the provision of a smoothing condenser. Sheets of tin plate cut from rust-proofed Red Cross biscuit tins were used. Some 100 x 3" squares were cut and a similar number of squares of waterproofed paper (pages of the Bible dipped in melted candle wax) were cut to act as insulation between each sheet of tin. A wooden box was made, 12" high and 3" square inside – the sheets were fed into the box, one tin and one paper at a time. A square of wood was placed on top and compressed with a table leg nailed in position, and a length of copper wire was soldered to the plates. Soldering was particularly difficult. Using a small piece of copper for a bit; solder was scraped or melted from old tins; and resin was dug out of the knots in the woodwork of the huts to act as a flux. The soldering was successful – unfortunately the condenser was not and had to be abandoned. However, after a long wait, one was obtained through the Stalag 'supply' chain!

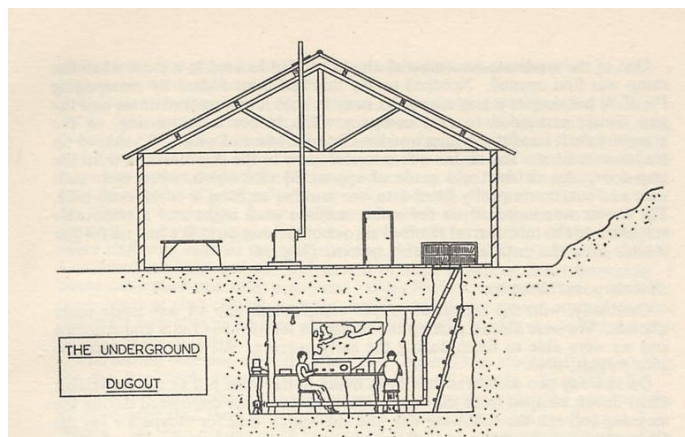
One night in January 1943, the syndicate of six was assembled for a final test. Two variable condensers were fixed to a piece of ply-wood screwed vertically to the front of a 6 foot table.

The remainder of the set covered the whole of the table top. The picture of six men, listening intently round a 6 foot table littered with blazing bulbs, odd shaped coils, and scraps of tin and wood bordered on the macabre. The excitement was intense; there was one headphone each; and, while four listened, the two backroom boys skillfully manipulated wire and wooden disc knobs. Completely out of the blue, they heard, *"This is the BBC broadcasting...this is the BBC broadcasting to North America. Here is the news....."* The main item on this broadcast told the story for the first time of the German defeat at Stalingrad and, although not very loud, it was clear and every word was absorbed and logged. The information was soon conveyed around the camp.

Going underground

The aim now was to reduce the set to a reasonable size; find a suitable permanent site to operate it; and, slowly, replace the manufactured items for proper components – the first task being to replace the lamps. The camp had a small hospital which was run by a RAMC Major. One piece of medical equipment in the hospital was fitted with a transformer - the MO allowed this to be removed every evening and returned the following morning by those attending sick parades! The hiding place was much more difficult and it was decided that the only option was to go underground. The camp amenities club was selected as a suitable venue and an Australian miner volunteered to take command of the dig.

The brick floor was removed in a small section – just large enough for a man to get his shoulders through - and this was covered by a wooden trap-door, covered in bricks to match the pattern of the floor. When in position, it was covered by a Stalag-made book-case. The soil was dug out using shaped pieces of wood and dispersed un-



der over-hanging banks formed by the terracing of the hillside on which the camp was built. As the working space grew, a bucket and string

'elevator' was used to lift the soil out of the entrance. The roof of the dugout (the actual floor of the club) was propped up with timber for added safety. Power was installed, together with a hidden aerial and a ladder. Ventilation was achieved by placing a 'procured' electric fan, close to the floor farthest from the trap-door, and using an air duct made of old tins to form a continuous extractor tube. The procedure was to seal two men in the dugout each evening to operate the set and take down the news (the activities of the club would continue on the floor above with people blissfully unaware of the activities beneath) – the men would be released at midnight.

Discovery and Disaster

It was not unusual for the Germans to ask their captives for a true version of the news and this news would naturally be spread in their own camp. This caused the German guards to ferret everywhere, at all times of the day and night but, in the main, nothing of importance was confiscated and the set survived these activities. However, on 20 August 1943, two men escaped from the camp. Their absence was discovered during the morning roll-call the following day, which resulted in a detailed search of the camp by the guards. As a result of this search for escape kits, the bookcase to the entrance of the



dugout was stripped, searched and moved – the hide-out was revealed. The syndicate looked on dejectedly while the results of weeks of skill, hard work and patience were wheeled away on a hand-cart. Fortunately no-one was using the set at the time of discovery. Luckily, a complete set was smuggled in by some French workers some three weeks after the loss!

The final round

The new set was an old fashioned three-valve, all mains, medium wave receiver in a simple wooden cabinet. It was quickly converted by the tiffies to short wave with a locally manufactured

coil, just in time for the syndicate to hear of the Italian surrender in September 1943. On 6 June 1944, a member of the syndicate was alone at the set waiting for the 8 o'clock news before morning roll-call. Even the BBC announcer seemed shaken from his usual calm manner when he came on the air and announced the Allied landings in Normandy. The listener's excitement at hearing the news inspired a cartoon from one of the Stalag artists.

The final news of the war was heard by hundreds of unarmed, bedraggled and very weary German soldiers retreating through the woods surrounding the camp.

(If you are aware of any other interesting snippets from our Corps' history, please bring them to the attention of the Corps Archivist on 0118 976 3469; military: 94251 2469; or email: mike.sibbons@rememuseum.org.uk)

Bill Gray's Adventures on the Water. (Part1)

EXERCISE INTERPADDLE 15.

It was the summer of 1976 (or possibly 77). 11 Field workshops. Minden.

This was an exercise name for a raft race 130 miles down the river Rhine from Mannheim to Bonn. A group of university lads from Solihull raised money for charity by racing an army team down the river Severn. Having beaten that unit they then challenged BAOR.

It started with the platoon commander asking who fancied a 130 mile journey down the river Rhine on a raft to raise money for handicapped children. Chorus of 'that sounds like a good number', yes I fancy that etc. Until someone asked when – August Bank Holiday – chorus of 'oh I don't know about that', from all the pads.

Shortly after that a mysterious collection of planks started appearing outside the A Veh Shop. Planks that had sat around in corners of the workshops for months vanished to reappear by the A Shop. Vehicles returning from exercise were seen to dump planks there even before personal kit was off loaded. 5 gallon oil drums started to pile up in the same location.

'Sponsors' was a word that started to get bandied about. 'Letters written' was muttered. 'Staff' followed closely by 'raft secretary'. About 130 letters later we decided we had begged enough.

The actual construction started one sports afternoon. Lines were drawn on the workshop floor which were duly covered by planks, and a 'thing' started to take shape. Calculating buoyancy gave

us no problems, being engineers. 42 x 5 gallon drums would be exactly what we wanted. We did not calculate wrongly of course but after the float test we added another 28 drums just to be on the safe side!

Bits acquired, mast, sails, rudder and paddles made, we only just had time to paint the drums red, yellow and blue, a bit of esprit-de-corps. Just had time was right, as the race had been brought forward 5 days. Someone had decided it would take twice the time originally planned. Had someone seen our raft we wondered? We named her Wassock – can't print what it means, but most appropriate it is.

We gave her one final test on Thursday 18th August, even tried the sails out and all seemed well.

Sunday 21st at midnight we set off for Mannheim. As we approached Mannheim about 6 o'clock it started coming down in buckets, things did not look too good. However by the time we got there it had stopped.

The rafts kept arriving all day, and it was fascinating to see the different designs. The most popular design was two rows of 45 gallon drums, a couple with 3 rows. Only one other had gone for the rows of 5 gallon like us. The civvy students from Solihull had plastic containers strapped together and their deck was hinged in the middle. They explained they had gone for this design when they had watched another raft snap in two as it went over a weir. This raft of theirs had already proved itself over 200 miles of rivers in the UK. The ultimate in design came from the two RAF teams, ex Canberra drop tanks. It was incredible to witness only 4 or 5 inches of displacement with a deck and a crew of ten on top of only 4 drop tanks.

Time to introduce our crew:

Captain Moat	(in both senses)	G u y
S/Sgt Gray	(scribe)	B i l l
S/Sgt Lancaster	(first mate)	T o n y
Cpl McMinn	(bosun)	J o c k
Cfn Roberts	(welder and whiner)	D a v e
Cfn die Emerson	(back seat stealer)	G e o r -
Cfn Wheatcroft	(overboard)	J o h n
Cfn Jimmy Binns	(on his knees)	
Cfn Johnson	(oatmeal block)	B o b
Cfn Chivers	(paddle breaker)	C h r i s

Shore Party

S/Sgt McEnroe	(pub recce)	T o n y
L/Cpl Douglas	(burner fixer)	G a r y
Cfn die Broom	(fishcake maker)	G e o r -
Cfn Graham	(lend me)	D o n
Cfn Edwards	(roll me own)	P e t e

All rafts having passed the safety scrutiny – we broke a paddle during ours, it was decided that we would do a mass start of all 13 rafts on the Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock. The mass start was for the PR boys, more spectacular for the cameras and photographers. Largely due to the PR boys we got off about 11 o'clock. We were not exactly in line across the river but we were near enough to make no difference.

The first day we did 57 kms. One of the 13 rafts didn't make the first 7.

We were not the slowest raft and we got home at 8.40 in the pitch black. We had been soaked, a little bit of sunshine and soaked again. With every breath of wind we hurriedly rushed up the sails only to have our hopes dashed as the wind immediately dropped again. So we paddled for 57 kms. The raft looked a little bit lower in the water but we were on a beach so we hauled it up and let it drain overnight.

The next morning we set off on a staggered start. The slowest rafts went first to try and keep everybody less spread out. One could not set off on time as they were still doing repairs. The second day was a very similar story to the first with one small exception. When we were in the last 3 of the days scheduled 46 kms, a bit of a breeze sprang up. We were at that point sort of gently stirring the water instead of paddling with arms and morales at a very low ebb. That breath of wind blew a new crew on board. Suddenly we were heaving on the paddles and singing at the tops of our voices as we spurted the last 2 kms.

The Thursday was a rest day with no paddling, sailing, rafting or whatever. A trip to the Asbach Uralt Distillery to see and sample some of their goods, but mainly maintenance day. Rafts could be seen all along the shore in different states of stripping and repairing not least of all ours. Drums that had leaked were drained of about 30 gallons and re-sealed. One crew member was at his best welding and whining, having missed the distillery trip.

The third race day, Friday – proved a good one! The day of the rapids. It was the same, slowest boats away first. One of the other boats was from 4 Field Workshops. S/Sgts Mick Levitt, Ziggy Black and crew on their 'Blazing Paddles'. Whenever we were near them we always had a good hearted slanging match. Today they were determined we would not pass. For about 3 kms we battled it out. Hurling abuse and paddles – only when we finally got in front of them, did we realise we were rapidly approaching the rapids. To the delight of 4 Field and the camera crew who were there, we cannoned off a buoy which we were going too fast to avoid. We very nearly did the same thing with a stationary barge. We were well on course to pass left of it when the river police launch, which was never very far away, told us to go right of it. All this was done at a speed of around 10 knots, which may not sound much until you see that current crashing over the rocks.

