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**Issue
55**

O B A N



Arboretum Old Boys Association News

www.arboretumoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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To Be Confirmed

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All Past Commandants

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In Memorandum

Deaths notified since last OBAN

113	Leahy	AP	Anthony	42A	19/09/2012	
390	Crowson	PF	Peter	44A	20/11/2012	
1737	Dougall	R	Bob	39A	12/06/2012	
1968	Pewsey	JWN	John	45A	18/07/2012	
711	Strong	AP	Tony	56B	03/12/2012	
1957	Bolding	DA	Dave	43B	25/10/2012	
n/a	Jacques	R	Tony	51	13/08/2012	
1791	Corscadden	E	Eric	42A	05/10/2012	
n/a	Pickworth	L	Nebbi	48A	05/10/2012	
n/a	Coulter	E	Ernest	56B	09/04/2009	B E
n/a	Platt	MJ	Mike	55B	29/11/2012	
1266	Gulliford	IEH	Ivor	43C	02/10/2012	
1127	Meehan	GA	Gerald	77B	n/k	
1827	Nixon	L	Larrie	42A	02/01/2013	
1091	Parnell	P	Reg	46B	27/12/2012	
n/a	Salmon	CC	Colin	53A	17/04/2012	
482	Alway	GM	Guy	55A	05/01/2013	
229	Holmes	D	David	54A	21/12/2012	
n/a	Blackburn	MJ	Maxwell	42A	07/02/2012	
n/a	Harkness	BR	Barry	57B	Jun 2012	
1660	Wood	DM	Chippy	47B	22/01/2013	
252	Robertson	WT	Weston	50B	12/01/2013	
2356	Day	MS	Marshall	58A	07/02/2013	
1435	Macdonald	JE	Jim	43A	21/02/2013	
1436	Smith	CP	Christopher	54B	27/11/2012	
n/a	Paget	S	Stanley	41	Mar 2013	
n/a	Melloy	M	Mick	39	21/03/2013	
n/a	Picton	MBE IR		PS 72	31/01/1989	BE

Committee Members Reports

Chairman's Report



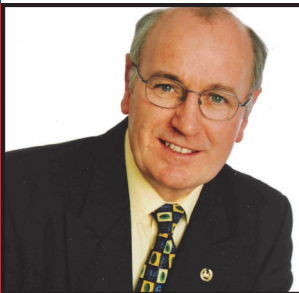
Your committee meets twice each year - generally, in spring and autumn. At the commencement to each meeting, the names of those Old Boys who have been most recently called to that last parade are read out and a short silence is observed. That may seem a bit maudlin and probably is, but then we get down to the main objective of looking after the Association's interests for the well being of its members. Much of the committee's time is spent on the reunion week-end, but OBAN and website matters are well covered, as is the funding to ensure its continuation. Each committee member in turn reports on the main issue pertinent to his area, but it is always lifting when the Hon Membership Registrar informs us of recently joined members, many of whom in time to celebrate their intake's fiftieth anniversary at the coming reunion.

One area, which appears to be quite sparse, and many might observe to be a good thing, is in the

Association's remit to assist those who may be in some need of help, perhaps in the provision of medical equipment or such. We can only offer assistance if we are aware of a requirement. It is possible that some of those in need may be too proud to seek help. May I ask that if you are aware of a need that you pass on such information to our Hon Secretary. In closing, I wish you all health and happiness and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the week-end reunion.

Brian Hutchin.

Honorary Secretary's Report



Where does the time go - that's what I want to know? It seems only a few days ago I was saying thanks to the Hotel and NMA regarding last year's reunion and here I am about to confirm numbers for this years - amazing.

We can look forward to another great weekend in July I'm sure as we have close on 200 people coming, most for the complete weekend from Friday evening onwards, so make wure you bring plenty of funds to keep me in beer!

Reunion costs are difficult to predict (as always), especially the NMA who told me to expect a 5% increase on last year. Now they have firmed up and have increased by over 25%! They have changed the method of charging - trying to get as close to a 'delegate rate' as possible, but this has had an adverse effect on us. Last year the day at the NMA

worked out at just under £25 each - this year is closer to £32, a bit of an increase some might say.

In the last OBAN Mike Davis told us he is looking to stand down as our Honorary Treasurer. Sadly we still do not have a suitable replacement for him and as he's done the job unstintingly for over 13 years I think it's high time to relieve him. So I'm urging someone out there to stand up and volunteer to take on this task. It's not onerous and if you have an understanding of spreadsheets this would be an advantage, but if not we can soon show you the way. I would like to think that at the very latest by the end of the July reunion someone will have come forward and we can let Mike *Stand Easy*. He certainly deserves to.

Looking forward to catching up with old friends in July.

David (Tich) Schofield



Treasurer's Report

remind those members who pay their subscriptions by cash to do so as soon as possible. Thank you.

The account has been examined by independent chartered accountants and I am pleased to report that all is in order. You will be presented with it at this year's AGM for your approval.