Weather and wind had been kind to us most of the day – we were still sixth but had caught up 15 minutes on our crew in front of us. Another 55 kms completed and another rest day ahead.

The rest day was spent sightseeing in Koblenz and well worth the trip it was too.

Sunday was to be a long one, 65 kms. Our spirits were not lifted when we poked our noses out of our tents. The mist was halfway down the vineyards, which climbed the hills just behind the campsite, and the temperature was just as low. With shirts, jumpers and jackets on we climbed aboard and set off on our usual staggered start. However the picture changed rapidly. Within an hour the mist had lifted and the sun was hot enough to strip to swimming trunks and life jackets. The wind too was kind though not as you might think. It was strong but right on our nose, no sailing today. This was not very detrimental to us as we were very low in the water, with hardly any frontal area. Most of the other rafts found it very hard going and we had a very successful day. We gained two places to put us in fourth, and half an hour up on the civvies who were in 5th spot. Sunday night too was very successful as there was a Shutzenfest in the campsite.

Monday morning was filled with complaints of sore heads.

Monday was mainly a showpiece for the PR boys with a mass start and only 10 kms to the finish line. Our Sunday success had gone to our heads. We could not catch the 3rd boys, they were over an hour in front of us, but we were determined to cross the line high in the order.

The mass start was a great affair, with many chants and much barracking. We gave it great licks and with 4 kms to go only the two RAF teams were in front of us. We found some extra energy from somewhere and as we passed Wildenrath with 2 kms to go we gave them a few choruses of the Dam Busters March. We were over the moon with our success. The finish line was a mass of cameras and reporters, not to mention sponsors. Our sponsor was there with a very generous bottle of Sect each. Much popping of bottles, cheers and applause as each crew came in. Also much delight for the camera crews with champagne over heads and throwing in of prominent figures.

RAF Gutersloh were clear winners with 18 Sqn RAF Wildenrath second. 4 Field Sqn RE were 3rd, us 4th and the Solihull boys 5th.

There was the presentation of a cup for the winners and the raffle of the Solihull boat. They did not get much as nearly everybody there had seen enough of rafts to last a lifetime.

The outcome of all this was a donation of about DM 150.00 to the handicapped children of Solihull and about DM 600.00 to our local German charities. That Was from II Field Workshops. The full donation was much more.

We all look back on it as a great adventure and remember lots of laughs, just don't ask us to do it again.

AOBA Benevolence Fund.

Please remember that the **Arborfield Old Boys' Association** 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 cases where the fund can be of any help or assistance, please contact the Honorary Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

Remembrance Weekend 12th & 13th November

by John Dennett, 51B. 'C' Coy

The weekend started on Saturday evening with dinner in the Trafalgar Room at the Victory Services Club for the Arborfield Old Boys Association and friends. This had been ably organized by Jim Gardner. Those attending were Keith Evans, Larry Jarvis, Andrew Cameron, John Harte, John Dennett and wife, Peter Church, John Reynolds and wife, John Lee and wife, Gordon Bonner, Dick Wright, Craig Featherstone, Ken Tilley, Phil Graham and Mo Hope and two guests. The food was excellent and so were the speeches; we were well attended by the Club staff, and the meal ended with the loyal toast. We all went through to the Club Bar and joined in the 40s sing-along. Then it was time to get our heads down ready for an early breakfast prior to the Parade.



Marshall Day. Brian Hutchins yet again impressed the crowds with his call for, and our execution of, double change step on the march, and this drew much applause.

Transport to and from the Horse Guards was again provided free by the Black Cabs Association of London – this was a marvellous gesture and much appreciated. Those on parade were Brian Hutchins, Larry Jarvis, Andrew Cameron, John Harte, John Dennett, Peter Church, John Reynolds, John Lee, Gordon Bonner, Dick Wright, Craig Featherstone, Ken Tilley, David Naylor and

The warmth and support for serving and ex-service men and women on parade was overwhelming. You can see us in slow motion in a video posted on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/Tn84qcFMaVo>) – thank you Larry Jarvis.



Tickets for the November 2012 Parade have now been allocated, but we would really like to see more people at the Saturday evening dinner; please contact Jim Gardner (jim.gardner@fsb.co.uk) for details.

Reunion Report 2012 by John Swarbrick, 62A.

Well, another AOBA reunion is over, and despite the fact that everyone I spoke to enjoyed themselves, I cannot help but remember that famous John Cleese catchphrase from Monty Python, "And now for something completely different." For those of us from the 1962 intakes, it was of course our 50th anniversary year. We had hoped, along with many others, that we could have celebrated where it all began; at Arborfield. Alas, that was not to be. It became evident at the reunion last year that the 1961 intakes were to be the last to have that privilege. So, overtaken by events and our dreams in tatters, we had no option but to accept the inevitable. The break with Arborfield had to come at some point and we 62ers happened to be the unlucky ones, but putting a positive note on it all, we can say we were the first to celebrate with a new location and format.

The Barcelo Hinckley Island Hotel in Leicestershire was the new venue, and I must say right here that the hotel management and staff did a wonderful job, not only for the accommodation, standard of catering and service, but all done with the utmost efficiency and politeness, so a big thank you to them. The hotel, being in the midlands, made it easier for some to travel to this year, but of course a longer trip for those living in the south and southwest. However, the principal choice of this hotel was for its close proximity to the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) at Alrewas, a venue thought by many to be a fitting place to hold our parade and drumhead service, more of which later.

Friday afternoon is the traditional time for attendees to 'report for duty', although this year a gathering at the Bramshill Hunt for a few 'warmers into the bank' prior to booking in was sorely missed. Having registered with the hotel, and settled into our rooms, it was time for the Reception Evening, which, as in previous years included a curry supper. Not being a curry person, I cannot comment, but some thought it could have been 'hotter', but then again you cannot cater for everybody's taste. Meeting old friends once again, and rekindling long lost friendships is as important now as it has always been, and the camaraderie and apprentice spirit was in evidence everywhere. More than a few stories were told, exaggerated no doubt by more than a few drinks! There was a departure from the norm this year in that the wives or partners of those who wished to invite them, were in attendance. This has caused some controversy, but personally, I had no problem with it, and indeed, the presence of the ladies has in my view added value to the weekend. With the prospect of an early start the next day, there

were not many remaining when the bar closed at 2359hrs.

Saturday dawned with threatening clouds and the prospect of rain. Breakfast over, and all 'booted and suited' the coaches to transport us all to the NMA departed around 0900hrs. On arrival, further acquaintances were made with those who had opted not to arrive on the Friday. This was for me, and many others, the first visit to the NMA, and I have to say I was impressed, and think it a fitting memorial to the fallen. The parade this year was always going to be a problem. The NMA does not have a square, so any drill would be restricted to the main pathways. Not ideal, but as always you adapt and make of it what you can. One advantage however, there would be no echo bouncing off the 'Jeepland' block from the base drum!

The paradecommander as usual was our AOBA chairman Col Brian Hutchins (61B) ably assisted by WO2 (CSM) Grant Davidson REME and Sgt Mike Bysh both from 11 Trg Bn REME, and whom volunteered to give up their weekend. Well done lads, I know what it is like to be a volunteer! After a one minute of silence, which happens every day at 1100hrs at the NMA, the parade set off to the accompaniment of the Leicester and Rutland pipe band ably led by Pipe Major Phil Duthie. The reviewing officer this year was also an ex-boy, Maj Gen Gerry Berragan CB (48B), who is Patron of the Memorial Fund. Watched by the assembled crowd and by members of the general public visiting the NMA, the salute was taken and the march past completed. Some minor hitches, but all valuable experience for next year. It is worthy at this point to mention Roger Wilkinson (62B). Roger is confined to a wheelchair, but for his 50th anniversary he wanted to attend and take part in the parade. To do this Paul Tonkin also (62B) volunteered to drive Roger up to the NMA for the day, and also take charge of his chariot. Unfortunately, neither could stay for the dinner, but Roger was so impressed by the event that he is already making plans to attend for at least one night next year. An inspiration to many more able than yourself Roger.

The parade over, it was time for the Drum Head Service, conducted as in previous years by the Revd Cannon Bev John (66A) at the recently dedicated Apprentice Memorial. During the day and having viewed many of the memorials at the NMA I have to say that 'ours' is outstanding and is a credit to all those involved in its conception and construction. A special thanks here also to Gordon Bonner (49B) and Mo Hope (59B) who

gave up their time the day before to ensure the memorial was clean and everything in order. Thanks also to Alex Burt (62A) for his pipes after an excellent rendition of the Last Post and Reveille from an ex Royal Marines bugler. On a sadder note, as always, there were 26 crosses in memory of those who have passed on since last year, some were permanent staff but the majority obviously ex-boys. Our thanks must also go to the management and staff of the NMA who supported the event and provided the buffet afterwards.

The AGM started bang on time at 1700hrs, and there was much debate about the deviance from normal practice by inviting ladies for the weekend, and to attend the dinner. After discussion the consensus was that it was a good thing, so this will happen again next year. Presentations were given by each of the committee members, changes to the constitution voted through, and agreement that we should use the same venue for next year's reunion, but probably in July rather than June.

And so to the Ladies Dinner Evening. Including ladies, 26 of us from the '62 intakes took to the 'top table' dressed in our finery, and participated in a truly magnificent dinner, which was appreciated by all. Alex Burt once again piped us in and provided a medley of old favourites half way through. Other accompaniment was provided by the 'String Sensations Quintet' who were superb, but we did wonder if we were all in the right reunion after their rendition of the RAF March Past followed by the Dam Busters March! Speeches

followed with Brian Hutchins reminding us all of our wonderful carefree childhood without the shackles of the now ever present scourge of 'Health and Safety' legislation. Ian Tilson (62A) responded for the '62 intakes with a thankfully shorter speech than by some in previous years! Ian did note that there was only one representative present from the 1963 intakes, Calum Rendall (63C). A little bit of work to do for next year Calum! After all the toasts and nearly as an afterthought, the time honoured rendering of 'The Reds' was performed, sung with such gusto by all present that it must have roused other guests in the hotel.

In closing some thanks and facts. David 'Tich' Schofield 65A took on the responsibility as secretary of the AOBA at the last reunion. Following a tried and tested path is one thing, but with all the changes this year, he and his helpers have organized an excellent reunion weekend. Some minor hiccups, but nothing that cannot be put right for next year. Thank you David and well done. Some 176 people booked in for the weekend, 79 of whom were wives or partners. There were 190 attendees on the Friday night and 265 attended the parade on Saturday. At dinner on Saturday 228 sat down for a splendid evening. For the 1962ers, well, a total of 29 attended at various points over the weekend of which 8 were ladies, way down on attendance from previous reunions, so our best wishes go to the 1963 intakes for next year. Good luck in your recruitment. A great weekend as ever, and I hope everyone will be looking forward to a repeat performance next year.

Tee Cee's Rhymes of our Tymes.

On the opposite page you will see a new topic, that will be in every issue. TeeCee has kindly given me permission to use any of his works. It is my intention to include, a choice of his odes, rhymes, or poems. Now that can either be your choice, or mine. If you have any particular TeeCee masterpiece that you enjoy and would like it included, then please send it to me. Add your name and intake.

Now and then, when we have a special occasion TeeCee may well write something fitting. As our reunion is early June, TeeCee has given me a special poem that he has written for the Anniversary of the Normandy Landings, a subject that is very special to TeeCee. The following is an extract from one of TeeCee's e-mails.

I presented a signed copy of this and the other one to John Millin, Bill's son as a memento of our meeting at Hamble on 4th/5th May.

Incidentally, the whole thing was organized by David Pickworth 52A, and involved Robin Bartholemew 58A and the participation of Pat Hassell 54B, so you can see that the Arborfield lads get into all sorts.

('The other one' mentioned above, will appear in a later issue of the OBAN.)

TeeCee has asked to be able to share this opportunity with any other budding wordsmiths. If you have any of your own work, that you would be willing to share with us. Then please send it in, but make sure that you give us written permission for the OBAN to print them. Get Busy writing boys.

Tee Cee's Rhymes of our Tymes.

Piper Bill

(The legend of Bill Millin, the D-Day Piper)

The sighing surf on sand abounds, and seabirds call, the only sounds
At break of summers day, and yet, within the hour men will have met
Their destiny as wars shrill chatter ends this tranquil scene. The clatter of machine guns spit their hate, as landing craft nose in to grate
Against the shingle to disgorge their human load who wait to charge
Into oncoming deathly hail, but never faltering, nerves taut, pale
Faced, leaping down into the cold wet breakers, seeking firm foothold.

Struggling forward, arms raised clear to gain refuge ahead, so near
And yet seeming so far away as spiteful guns traverse and spray
The killing ground that lies ahead, already littered with the dead
And dying who would never see this bitter, bloody victory.
Then faintly, through the deafening din, an alien sound is heard, the thin
Melodious wailing cry of highland pipes, though bullets fly
Around him, he is unscathed still. Thus starts the tale of Piper Bill.

Bill, who piped for Brigadier Lord Lovat, raised a special cheer
When, leaving on the previous day, took up his pipes, began to play
"Road to the Isles", as, leaving Hamble river for this costly gamble,
Lifting spirits of the men, calling, cheered and cheered again,
Who as the Solent slipped away, all knew that on the following day
They'd face their own worst fears and doubts, prayed that when it came about
They would stand firm and conquer fear to face the perils that appeared.

And now, amid the smoke and roar of high explosives, Bill endures
The hail of death, which all around leaves him untouched, while yet the sound
Of "Highland Laddie" fills the air as fingers on the chanter dare
To still defy the lethal storm, this awesome hell in all its forms.
Yet death and wholesale demolition, backdrop to this exhibition
Of the art of Scottish piping, even with the bullets sniping,
Will not quiet this hardy Scot, surviving mortar shell and shot.

He marches at the waters edge, still playing, able still to dredge
From deep within his mortal soul the courage to maintain and hold
Himself upright despite the urge to run for safety, then emerge
When all is still and quiet again, escape the trauma and the pain.
But Bill is made of sterner stuff, clutching his pipes he starts to puff
And fill the bag, then with a squeeze, his hands again with practiced ease
Launch into yet another air, lifting spirits everywhere.

And so the legend now is born, as Bill continues to perform
Beyond this strip of golden sand known as Sword Beach, where many men
Have fallen, sacrificed their all in answering their country's call,
But in this page of history this part of France will always be
Where Highland Bagpipes played their part with inspiration, and gave heart
To all who witnessed Bill that day, who, when he crossed that beach to play,
With all his great panache and poise, gave the Highland Pipes their voice.

TeeCee 55A

Scrapbook of Photographs from our Chairman, Brian 'Bugs' Hutchins, 61B

Photo 1: Awards made to Intake 61B, April 1964.0

Back Row: Chris Rhodes, (?) (?) Ayatalumo.

Front Row: Bob Brotheridge, Brian Hutchins, Dave Durham, and Al Jones.

Photo 2: A/T/RSM Brian Hutchins with Award of Honour, Senior Education Officer's Cup, and Commandant's Cup.

Photo 3: 61B Radar Techs—' Wirebenders R Us '

Back Row (Standing): Ken 'Legs' Barker and Gravestock (?)

Centre Row: Freeth, 'Tex' Kneen, Chris Rhodes, (?) and 'Bugs' Hutchins

Front Row: Bill Turnbull, Geoff 'Cankered' Stevens, Ray Doughty, Dave Durham, and 'Ginge' Hunter.

Photo 4: Passing-Out Parade. Inspecting Party (left to right): Commandant Col Dobie, A/T/RSM Brian Hutchins, 'The Admiral', and A/T/CSM Gerry Champion.

Photo 5: 61A Drill Competition, July 1961.

Photo 6: 'That Winter' of 1962/63

Back Row: John Rowsell, 'Kelloggs' Kelson, 'Bugs' Hutchins, Al Jones, 'Ginge' Hunter, Ray Doughty and 'Grovel' Greengrove.

Front Row: (?) Room A/T/LCPL

Skelton, Room A/T/CPL Barnfield and Tony Ameh.

Photo 7: 'That Winter' of 1962/63

Ray Doughty, Gerald 'Kelloggs' Kelson, 'Gingr' Hunter, 'Bugs' Hutchins, and Al Jones.











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From Craftsman to Chaplain.(or 'I'll stick you down as C of E'!)

By Canon Bev John. 66A

I was born into a truly ecumenical family. My paternal great-grandfather was a Deacon in a Welsh Congregational Chapel. All Welsh Deacons are black-suited, white-shirted, black-tied, funeral director looking, with an inborn scowling countenance. In every Welsh village, Deacons are respected by the grown-ups and feared by the children. My paternal grandparents were Methodists and my maternal grandparents were members of the Salvation Army. Their five children (my mother was the youngest) were all brought up as Anglicans (Church of England/Church in Wales). Any Anglican influence ended when my mother died in 1958. As children, my friends and I were sent to Sunday-school in our local chapel by our parents, to give them an hour's peace and quiet. When, with others, I was driven through those unforgettable Arborfield gates, in a less than luxury coach, on 11th January 1966, Sunday-school was very much a distant memory.



(The early photograph was taken outside 'F' Block, 'D' Coy lines)

We were herded into the WVS room for squad allocations and, in no time at all, I found myself in 'D' Squad. We were marched (marched?) to Junior Company Block and sent to Charlie (the barber) for a light trim (remember this was the

60s!), then, 'that' form to fill in. We were all helped by an A/T NCO and here I met, for the first time, A/T Cpl Johnny Hartley (a Brummie, I seem to remember). Filling in the form was proceeding to plan, until we arrived at the little box marked 'Denomination'. Now, as you have already read, the number of denominations in my family was confusing and here I was, trying to decide which of these denominations had had the major influence on me. "Well", I said, "I'm a Christian". Johnny Hartley's reaction, having had to fill in so many other forms no doubt, was completely barren of patience. He roared, "We're all *#*#*#* Christians! What Denomination are you?" Timidly, I replied that I wasn't really sure. Then he roared those words that would open a door for me that would slowly, but surely, change my life. "I'LL STICK YOU DOWN AS C of E!" Had I chosen a particular denomination or, out of exasperation, had he put me down on the form as OD (other denomination, of course), then there would be no church service, I would have simply sat in a room for an hour, reading a book. But Johnny Hartley had pushed open that door and I walked straight through, without even realising it at the time.

Like everyone who ticked the 'C of E' box, we were marched to church, the Camp Hall of course, every Sunday morning for a service led by our Chaplain, The Reverend Brian Morris. Jim Schofield persuaded me to join the church Choir and, reluctantly at first, I agreed. It wasn't too long before Padre Morris persuaded me to be confirmed. Early one Sunday morning, in the Spring of 1966, I was baptised in the Camp Chapel by Padre Morris, then confirmed that evening, in Windsor, by the Bishop of Windsor. Padre Morris eventually moved on and Padre Bob Woods moved in. I remember that, at the end of his first service, as a witness to his faith, he knelt before the altar for a few seconds. An amazing gesture, I thought, in front of an assortment of 16-year old to 18-year old young men. I remember thinking that there has to be more to faith than I had realised, and I wanted to know more.

Where Padre Morris had been quite introverted, Padre Woods was the opposite. He thoroughly enjoyed provoking arguments! He would make a controversial statement and encourage us to challenge him, with freedom and confidence. He forced us to think things through; e.g. he once said, "If you plan to marry, deliberately take the young lady out in the rain and take note of how she reacts to getting soaking wet. If she laughs it off, you will know that she would be worth

marrying". I was horrified and told him, in no uncertain terms, that I found the suggestion appalling! The argument took off, with the whole of the choir arguing against him. Padre Woods was a man, I thought, who was ahead of his time, and he had an important influence in the development of my journey of faith.

My first posting was to Tidworth and, unknown to me, Padre Woods had been posted there too. He was to oversee the Garrison Church there. Our first encounter in Tidworth was, for me, embarrassing. We literally bumped into each other at a corner of our QM's store. As we collided, I was both startled by him and delighted to see him. He was by now a Major and I, a mere Craftsman - and the first words out of my mouth were, "What the 'ell are you doing 'ere?" He was laughing too much to tear me off a strip, giving me the opportunity to respect and salute his commission. That posting was in 1969 and met and married Sher in 1970. Eventually, we were allocated a married quarter. One Sunday morning (for old times' sake, really), I went to a service and was amazed to discover that the service - or Padre Woods or both - had ignited a 'God spark' within me. I felt compelled to attend not only a service every Sunday, but all three Sunday services.

Our next posting was to Germany where we lived, firstly, in a private hiring and then in a married quarter. This was approximately half a mile from the Garrison Church and we soon became regular attendees. The church was overseen by Padre Fred Preston, an eccentric fire-brand who was attached to the Staffordshire Regiment. The poor soul was, for a while, responsible for five churches and he would, literally, run into our church, take the service and run out again, to get to the next church service! To help him out, Sher and I would prepare the church for his arrival and, following his whirlwind departure, we would replace whatever had been disturbed! Clearly, personal commitment to the Anglican Church was continuing to grow.

In 1973, several new chaplains were posted in and Padre Fred Preston ceased to visit our church. (In fact, the only other time I saw him was when he was speaking to a television reporter at the beginning of the first war against Iraq. He was suggesting to the reporter what he would do with captured insurgents.) Padre Dodson was posted to our church and he asked me to work alongside him. Over the next few months, a sense of vocation within me became more and more intense and, through Padre Dodson's wise advice and guidance, I knew that, sometime after entering civvie-street, my ordination as an Anglican priest would be initiated.