Last but not least. A volunteer is required in the next 6 months to become the Treasurer as I shall be switching off the calculator!! Please contact the Secretary.

I am pleased to be able to tell you that the PayPal system is working well. Members are ordering ties, blazer badges etc and paying by this means.

Mike Davis

Whilst on the subject of 'cash' could I please



Registrar's Report

a) Since the last OBAN we have had 11 applications for life membership, no reactivations and one resignation. b) New Members:

2747 Colls FC Frederick Fred A-39B-B
 2748 Sayers RC Roger Tosh A-60C-C
 2749 Hicks DA David Dave A-64A-A
 2750 Turrell NA Neil Neil A-62A-C
 2751 Ebbatson DW Douglas Doug A-62A-A
 2752 Atkinson JJ John John A-62A-C
 2753 Rostron JN John John A-64C-C
 2754 Ford IK Ian Ian A-64C-C
 2755 Ford P Peter Pete A-64C-D
 2756 McCormack OJ Oliver Joe A-63B-C
 2757 Shepherd MJ Micheal Mike A-65C-B

c) Numerous requests for detail updates have all been recorded to the best of my knowledge as are the sad reports of members passing on.

d) Bob Castell (64A) reports that a **YEAR 64** drive he is organising is as follows:

"Of the 70 current email addresses I had for non Arborfield Old Boys Association members I received 43 replies, all in favour of attending except one. So, along with current Association members and as long as we don't get any back sliders, we should have a pretty strong showing at the reunion."

Please let me know of any changes to your address information especially post codes. It is important to know where you are located
Alec Powell



OBAN Editor's Report

I must admit that last year when I started as the Oban Editor, I was a bit apprehensive about whether I was taking on too much or not. The amount of help and advice I have received has made things so much easier to cope. Plus the fact that when I should be proof reading an article; I have become totally engrossed in its content. Along with talking to various members about what they want to submit for publication, it has made things far more interesting, and enjoyable than I thought it was going to be.

obituaries. As mentioned by the Webmaster Herbie Coles, unfortunately since the beginning of the year we have had too far too many.

From now on you will not have to wait as long between Obans, as we will be returning to regular four monthly issues. Keep the articles coming, I am always available if you need any advice. Remember a picture is worth a thousand words, and also takes up far less space.

Ray Stevens

The one down side is that I have to deal with all the



Webmaster's Report

The Arborfield Old Boy's main website has continued to be popular and several updates to Apprentice tradesman RSM's, major prize winners and Pipe Majors have been noted and implemented, these alterations are made because members take the trouble to notify me and I am grateful for their help, my sincere thanks, gentlemen. I am always willing to publish Obituaries, I would comment that sadly we have had far too many .

I was able to update the site building software again this year, the latest version bringing several improvements and making alterations or additions to our site considerably easier to implement.

The Forum, although a little quiet at present, has seen an increase in membership of 17 members since last June. I do acknowledge that this sort of

bulletin board/discussion site is not everyone's cup of tea, and occasionally some strong opinions get discussed, but it is there for all, so, if you have joined and want to say your peace then please do so, don't let the old stagers make all the running!

Electronic Oban, the online downloadable version of this magazine, continues to increase in popularity, with 16 more members electing to receive it electronically. I have now made it available on a one shot basis on a secure site, rather than via the AOBA website pages, although older copies are still available there. I am always happy to help if any members experience difficulty in this regard.

John (Herbie) Coles



Recruitment Officer's Report

I am continually posting on various sites, as well as finding new ones. Have made many personal approaches where I've found

e-mail addresses, plus face to face contact in a number of cases. Still trying as many angles as I can. It's, as ever, onwards and upwards!

Barrie Parker

My Life. (Part 4) By Johnny Johnson 56B

Adventures in Aden.

I kicked my heels at the REME Depot for as long as it took to be issued with the correct clothing for the Middle East. In essence, this meant some short-sleeved shirts and matching shorts that would be required for certain parades. Those of us destined for Aden were always the subjects of exaggerated sad looks and comments, which did nothing for our morale; especially my morale - having been married for less than six months and now handed a twelve-month unaccompanied posting. When all was ready, the REME contingent assembled at a RAF Station I cannot remember and joined the rest of the passengers for the flight to Aden in a *Britannia*, if I remember correctly. Once our luggage was claimed, we were divided into geographical groups, some were part of the RAF's contingent, who had almost no distance to go to their accommodation, to those who like me, were headed for Bir Fuqum, some thirty to forty minutes drive from airfield.