Sher and I actually entered civvie-street in 1976 and moved to Clydach, in the Swansea Valley, in 1977. We regularly attended the local church and it wasn't long before my vocational conviction returned and continued to intensify. In 1980, there was a moment when, like John Wesley, "I felt my heart strangely warmed". I knew then, without any shadow of doubt, that Christ had died for me (you, too, of course), taking on himself the punishment I deserved, for things I had said or done, in order that my relationship with God might be restored. My relationship with God was, for him, more important than life itself. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". What a message to share! I spoke with our vicar many times until, gradually, he became convinced that God was indeed calling me to the priesthood. Following his recommendation, Sher and I successfully negotiated several selection boards, sometimes together, sometimes as individuals, and there followed two years of theological study at Trinity College, Carmarthen and another two years of theological study at Queen's College, Birmingham. I was ordained in 1985 and, following two curacies, I was licensed as Vicar of my present parishes in 1988.

In 1991, Sam Weller wrote to me regarding the Old Boys' Reunions and, later that year, Sher and I attended our first reunion. We actually spent the weekend with Ian and Jan Swinton, close friends, who were stationed at Arborfield. The Garrison CO invited me to take the Drum Head Service in 1992 and I leapt at the chance. Unfortunately, illness prevented me from attending and this remained the situation for some years.

In July 2006 I trawled the internet for anything on Arborfield Reunions, with success obviously, and signed up immediately. At that time, I was chaplain to the High Sheriff of Mid-Glamorgan and, as a result, Sher and I were invited to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace and the date clashed with that year's Reunion. We were 'forced' to choose the Garden Party, concerned that a refusal would lead to being thrown into the Tower! Besides, Sher had invested in an expensive hat! One of my fellow AOBAers (who shall remain nameless, E.T.) gave me a rough time, demanding to know how seeing the Queen could be more important than seeing the guys! The Garden Party proved to be one of the highlights of my ministry. More highlights were to follow.

Because of parish commitments, the only event that I was able to attend at the 2007 Reunion was the Dinner on Saturday evening. I drove up for it and drove home soon afterwards. It was

definitely worth the effort though, to meet so many friends that I had not seen for forty years - another highlight. Finally, in 2008, Sher and I were able to be at the Reunion from early Saturday morning until late Saturday night. Bill Cleasby had invited me to lead the Drum Head Service, such a privilege. To lead the service before so many fellow Arborfield Old Boys was



overwhelming and humbling, and I felt that, at last, I was able to give something back to a place that had given so much to me. The highlights were getting higher! *(The colour photograph shows me officiating at a Reunion Drum Head Service)*

During the afternoon barbecue, David Ashton Jones, the Garrison Verger (alongside me during the Drum Head Service), asked if I would be available, and willing, to lead the Dawn Service on 11th November. The Garrison chaplain had been posted out and his replacement was not expected until the New Year. As I had no parish commitments, I readily agreed; it is difficult to explain the atmosphere at that service. We were quite a large gathering at the monument, on the lawn of the Sgts' Mess, standing in silence on that chilly, slightly misty November dawn, waiting for the light to become strong enough for us to read the words on the Order of Service. As the words became clear, I inhaled to read the opening sentence, simultaneously it 'dawned' on me that, 90 years ago, at that precise moment, the Armistice to end the First World War was being signed. At that very moment! The relevance was so moving that the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. That

thought moves me still, even as I write. Here I was, back at Arborfield, being allowed, again, to give something back. An even higher highlight.

As David drove me around the old familiar places (shadows and echoes, now), I asked him what the procedure was at the two minutes' silence. He said that a gun was fired at 11am and, wherever people were, they stopped working for two minutes, after which the gun was fired again and work continued. There was only one place I wanted to be for the two minutes' silence and that was with Bill, and all my friends, at the REME Museum. And so, at 10.30am, David and I popped into the Museum to see Bill and to

ask for his permission to join him at 11am, after which sat in the shop cafe with a cuppa. After a few minutes, Bill sat down with us and asked if we and the Museum staff could meet in one of the rooms there, and would I begin and end the two minutes' silence with a short prayer. I, of course, leapt at the opportunity. Studying, with two of their teachers, was a party of, about twelve Junior School children. They were scattered among the displays, making notes and drawing relevant items and they were all wearing gas-mask boxes. I asked one of the teachers if the boxes contained anything. She said, "Yes, their sandwiches!" We met, as planned, in the Medal Room (where better?) just before 11am, and the children, with their teachers, came in, too. We stood, different generations but of one mind, for two minutes of absolute silence. Again, the relevance of the moment 'dawned' on me. Ninety years previously, to the second at 11am, the guns of the First World War ceased, silence like no other. It was so moving, and I remember thinking that, surely, 'Remembrance' is safe in the hands of children such as these. Another highlight.

Sher and I were able to stay for the whole of the weekend of the 2009 Reunion (thank you, Bill),

prevented me from taking the 2010 Drum Head Service, although, thanks to Phil and Megan Graham's invitation to their Thursday Evening's Barbecue, and Michael White's thoughtful offer of accommodation, I did have a flavour of the weekend. On Friday morning, I was able to pop into the Museum for a short visit, because I needed to be home, by lunchtime, to take up those parish duties.

David (Tich) Schofield had e-mailed me earlier in the year, to ask if he could nominate me at the 2010 Reunion AGM, for the position of AOBA official Chaplain; I found it impossible to refuse. At 3pm on the 25th November 2010, Bill Cleasby confirmed, by telephone, that the nomination had

been accepted. In my ministry, so far, there has not been a higher highlight. As I mentioned earlier, Arborfield has given much, and now, as the AOBA Chaplain, I feel that I am able to give back even more. My journey has travelled full circle, from Arborfield (11.1.1966) to Arborfield (25.11.2010).

Experiences and highlights will, of course, continue; but today, I thank God for those words, 'I'LL STICK YOU DOWN AS C of E!' and I thank God that A/T Cpl Johnny Hartley spoke them.

God Bless you Johnny.

I did it my Way! (Part 2) by Gerald 'Gerry' Hincks, 56B, 'B' Company

Working in the desert

The military set-up in Libya was such that there would be an infantry battalion in Tripoli, with one company detached to Benghazi. A cavalry regiment would similarly be stationed in Benghazi, with one troop in Tripoli. Brigade HQ was in Tripoli. Thus it came about that 'A' Coy moved to Benghazi, with me as attached fitter, to look after about five vehicles, which was a doddle. We always worked a full day and did guard duty. However I noticed that 62 Station Wksp REME, next door to us, had a Unit Repair Section (URS) that did running repairs on all the station transport, but they were a bit stretched, so I helped from time to time. I also discovered that the Wksp only worked from 0700hrs - 1300 hrs, then it was off to the beach with families for the afternoon. The Wksp CO was also the senior REME officer in Libya. I duly approached him and proposed that he attached me to his strength, so that I could work in the URS on all the station transport. 'A' Coy vehicles could be booked in for repairs as and when necessary. He duly spoke to my OC, telling him how desperate he was for experienced mechanics and that he could arrange temporary attachment for the remainder of our tour. It was a master-stroke. I remained attached to the workshop for the remainder of my stay in Benghazi and had every afternoon off. The CSM was apoplectic, but could do nothing about it, as it had been agreed with 'A' Coy Commander.

One type of vehicle we had to repair was a small *Bedford* tanker, used to empty the septic tanks of the families' accommodation blocks. They always stank to high heavens and we hated them coming in. They were all driven by Arab drivers, who had

two interesting ploys. If they decided that they didn't want to work, they would get a balk of wood and drive it up the inlet pipe at the back of the truck. This prevented the rotary evacuator pump from filling the tank. It doesn't take much imagination to realise what a stinking job it was to remove said blockage! The second ploy was to remove such things as wiper blades, spark plugs, fuses, light bulbs etc and replace them with faulty items. Naturally, when they came in for servicing or repairs, these would all be replaced with brand new items. As soon as the truck left the URS, the drivers would take them somewhere down town, where all the brand new items would be removed and replaced with worn but operable items. The new items then found their way into various local garages and shops! We soon became wise to this and refused to replace anything with brand new items if it could be avoided.

When we first arrived in Benghazi, we lived in the top flat of a block of four. As there was no lift, it was a pain to get our heavy wooden MFO boxes up all the stairs. The block was served by a water-tank, situated on the roof. It was filled by an electric pump on the ground floor, switched on and off by a microswitch connected to the ballcock. The owner of the block wanted to regain possession, so he adopted the ploy of switching off the pump at strange hours and telling us it was 'broken'. When this occurred, the tank had to be filled by a military water bowser, which tended to disturb the silt at the bottom of the tank. The water then became contaminated with the jaundice bug. Rosemary subsequently contracted the disease and had a long spell in BMH Benghazi to recover. I've never seen anyone quite so yellow skinned! Because of the owner's activities with the pump, we later left this block

and moved into a brand new block of six flats - which we soon discovered had been taken over by cockroaches prior to our arrival! The water-tank in the new block sometimes would overflow and pour water down into the open space in the centre of the flats. One day I climbed onto the roof to raise the ballcock to stop the overflow. The water level completely covered the ball-valve, which unbeknown to me, also activated an electrical cut-off switch. I discovered this fact when I plunged my hand into the water. The subsequent shock almost threw me off the five-storeys high roof, another lesson learned! Coming back to the matter of cockroaches, I came home one lunchtime to hear Rosemary say, *"Go into the kitchen and see the size of the cockroach I've killed, it's in the dust-pan"*. I duly went to examine said 'beastie', only to discover that it had managed to crawl into a corner, and yes, it was very large! They were very difficult to kill, except under a size twelve boot. We were issued with two aerosol cans of DTD to keep them under control. They used to invade the kitchen every night in the dark. The favourite trick was to go in, switch on the light and then bash away with a fly swat before they all disappeared.

Across a wide expanse of open ground opposite the block was a timber yard, surrounded by a tall brick wall. Against this wall were several shanty houses constructed of wood, cardboard and wriggly tin. One occupant, a young Arab taxi-driver, owned a *Mercedes* taxi that we tended to use. We learned that he had married a thirteen-year old girl and, because she had not born him a child by the time she was fifteen, he had divorced her and married again to another thirteen-year old. They now had had two children - and she was still only sixteen (how the other half lives!).

Life in Benghazi was very laid back - work in the mornings, swimming in the Med every afternoon. We would take the workshop minibus and go up the coast to a nice little cove and enjoy ourselves. The married soldiers would bring sandwiches etc and the 'singlies' would bring the beers and a good time was had by all. I recall learning to swim at this location. This was achieved by the simple expedient of my 'mates' telling me to jump from a rock pinnacle into the sea, well out of my depth I might add, with the simple phrase, *"We'll make sure you don't drown"*. Of course they did no such thing and waited for me to beach myself on a coral shelf, which did my arms and legs no good at all - as all the wounds quickly became very septic and took ages to heal, as coral is very poisonous to open wounds.

It was during this time that our second child, a girl, was born in BMH Benghazi - quite an experience, as I had missed the birth of our son. The midwife and I were the only persons present at the time. I did offer to assist her by injecting my wife with an anti-coagulant, because the nurse had her hands full with the baby, but, not surprisingly, both she and my wife declined. It was also while we were in Benghazi that we had the sadness of attending the funeral of Ann Clapcott, the wife of Roger, who was also an ex-Arborfield Apprentice. She died of peritonitis and was only 21-years old.

Back to UK - 'A' Vehicles at last

In February 1966, just before the coup by Colonel Gadhafi to unseat King Idris, whilst he was taking his customary stay in Malta, the regiment was posted back to UK, to Colchester. I was only there for two months before being posted to 16/5 Lancers at Tidworth, on a tour where I could at last use my 'A' vehicle training, as the vehicle fleet was Mk 13 *Centurions*. I was attached to 'A' Sqn under a Tiffy who had transferred from the regiment into REME - so he really 'knew his onions' where tanks were concerned. This period was passed in keeping the fleet up to scratch and attending gunnery camps. There was one occasion, where I was attending to an ignition fault on the aux generator engine on the firing line. The task involved changing the contact breaker (CB) points. Just as I was about to fit the new ones, without any warning to me, the gun was fired. The back-blast made me deaf and nearly blew me from the engine decks. Consequently, that set of CB points is still lying somewhere in the long grass of Lulworth!

It was here that I renewed my acquaintance with the ubiquitous *International* half-track, which by this time had become quite sophisticated. It now carried an articulated jib to give extra lift and also to allow it to fold almost flat to the top of the vehicle. On the roof was a tank to carry coolant. Inside, there was storage for tools, food, cooking equipment, personal kit and bunk-beds for the crew of four. They were a far cry from the prototype that I had encountered in 1960. I have never known a half-track to become bogged down and need recovery, even when pulling a trailer with a spare assembly on board. During the tour with the Lancers I had the good fortune to go to Denver in Colorado, for an exercise with the American cavalry. (**This was quite an education and could well be the subject of another article!*) But - back to Tidworth! I came home one day with a very bad headache, I think it was a Friday. During the evening this became steadily worse, until I

was forced into lying down. In the middle of the night, the headache became so excruciating that, on trying to get out of bed, I collapsed in a heap on the floor. The usual medication had no effect and I eventually became delirious. This persisted all night.

On Saturday morning my wife called the Medical Centre for a doctor to visit, but by mid-day, no doctor had called. However in the afternoon, a friend in the Army Air Corps, who we had known in Benghazi, came to visit from Middle Wallop. On seeing my condition, and being told of the unsuccessful attempt to get a doctor to call he, being a forthright Manxman, called the Medical Centre, played merry hell, and within ten minutes there was an ambulance outside the door. On arriving at BMH Tidworth, I was examined and immediately put into isolation, as I was diagnosed as having meningitis. I recovered after a week on bucket loads of antibiotics and happily am still around to tell the tale!

Posted as a Tiffy

In 1967 I left the Lancers to attend 221 Artificer Vehicle course at SEME, having passed the selection course about nine months earlier. This needs no elaboration! I was subsequently posted onto the strength of 43 Command Wksp at York. It was only after visiting the unit during post-course leave that I discovered I was to be stationed at Bestwood Lodge, Arnold, the outskirts of Nottingham. However the journey wasn't wasted, as we went up in my brother's *Ford Anglia* and, as the motorway didn't have a speed limit and was also mostly devoid of traffic, we were able to test the car to its limits. Yes, a 998cc *Anglia* can do 85 miles an hour! Bestwood Lodge used to be the home of Nell Gwynn and was situated in the middle of a park, on a hill, in very picturesque surroundings. The only houses around were about twenty ORs' quarters and about ten officers' quarters. The lodge contained the headquarters of East Midlands District and I was to be a member of a travelling PRE (Periodic REME Examination) team. The team comprised a major (Maj Ken Negus, now sadly departed together with wife Gwen), myself and two civilian inspectors, to examine all mechanical equipments in the district; and a Weapons Tiffy plus another civilian to examine all weapons. We had a *Morris* J2 minibus, which contained all the EMERs pertinent to the equipment for which we had responsibility and which I drove from location to location. The OC had a *Morris Minor* estate car at his convenience, to visit units and present the subsequent reports.

This posting stood me in good stead as a new Artificer. I learned a great deal from my civilian

counterparts, as they had been doing the job for years. One of them was very thorough, without nit-picking, and he became my mentor. The other guy could pick nits for England! I remember he lived at North Hykeham, near Lincoln. It didn't matter where we were working, he would always travel to and from home every day, in order to claim expenses (which was allowed, as he was a civilian). Whereas the other guy and myself would take sleeping bags and doss down in the TA halls when we were a long way from home. The range of equipment was enormous, including all kinds of cranes, for which there was a special programme, as the test weights had to be ferried around the country to a strict timetable. There were *Antar* MK 3 tank-transporters, forklift trucks, a huge miscellany of vehicles and plant and even bicycles. Pressure vessels were also included, so the knowledge gained from this posting set me up for many tasks in later years.

Off to BAOR

In June 1970 came a posting to 7 Armd Wksps in Fallingbommel. There I served time in the URS, also the Forward Repair Section (FRS). Then latterly in the planning office, where the workshop-repair loading was programmed. The FRS also carried out the PREs in the armoured units. Teams (FRTs) were equipped with *FV434* REME repair vehicles, which would travel at about 31 mph flat out. Most of the workload was at Hohn, across the Luneburg Heath. There was always a bet on to see who could drive a *434* in either direction without the gearbox coming out of top gear! I have to tell you that there were only one or two successes, because the power-packs had covered a lot of miles. One of the major tasks of the FRTs was to carry out a major modification on all *FV430* series vehicles, to align the gearboxes to the final-drives, as so many final-drive couplings were becoming damaged. This was serious, as loss of a coupling gave rise to loss of steering and braking, with all that could entail. It was a very onerous task, involving using a dial test indicator (DTI), to check the extent of any misalignment, remove the gearbox, insert shims, install gearbox and recheck. Alignment was not guaranteed on first attempts and was a very frustrating exercise, because shims couldn't be inserted or removed without taking out the gearbox on the *FV433 Abbot* self-propelled gun version. It was during this time that our Colonel-in-Chief HRH the Duke of Edinburgh paid a visit to our unit, where we entertained him in the Sgts' Mess for a brief period.

In June 1973 I moved on to REME Technical Services in Dusseldorf. My task was to investigate 'A' vehicle defects arising within BAOR. The tour

was very good and involved another visit to America, at the School of Artillery in Maryland, to attend a course on the M113 *Lance* missile carrier. (**Recollections of this visit are also worthy of an article at some future time.**) My wife and I had a series of caravans while at Dusseldorf and became members of the Services Caravan Club. This allowed us to attend rallies all over Germany and Holland. We also had a memorable trip to St Tropez, where our youngest son, born in the BMH at RAF Wegburg in 1973, caught 'monsoon blisters', necessitating a non-stop drive back to camp - because no-one knew what the affliction was until we saw the nurse in the Medical Centre. She had served in Hong Kong and recognised the symptoms and how to treat them. Luckily, this all occurred at the end of the holiday, so nothing was lost. One aspect of this posting was the amount of live firing we did. It was as though they wanted us to expend all the ammo in the Garrison! We had to go on to the ranges every Friday without fail. I have to say that I fired more ammunition in Dusseldorf than in all my other postings put together. Mess life was memorable and six of the couples we met there remain stalwart friends. We still meet each year at each of our homes in turn, where there is much reminiscing over glasses of red or white wine and where we all catch up on what our respective offspring and what our children are doing with their lives.

During my time at Dusseldorf, I was promoted to WO2 - and this eventually led to selection for promotion to WO1 and a posting to 65 Corps Support Squadron Royal Engineers, in Hameln. This was another brilliant posting, where I learned so much about how the 'other' engineers work, with their wide variety of engineering plant. In addition, 28 Amphibious Regt was opposite our park, so I was in a position to learn all about the M2 floating bridge and also to experience them in action whilst on exercise - what a brilliant piece of equipment. Whilst in Hameln, we attended the massive military parade at Senelager for the Queen's Jubilee in 1977. It was quite a sight to see so many armoured equipments on parade and the ensuing drive-past.

Commissioned

In 1979 I was selected for commissioning and duly attended a course at the REME Officers' Wing at Arborfield. Following this I was posted to the strength of 31 Command Wksp at Bridgend in Wales, but stationed at Sennybridge, near Brecon, to run the civilian workshop detachment, which maintained all the loan equipment for TA troop training. We also carried out repairs to equipment brought to the training area by regular units. The tour was uneventful and lasted until 1981, when I moved to 1 Div

Regt RCT in Bunde. This was another backwater posting, with little excitement apart from 'Crash-outs' and regular exercises. In 1982 I returned to UK for a posting to the Logistic Executive (Army) at Andover in Hampshire, to carry out a one-off project concerned with Forward Reporting. And then, in November 1983, came a move out to the Falkland Islands, as OC of 37 Engineer Regt RE, REME Wksps, on a roulement tour of four-and-a-half months. (**This again is worth a stand-alone article, as it was so eventful, but more of that at another time.**)

On return to UK, I again found myself at SEME, on the staff as planning officer for Young Officer training. I was here that I bumped into Pete 'Scouse' Gripton, another old 56B colleague, now a civvie and running the SPEC computer at Bordon. (*But I wasn't bugging you for OBAN articles then, Gerry! Ed.*) This was another routine posting and in 1986, on promotion to Major, I moved to London, to the MoD Quality Assurance (QA) Directorate, located in St Christopher House in Southwark Street, near the Thames. This was a good posting, as my responsibilities were to deal with quality checks on *Challenger* and *Warrior* armoured vehicles, coming off the production lines at Leeds and Telford. A *Challenger* check would take six weeks and a *Warrior* three weeks, so it meant pleasant breaks away from London. There were also trips to the Isle of Wight, in connection with production of NBC filters for *Challenger*. The posting also gave me an insight into civilian production methods and industry. This eventually led to me getting an appointment, in 1989, as QA manager with a civilian company, when I took early retirement from the Army. They manufactured huge conveyors, handling paper bales for pulping to make newsprint; sorting systems for recycling and refuse handling were amongst other things. I held this position until 1996, when the appointment was made redundant due to a 'downturn'.

So, what to do? I was only 56, with a mortgage still to pay. Undeterred, I applied for a number of posts concerned with QA, but my age and lack of formal qualifications led to me eventually starting my own business, which I'm pleased to say prospered. I never had to seek any work, as my reputation preceded me - which goes to show that QA, when properly applied, does work! I eventually closed the business down in 2007/8 and now enjoy a bit of leisure time with Rose and the grandchildren. However, I still do the odd job as 'a favour', to prevent myself from becoming completely idle. So, here endeth the story of young Hincks, aged 15 years and 10 months when I started in 1956 - and soon to be a great grandfather aged 69!

From Sutton Veny to Suez— and Back.

by Fred Hayward, 45A

When reading about Eddie Broomfield's early Army service (OBAN51), it brought back memories of my own early days, some of which I thought I had almost forgotten. I do remember how 'cocky' we ex-boys were, once we marched out of the old main gates for the last time. The Regular REME Craftsman course I was on was originally split between two barrack rooms in Hazebrouk, the rest of each room being occupied by National Service recruits. After deciding which room we would prefer, we then unceremoniously dumped the others' kits into the corridor!

I too was selected for the six-week Leadership Course with the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards at Aldershot. That was in February 1949 and I recall only too well being 'scalped', as well as all the scrubbing and re-blancoring of all our webbing to the Guards colour. We then spent a 3-day exercise 'in the field' where, in spite of being cold and dirty, we were still expected to be 'spick and span', washed and shaved, on return to barracks. Relinquishing my lance-jack's stripe, I returned to 27 Command Workshops Warminster – and the awful slum-like huts at Sutton Veny Camp – which were just as Eddie described! I really hated that place and was very relieved when I was later posted to HQ 27 Infantry Brigade LAD REME and was soon on a troopship to Hong Kong after only four days embarkation leave.

After service in Hong Kong and the war in Korea, I returned to UK to complete my Artificer course (70 Arm Art Vehicle) and, on my 26th birthday in September 1955, returned to civilian life. But, as it transpired, not for long! In August 1956, I came home from *Marconi's* (where I was working as a draughtsman) to our new house in Chelmsford, to find a telegram instructing me to report immediately to Depot REME, as I was being recalled to the Colours. Obeying these orders, I dutifully turned up at the Depot Sergeants' Mess at Arborfield – where it was just like an Old Boys' Reunion!

I quickly discovered that I was being posted to 24 Port Workshops REME, a newly formed all-reservist unit but, horror of horrors, found that we were setting up in Sutton Veny camp – the one place in the world I had hoped never to see again! The next few weeks were very busy, collecting vehicles and equipment from Ordnance Depots in various parts of the country; getting the vehicles repainted from 'olive green' to 'sand'; and painstakingly checking and packing away hundreds of items of spares and tools.

By late October, the Suez crisis seemed to be going 'off the boil' so, after having been on 24-hour standby, our CO decided that he could risk having some of the unit off on a 48-hour leave pass. When it became my turn, my wife rang the

Mess to ascertain when I would be leaving, only to be told that I was no longer in the country! In a state of shock, after asking the inevitable "Where?" she was advised to read the next morning's headlines! In fact, by the time that she rang, I was on my way to RAF Lyneham, where we boarded a *Hastings* aircraft. After refuelling at Malta, we landed at Nicosia (Cyprus), before travelling to Limassol, where we joined the invasion fleet.

On the day that we arrived at Port Said (November 6th), we were told that we had authority to find suitable premises, so we took over a garage, after politely asking the Egyptian owner and his family to leave. We then pushed all of his cars out onto the street and moved in. By now, landing ships were arriving thick and fast, loaded with vehicles for all the varying units, and our task was to ensure that they could all be either driven off or 'seen to'. It was decided that Don James (a fellow Tiffy) and I, along with a small team, would relocate right on the quayside, in a small contractor's hut beside De Lessop's statue, where Don and I decided to work 12-hours on-and-off shifts. One day, after working furiously all night getting ships unloaded, my team and I were lying on our makeshift beds when a 'brass-hat', direct from the War Office, came in and looked around. He asked "Who's in charge here?" Still lying down, I admitted that I was! He then said, "Tell me, are you soldiers or reservists?" Upon getting the reply, he shook his head sadly and walked out!

We stood by to assist the arrival of some United Nations contingents, but found that the Yugoslav troops were aggressively anti-British; the Norwegians were determined to remain strictly neutral; while we shared plenty of beers and laughs with the Canadians. As regards our 'allies', the nearest any of us came to being shot was when our *Scammell* recovery vehicle came face-to-face with a French Foreign Legion patrol, which took great exception to the captured Egyptian flag strung across its radiator!

When the date of the ignominious withdrawal was announced, we were busy 'modifying' Egyptian Army vehicles, by cutting through the chassis, filling the sumps with sand (no shortage of sand!) and running them with a brick wedged onto the accelerator. The Royal Signals reservists were doing similar things to the generators at the local telephone exchange. As we assumed that we would be reunited with our vehicles in the UK, we used the padlocked storage bins to good advantage, as there was a vast amount of various 'liberated' items about. The bonded warehouse, which was damaged in the early days of the occupation, ended up needing badly restocking by the time we withdrew!

We sailed away from Port Said on December 22nd, sailing on the *Astorias* and arriving back on New Year's Eve. It was back to the dreaded Sutton Veny, where the very peace-time staff expected us to stay and demobilize. They didn't reckon with us reservists, so our CO marched into the Orderly Room, demanded a pad of rail travel passes, filled them in for us – and then we were off! We never encountered any repercussions from that 'self-demobilisation' – but then, neither did we ever get reunited with our store-binned vehicles! Whoever eventually unlocked

them at some vehicle depot must have been happily surprised.

In 2003, my wife and I landed briefly in Port Said and I went to show her, amongst other things, the garage we had taken over so many years previously. I didn't, however, go in and introduce myself because, for one thing, I was no longer carrying my .38" service revolver!

Up the Pole. By Chas Pepper. 43A

In the early 1970s I visited the Model Engineering Exhibition at Wembley, a wonderful display of skills in all aspects of miniature engineering. Among the exhibits there was an area in which impressively constructed model aircraft were flying on 30-foot lines around a central pole. 'Round The Pole' (RTP) flying caught my interest, as it seemed well suited to a back garden – so a basic kit was purchased on the spot. The kit was very basic – a simple transformer, a speed controller and a pole with brass strip contacts and relevant wiring. The plane was made of sheet balsa-wood, driven by a small motor. The kit worked all right, but was hardly satisfying after seeing the great models flying at the exhibition.

Purists could say that RTP is not true flight, as centrifugal force is a component of the lift – but that was its advantage, allowing heavier models than free-flight types to fly. Winter evenings were then spent making a model of my own design and then testing it whenever the weather allowed. There was a wide range of advanced equipment and motors available, allowing a large number of different types of aircraft to be built. Experiments were tried out, even a jet – using a paper cup as the jet tube. The difference in diameters between entrance and compressed-air outlet gave a good thrust. The two best flyers in 'bumpy' air were an Auto gyro and a 'pusher' – propeller behind the wing, modeled upon a 1915 'gun bus'. Both would float to the ground if motor trouble occurred. I tried making a form of helicopter, but without success. Its method of flight went against the principles of RTP.

Inevitably the thought arose – how fast could one of these models go? The layout for the test was a 30-volt transformer which would allow for the resistance of the circuit; the central pole was 4.5 feet high; the slip-rings replaced with two ball-bearings, lubricated with Electro lube and con-

nected to the 11-foot line, tethering and passing power to the flying model that had proved the

fastest of my collection. Once the 11-foot line was flown to the horizontal, the power would be applied and the r.p.m. counted. Basic mathematics showed the speed as around 11 m.p.h. – curiosity satisfied!

Time passes and joints stiffen, causing me to give up RTP, which requires much kneeling, setting out cables to the pole and tensioning the pole in the ground. But, like all hobbies, other factors can be seen. When trying to get my first basic model to fly, there was utter failure. Like the early aviators, I blamed the condition of the air, so I set tufts of wool all over the flying site and surrounds, but what I found was surprising. Although not immediately obvious, we are surrounded by turbulence – air spilling over fences, like water spilling out of a bath; pressure fronts against vertical surfaces; and shrubbery setting up its own local turbulence. All of this aroused an interest in the subject. The failure to fly was not due to 'bad air'; I had set all the controls correctly. But I was now much wiser in respect of the behaviour of the air around us.

While teaching Motor Vehicle Engineering in Further Education, perhaps the behaviour of air flowing into an engine, laminar flows in pipes and the venture effects in carburetors should have raised my curiosity – but the syllabus had to be covered, not leaving much time for reflection upon these peculiar behaviours. Dried falling leaves expose air currents at ground level. Two extreme examples: a group of leaves 'dancing' up a sloping road, suddenly doing a right turn through a gap in the hedge and being scattered across the adjacent field – venture effect? A slowly rotating circular mass of leaves, 4 feet in diameter and 6 inches deep, situated in the entrance to a large

department store. It was Autumn and the movement seemed to be caused by heated air coming out of the store and meeting the cold air of the street. A most curious sight, though it generated little interest in the shoppers, who walked carefully around it!

And so, when flying off next time to your holiday resort, take a close look at the plane's wings and give a nod of appreciation to Aeolus, the God of Winds, whose air-flows both above and below the wings are keeping you aloft!

A Working Life. by Fred Mills, 51B

When I left the Army after nine years of service, I first tried to settle down in my home town of Peterborough, close to my family. The usual problems occurred – where to find a suitable job and where exactly to live. Unfortunately, no suitable employment presented itself in Peterborough, and I was forced to commute backwards and forwards to Cambridge. After six months of that, I was back at the Recruiting Office! "You should be back in the Army within weeks", I was assured. They should have consulted the doctor first! On my medical, I was told that I was overweight and so could not re-enlist. I tried to persuade the doctor that, as a prop forward in a rugby team, I needed to be that heavy. Five months later and four stone lighter, I was at last allowed to join up again.

I was much wiser, some sixteen years later, when I left Scales Branch to return to 'civvie street'. Within that time-span, I had built my own bungalow, so there was no problem in where I was going to live now! I started working as a lecturer with ICL, teaching computer maintenance to their engineers – but it was back to the old 'commuting' once again! One

weekend a couple of years later, I noticed a job vacancy notice for a manager's position with *Servisystem*, an international company based in Peterborough. This offered more money, a company car – and an end to commuting. I thank-

fully got the job and, sometime later, was promoted to the position of 'district director'.

I then joined the local 'Chamber of Commerce' and got myself involved with local industries and 'twinning' committees. I was eventually elected as President of the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, which helped me considerably, as shortly I was to be made redundant, the company having decided that they didn't need so many directors. I now made the decision to form my own company, specializing in the provision of cleaning and maintenance contracts to various agricultural and sporting events. In hindsight, I wish I'd been made redundant earlier, as life now became more challenging – but the money was rolling in! So much so that I was soon able to take 'early retirement' and sat back to enjoy a good pension and have lots of time to spend with my family.



Joseph 'Joe' Mellor—How he and his wife became my Godparents

by John Worland, 52B

Joe Mellor joined the RAOC as a 'boy-entrant' in 1904 at Woolwich and stayed in the RAOC up to 1929, when he transferred into the Indian Civil Service (ICS - known as the 'Heaven Born'). During his service he was posted to Sierre Leone from 1913 to 1914 (known as the 'white man's grave' - his service there was counted as 'double' i.e. 1 year = 2 years service). During that service, he was sent with a 'shipment of arms' across the German Congo to our forces in East Africa (the 'stories' were very interesting - we can all possibly guess what he was really doing!).

He was posted to France in December 1914 and was awarded the three medals for WW1 (known as 'Pip', 'Squeak' and 'Wilfred'), but was not awarded the 'Bar' (Aug 5 to Nov 22). Joe was 'Mentioned in Dispatches' (MID - 'Oak Leaf') in Dec 1917 and was then awarded a 'Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) in May 1919 - for 'duty' not for 'gallantry' (would anybody like to explain?). He was awarded his LS&GC medal in Oct 1921 (with a 'gratuity' of £5.00, which was not paid until March 1926 - how do you explain that?).

Along with his wife, he was posted to India in 1929 (they were on the same ship as my parents from England to India). My father had just finished his 18 months of 'courses' and 'leave' (he had transferred from the 'Lincolns' in 1922 into the Indian AOC) so, over the years up to my birth in Oct 1936, they both kept bumping into each other at different postings. 'Uncle Joe', as I called him, later became a CCMA (Civil Chief Master Ar-

When I joined AAS Arborfield, Joe and his wife lived at Beaconsfield, where I used to go and stay with them, and it was on the strength of his worldly advice that I became a 'Gun- Fitter' and not an 'Armourer'. For me, the rest is 'history' and a story for another day. However, Uncle Joe's nephew gave me permission to add the following details of what may possible be titled 'Gun Fitting in the 1860s & 1870s'.

Gold and Silver Artillery

The Gaekwar of Baroda, an Indian Prince, has a battery of artillery consisting of gold and silver guns. There are four guns - two of gold and two of silver. The gold guns were made in 1874 by an artisan of Lakha, who worked on them for five years. They weigh 400 pounds each and, except for the steel lining, are of solid gold. They are mounted on gun carriages of carved wood, overlaid with silver. In 1876, when the Gaekwar went to Bombay to meet the Prince of Wales, he took the gold guns with him to salute the Prince, and that was the only occasion on which they have been allowed to leave the State of Baroda. (extract from the London Globe)

THREE POUNDER
Cast under the orders of His Highness the

Serial No.	Name and description of the article	No.	Weight in Tolas	Price in Rupees	Remarks
1	The Silver Gun	1	5,920-0-0 with steel tube	2,420-0-0 40-0-0 2,460-0-0	A salute of 21 guns was fired from this gun, in honour of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh (Queen Victoria's second son) when His Highness Maharaja Khanderao went to Bombay, to meet him in 1870.
2	The Brass Carriage	1	...	260-0-0	
3	The Brass Limber	1	...	155-0-0	
4	The Silver Horn Covers	4	252-8-0	414-6-0	
5	The Silver Head Stalls	2	244-4-0	129-12-6	
6	The Standard	1	...	37-0-0	
7	The Driver's Stick	1	28-14-0	22-4-6	
8	The Silver Chains	2	284-0-0	280-0-0	
9	The Silver Slight with a Screw	1	23-7-0	8-12-6	

SILVER GUN
Maharaja Khanderao Gaekwad of Baroda in 1860

Serial No.	Name and description of the article	No.	Weight in Tolas	Price in Rupees	Remarks
10	The Silver Head Covers	2	224-6-0	99-10-9	
11	The Brass Yoke	1	...	7-0-0	
12	The Brass Bucket	1	...	4-3-6	
13	The Crests	2	40-0-0	25-0-0	
14	The Trappings	2	...	300-0-0	
15	The Head Covers	2	...	35-0-0	
16	The Handkerchiefs	8	...	13-0-0	
17	The Reins	2	...	44-6-0	
18	The Nose Ropes	2	...	14-1-9	
19	The Silken Throat Pads	2	...	47-2-0	
				Total Rs. 4,350-11-6	

THREE POUNDER
Cast under the orders of His Highness the

Serial No.	Name and description of the article	No.	Weight in Tolas	Price in Rupees	Remarks
1	The Gold Gun	1	8,176-0-0	2,04,400-0-0 400-0-0 2,04,800-0-0	With Steel Tube
2	The Silver Carriage	1	...	4,853-5-4	
3	The Silver Limber	1	...	6,287-14-4	
4	Gold Horn Covers	4	682-6-0	16,380-10-0	
5	The Gold Head Stalls	2	263-5-7	6,369-6-3	
6	The Gold Standard	1	26-6-0	907-10-11	
7	The Driver's Stick	1	34-0-0	277-8-0	
8	The Gold Slight & Screw	2	28-2-4	614-10-0	
9	The Ram Rod	1	110-0-0	85-7-6	

GOLD GUN
Maharaja Malharao Gaekwad of Baroda in 1875

Serial No.	Name and description of the article	No.	Weight in Tolas	Price in Rupees	Remarks
10	The Charge Extractor	1	100-0-0	75-11-3	
11	The Yoke	1	215-0-0	180-2-9	
12	The Bucket	1	232-0-0	174-6-0	
13	The Crests	2	...	54-0-0	
14	The Trappings	2	...	12,000-0-0	
15	The Head Covers	2	...	...	
16	The Handkerchiefs	8	...	75-0-0	
17	The Reins	2	298-0-0	450-0-0	
18	The Nose Ropes	2	77-0-0	160-0-0	
19	Throat Pads	2	84-0-0	171-12-0	
				Total Rs. 2,53,917-8-4	

HIS HIGHNESS' BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS.



THE A. D. C. - IN - WAITING

IS COMMANDED BY

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA BAHADUR

TO INVITE

Mr & Mrs J. Mullier

TO AN EVENING PARTY AT THE RAJGARH PALACE, ON Saturday

THE 21st Sept 1935, AT 9.30 P.M.

DRESS : EVENING DRESS OR
ACHKANS & COLOURED SAFAS.

P. T. O.

R. S. V. P.

mour) in the ICS, but still attached to the RAOC, and retained that post all through WW2 until 1945, when we all had to leave India.

Recollections of Extra-Curricular Training.

by Bryan Adams, Oct'42

As far as I can recall, never mentioned in the long history of *OBAN* has been a remarkable period when a certain programme of additional training was carried out, very close to home, mostly within Arborfield Garrison. It is worthy of record as being perhaps the most interesting of the further training that ex-Apprentices were subjected to, during the earliest days of their having left the School. I cannot remember exactly for how long this particular programme was implemented, but it was certainly in being in that period shortly after the end of the Second World War. The course that I attended took place in the early months of 1948, firstly at Poperinghe Barracks (before it became the REME Depot) for regimental training and then, at Hazebrouck Barracks for instruction in driving, vehicle waterproofing and tank recovery. I think that Hazebrouck was then called 'Vehicle Wing'.

Our group comprised eight Craftsmen and was drawn from a representative mix of trades, of which I happened to be an Armourer. The first stage was elementary instruction in light weapons, mainly memorable for schooling in use of the No.36 (*Mills*) grenade. At the rear of the camp (Poperinghe) was a bombing range – and it was there that our collective anxiety came to the fore! Shaking fingers, priming the grenade, was followed by that dreaded feeling, that the spring-loaded lever held in the palm of the hand, was all ready to fly away once the safety-pin was withdrawn. However, the NCO instructor in the throwing bay was really great and we all survived the experience without incident.

Our follow-up venture was to move across to Hazebrouck for the next stage of our education – to be able to handle, with some confidence, a somewhat abused WD motor-cycle. (Younger readers need to know that 'WD' stood for War Department.) One has to imagine what it was like, for this small group of novices, attempting to circulate the barrack square without coming to any minor grief. Initially it was hilarious, but surprisingly quickly we gained enough competence to be taken out on the public roads, before being advanced to the next stage – driving four-wheeled vehicles. Firstly we drove 15-cwt vehicles and then on to 3-ton *Bedfords*, thoughtfully laden down with pig-iron, so that starting and pulling away on an upward slope was none too easy. If one ignored the protests from the 'crash' gearbox, it all proved to be quite pleasant, driving on what was a decent circuit – down through Ever-

sley as far as Hartley Wintney, along the A30 to Hook, then heading from there up to Reading, before heading back to Arborfield. This period ended with the instructor's assessment – and a pass here gave the prospect of obtaining a full civil driving licence, as well as a WD driving permit when necessary.

The next item on this interesting agenda was how to prepare a vehicle for disembarking from a landing craft into several feet of water. Our instructor led us through the theory and practice of water-proofing, after which we were divided into pairs, to set about preparing a range of different vehicles, from a 3-ton *Bedford* down to a *Jeep*. The final test was to drive one's vehicle down a steep ramp into a static water-tank, then out the other end, without stalling the engine. Descend-



ing the wet (imaginary landing craft) ramp, in a slow and controlled manner, hardly seemed possible – but the threat was that, anyone whose

engine **did** cut out in the water would have the personal task of attaching the tow-rope!

The water in the tank was deep enough to reach the *Bedford's* windscreen and, once clear of the bottom of the ramp, there followed an anxious few seconds waiting for the vehicle to sink, so that forward motion could be achieved. This vehicle area and its accompanying water-tank was sited in the area that later became Princess Marina College. It is believed that this considerable facility was originally installed to develop and prove water-proofing techniques in the months leading up to D-Day in 1944.



Our final stage of instruction was to learn how to recover disabled tanks from seemingly impossible situations. We were transported daily across to Crookham Common (near Aldershot), which was then a pitted derelict area that seemed to us like a 'tank graveyard'. Here, we were instructed



in the merits of different winch-cable layouts, and how to secure ground anchors by driving in pickets with a sledge hammer. It was all very labour intensive – but a great experience to add to our now extended education.

You may well ask what was the purpose of this extraordinary course of instruction. In hindsight, it does seem quite odd for an Instrument Mechanic to be concerned with tank recovery – or for an Armourer to be able to prepare vehicles for wading. The reasons remain unknown – but the 'Cold War' was underway, so perhaps there was a policy to make REME tradesmen more

widely useful, in preparation for any major conflict. It is strange that I never did find out 'the name' of this course – and no mention of it ever appeared in my Pay-book or Record of Service, perhaps because it never warranted an increase in pay. However, the reward for me was in passing the driving test, which then allowed me to obtain a full civilian licence and WD Driving Permit. A few months later, the latter became necessary to me for my first posting in Malaya, in order for me to drive the Mobile Workshop. Needless to say, I never again practiced either water-proofing or heavy recovery – but the memory of those diverting days of long ago still brings back feelings of considerable pleasure.

The enclosed 'action' photographs were taken with a miniature camera and are self-explanatory, even if the images are rather blurred. The group photograph was an 'end of



course' record, taken in late April 1948. Standing, left-to-right are: the Corporal instructor, yours truly, Wheatley, Sands, (?), Murtagh and Norman. Up in the cab is Burton and, on the trailer to the rear is Wynell-Mayo.



(Thanks for that 'blast from the past', Bryan. Perhaps it may jog a few memories from others who may have taken that particular course. Ed.)

Arborfield Old Boys' Association Webshop.

Here we have a few items that we hope are of interest to you. You can order and pay for using PAYPAL or credit/debit card. We have added 4% to the prices to cover this service, plus P&P of £1:50 per item. The shop is run by our Honorary Secretary Mike Davis, and he will also have items available at the annual reunions.

Ties



Original Company Colours £8 + £1:50 P&P

Lapel Badges

Very attractive Lapel Badge in Black and Gold

Approximately 25 x 20 mm. £3.40 + £1:50 P&P



Also available is a small quantity of Blazer Badges @ £10.60 + £1.50 P&P, and Mugs with the AOB A badge @ £5.88 + £1:50 P&P.

Please contact Mike for overseas carriage prices, and any other enquires.

The Last Informer By Peter Gripton 56B

During an all-too short period of time, the Army Technical Foundation College (ATFC), or 'boys' school' under its most widely loved title, issued a newsletter under the heading of 'Arborfield Informer'. The final issue of this erstwhile magazine announced that 'Intake 04A is the last in a long and distinguished tradition' – Amen to that. The Commanding Officer at the bitter end was Lt Col Andy Philips RE, who wrote the above few words as part of his 'Foreword' to the magazine's final appearance – the full text of which is published below:

"It is with great sadness that I wrote the foreword for this, the final edition of The Arborfield Informer. The magazine provides a record of life at the College and this edition once again highlights the breadth and variety of activities which have been undertaken during the course of the term.

I am not sure whether it is a result of the impending closure, but this term seems to have flown by even more quickly than usual. Indeed, it hardly seems plausible that in only a short time the College will cease to exist. Many people have questioned the wisdom of the closure decision, and only time will tell what the long-term impact on the technical corps will be; but, regardless of this, it is just very sad that 65 years of tradition is now drawing to a close. Many thousands of apprentices have passed out through the College's gates and, while the length and content of the course have changed over the years, the ethos of the College, and the value that apprentices bring to the Army as a whole, have not.

Intake 04A is the last in a long and distinguished tradition and you can all be justly proud of that. You can also be proud of what you have achieved during your 28 weeks at the College; you are

now trained soldiers and I am confident that you are well placed to deal with all the challenges that you will encounter at Phase 2 and beyond.

We will all have our own memories of our time at the ATFC – mine will be of the enthusiasm of the ATs and of the dedication and professionalism of the Permanent Staff. I would like to thank you all for the support that you have given to me during my 14 months in command – and to wish you all the best for whatever lies ahead. The Army is a small place and getting smaller, so I am sure our paths will cross again in the future."

The magazine also included a centre-page spread of articles written under the heading 'Old Boys' Interview', which took place on June 30th

2004. Thirteen Apprentices met up with six members of the Old Boys' Association who were then on the current staff of the College. The premise behind the meeting was that the 'young boys' would question the 'old boys' about all aspects of their military careers, in preparation for their own futures in the Army. Those members of staff who volunteered their thoughts were Mr Keith Evans, 45A; Major (ret'd) George Dixon, 43C; Major (ret'd) John Dewar, 45A; Mr Ken Williams, ex-Chepstow; Mr Andy Brown, 46A and Mr Mike Mullett, ex-staff member. It was recalled by John Dewar that he had been the Apprentice RSM of his intake – and responsible for leading Field Marshall Montgomery onto the Square to inspect their Passing-out Parade. What a proud moment that must have been!

E-mail sent in by John (Doc) Houghton (56B)

I have just read Graham Chiltons (53B) email in issue 52. I have the following comments to make.

1. Graham makes reference to the 105mm Pack Howitzer in the Gun Shop. This is incorrect as it was an American 75mm Pack Howitzer which I never encountered in service, and was an entirely different animal to the American 105mm.
2. He also mentioned the names of some of the instructors in the Gun Shop. I can con-

firm that Bert Kelly would have been the AQMS in charge during Grahams time as he was still an AQMS in charge of the Gun Shop when I entered in late 1957.

By this time (1957) SSgt Loftus had been promoted to AQMS, and had been moved to General Fitting Shop as WO in Charge under Capt Percy Chivers. New faces in the Gun Shop by this time were; SSgt Roy Raynor (young, good looking with flashing white teeth I recall) and Sgt Mauderson

E-mail sent in by Robin Moore, (58A)

Hi Pete, I see from the latest copy of the OBAN that you have resigned your position as editor. I would like to put on record the outstanding job you did as OBAN editor and putting together 'The Arborfield Apprentice' - I was fortunately able to have you sign my copy. You may not recall but you were our room corporal at one stage. You were enrolled in a weekly ONC class in Reading at the time and nearly always brought the latest 'rock and roll' 45, something we all enjoyed - we

were all 58A entrants. *(I certainly do recall that Robin was over in the UK from his then home in Australia, not long after the book had been published. He came down to visit me in my home in Hampshire and we spent a good hour or more chewing the fat, before I happily signed a copy of the book for him. Robin has since moved to Colorado and I was delighted to hear from him – as I would be for anyone else out there who wishes to contact me. Pete Gripton, 56B)*

The Editor's Apologises to Brian Atkins.

I must apologise to Brian Atkins, as the last couple of lines, of his article in OBAN 52 were missing. I had inadvertently cut them off when fitting the article to the available space. These are the missing lines.

I asked if I could go straight from Middlesbrough to the regiment, but was told 'no—you have to go via the Depot', meaning a journey of 400 miles, as opposed to just thirty. Anyway I joined 'the Greys' just as they were preparing to move to Germany.

Obituaries.

Colonel Robert Dawson Wheal, 1915-2011

Old friend Chas Pepper, 43B, sent me a newspaper cutting from his local newspaper, *'The Watford Observer'*. The article described the holding of *'a tribute concert in memory of band leader Colonel Bob Wheal'* and Chas was begging the question, *'Is he part of Arborfield's history?'* The article certainly gave a hint to that possibility, recording that the Bob Wheal in question *'went on to work in the Army Education Corps, building schools in Kenya. Back in the UK, he worked with the Army Apprentices School as senior education officer, transforming the lives of disadvantaged young men'*.

Chas certainly took exception to that particular term, *'disadvantaged'*, wondering where that came from, but the remainder of the article stirred my own personal interest. I could definitely recall the name *'Wheal'* from a previous copy of our own *OBAN*, and determined to check a little further. It was only as recently as *OBAN49* that Mo Hope, 59B, sent in a copy of the Passing-out Programme in 1962 for his intake and there, sure as eggs are eggs, appeared the title *'Senior Education Officer: Lt Colonel RD Wheal B Sc RAEC'*. And so, to answer Chas Pepper's question – yes, it would certainly appear so!

Going back to main gist of the newspaper article, Bob Wheal had become one of the longest-standing band leaders in the country, spending some thirty-six years leading his group with enthusiasm and character. He had founded *The Top Brass Jazz Orchestra* in 1974, his drive and love of jazz music remaining undimmed well into his nineties. Sadly, at the age of 95, Bob had a fall on his way home from a rehearsal and died in April 2011. The previous year he had written his autobiography, in which he remarked: *"I have been very lucky to have met and played with so many people who love music as much as I do. My greatest wish is for the band to carry on playing great music long after I have gone."*

I duly contacted the editorial staff at *The Watford Observer*, and was kindly given permission to use excerpts from their article in the piece that appears above. That tribute concert in memory of Colonel Bob Wheal took place at the Metropolitan Police Bushey Sports Centre on January 27th 2012. I must thank Chas Pepper for his eagle-eyed observation of his local paper and wonder if anyone who served at Arborfield around the same time, the early sixties, has any personal memories of our erstwhile SEO?

Pete Gripton, 56B

WO1(ASM) Fred 'Timber' Woods.

It is with regret that I inform you of the death of H-37B-A 7589702 Fred 'Timber' Wood Member No 1146 after a long illness aged 89 on the 18th May 2012.

Fred enlisted in Derby on the 1st October 1937 in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and started his Apprenticeship at Hillsea and was later transfer to Arborfield to complete. He transferred to REME in September 1942. Served in the UK until he was posted in 1943 to North Africa, Malta & Italy. Returning to the UK in 1946 till 1949 when he saw service in the Canal Zone 1949 -52.

On returning to the UK he served on the Permanent Staff as the Warrant Officer Vehicles and this was the first time I met him as a young VM Apprentice in early 1956 until he departed for Korea & Hong Kong.

From 1959-65 served at Home & BAOR retiring in 1965 where upon he joined the staff as an instructor for a short time before transferring his skills to 'A' Wing SEME.

In the early 70's he took up the challenge and went back to school and gained an HNC in Mechanical Engineering and shortly afterwards left to join Highbury Technical College as a lecturer till retiring.



His one passion in life was gardening and in retirement relished in it when not bowling. As in his working life set high stands and achieved them.

Where do I come into all this? In 1970 my eldest sister was admitted to BMH Cambridge Hospital (they are BMH's to me) in Aldershot after a RTA and was seriously ill and during visiting I meet a young nurse who turned out be Fred's daughter, we married in 1971. Fred and I have been close friends ever since.

Fred is survived by his wife Rita, daughter and son.

Below are some of recent deaths, that have not been acknowledged by the OBAN in the past.

1901	Leah	AC	Anthony	57B	29/09/2011	Belated Entry.
	Geere (BEM)	HC	Henry	PS	22/09/2011	Belated Entry.
2344	French	JEG	John	52A	09/10/2011	Belated Entry.
1240	Oldham	AD	Tony	43A	08/11/2011	Belated Entry.
2458	Donoghue	WT	William	46B	13/10/2011	Belated Entry.
2522	Evans	M	Milton	39B	n/k	Belated Entry.
N/A	Buck	J	John	87C	23/12/2011	Belated Entry.
N/A	Lithgow	J	John	64B	Sept 2009	Belated Entry.
N/A	Raven	G	Gary	64B	June 2011	Belated Entry.
N/A	Burnell	D	David	47B	22/05/2011	Belated Entry.
N/A	Cox	N	Nigel	63B	18/01/2012	Belated Entry.
1285	Green	KD	Kenneth	37B	n/K	Belated Entry.
1986	Sands	FW	Frank	45B	25/04/2012	Belated Entry.



They will always be here,
laughing, young and full of fun,
With all their pals around them,
true friends every one.
The things we've done together
bind us closer still,
Friendships from our youth endure,
and they always will.

But when country called,
some paid the highest price,
Let this memorial stand proud,
to honour their sacrifice.
Remembered in this haven
far from the sounds of war,
They are foremost in our hearts,
companions ever more.

ARMY APPRENTICE TRAINING WAS CONDUCTED AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS INCLUDING ALDERSHOT, ARBOUTHOLD, ASHWALE, BRAMLEY, CARLISLE, CATTERICK, CHATHAM, CHEPSTOW, CHURCH CROOKHAM, DEECUT, HARROGATE, HILSEA, JESSEY, TAUNTON, WOOLWICH AND WORTHY DOWN.