My own destination was the last port of call on this particular route. We were now additionally loaded with a suitcase as well as cabin baggage, etc. The bus was a well-used military bus, no air-conditioning, no windows (just wire-mesh screens) and from the experience of the trip, no brakes. Perhaps the Arab driver disliked them, for he certainly showed no favouritism in their use! We left the old city limits and passed over the causeway, a raised ridge of packed sand and rock that bisected the bay around which Aden was situated. This causeway had a guard-point at each end, a particularly elaborate one at the far end, close to the Arab township of Sheik Ottoman. At this checkpoint, all inbound traffic was carefully scrutinised and vehicle spot-searches carried out. It must be remembered that the colony was in a state of emergency, due to the agitation for self-rule. Having safely negotiated a potentially dangerous part of the journey, the country opened up into 'a wide expanse of eff all', as one fellow passenger put it. Certainly there were miles and miles of desert stretching to the horizon, beginning at the rear of the shacks that lined some of the route. These shacks were made from cardboard cartons, flattened oil drums and anything else that could be tied or nailed together to provide shelter. There was also some modern-looking housing for the better-off Arabs. Our first stop was at the Royal Marine camp, near the beach and within the oil refinery bounds, at what I came to learn was called 'Little Aden'. From there, the bus rattled its way through a long bare-rock mountain valley toward my destination, a small garrison containing among other units, 24 Infantry Workshops, my home for the next twelve months.

Having arrived all hot and bothered after lunch time, those of us who belonged to units that ate in the central dining room were led to the cookhouse for a late meal. Mostly we just picked at the food, but drank a lot of juice, which we learned was not normally provided, as each member would receive a ration to last the month. The usual routine of booking-in was done that day, the unit clerks having been called in for the job, as work ceased at about 12:30 for the day, due to the intense heat of the afternoons. The first warning we received from our conducting NCO was that no suitcase or other article was to be left unattended - it would automatically be construed that the item was a

bomb planted by the local anti-British faction. It was not unusual for a newcomer to find his suitcase blown apart by the rapid arrival and efficient ministrations of the on-duty bomb disposal team. The second warning concerned our intake of fluids and salt. Up to quite recently, it had been standard procedure to issue salt tablets, but a recent study had shown that they were detrimental and so had been withdrawn. Instead, we were told to dose our food with a higher than normal sprinkling of salt, this would be sufficient to maintain the salt levels essential for health. In addition, the NCO indicated a normal galvanised steel bucket and said we should drink the equivalent amount liquid each day! To this end, each man was issued with a number of concentrated fruit juices, eight or so as I remember, and two tins of powdered drink. This was the first time I ever saw 'Mazoe' fruit juices and 'Clifton' fruit drink powders. Apart from the nutritional value of concentrated fruit juice, I'm fairly certain that these juices were issued to hide the taste of the local water. Being a place of very little rainfall, Aden could in no manner support its population on the rainfall alone. To this end, there was an active desalinisation plant to supplement the meagre rains. Desalinated water is very flat, or at least it was, back then in Aden. Each of our accommodation block floors had a water cooler, for drinking purposes. Showers and baths were always warm; a hot water supply wasn't really necessary, although water geysers were fitted.

The first thing a new 'whitey from Blighty' was practically obligated to do was to acquire the Aden tan. This was a potentially dangerous thing, as it was easier to get sunburnt than not. Having never been a sun worshipper, I took my time and limited myself to about thirty minutes each evening, just before the sun went down. Strictly speaking, getting sunburnt could lead to a charge of negligence and self-inflicted injuries. Another problem, though perhaps troublesome or annoying, might be a better description, was that of drinking too much of the local bottled cool drink. The local name was 'Stims', owned by *Coca-Cola*. They made a variety of soft drink, the most popular being Pineapple flavoured. The problem with this drink was that it seemed to make one more thirsty than ever, and it was rumoured that too much pineapple flavour would turn you a funny yellow colour, almost like yellow jaundice.

The routine of those days was up very early, eat a light breakfast and then head to work in the cool of the morning. Dress was simply boots, with socks rolled down, shorts with belt and topped off by one's beret. The NCO I/C the Armourers' Workshop was none other than my old chum, Danny Southcott, ex-56A, by now a full Corporal. For reasons I cannot remember, there was no Armourer Sergeant, which would be normal for a workshop of that size and responsibility. There was a titular head in S/Sgt Greg Peck. Yes, I know, his first name wasn't Greg, but what else would you expect us to call him behind his back? In fact his messmates called him that anyway. S/Sgt Peck was in reality an Artificer, which meant that although he had completed the Armourers part of his artificer training, to supplement his Gun Fitters qualifications, he was nominally in charge of the Armament and General workshop, which formed part of 24 Inf Wksp. In this respect, his duties didn't really allow him time to fully and effectively supervise the Armourers' workshop. So

it was that Danny was in charge. As Armourers' workshops go, in field workshop set-ups, it was quite small. However, it had the advantage of air conditioning, something not shared by everybody. We soon settled into a routine that was much like the one we shared with Henry Whitehead at 8 RTR. Danny was a meticulous worker, who went by the book. In fact we always joked that an unamended technical publication was pornographic literature to Danny! He neither smoked nor drank, but despite that, he had no enemies and many friends. In contrast, I smoked far too much and was only an occasional drinker.

24 Inf Wksp was one of a few units that made up the garrison of Little Aden. The nearest Arab settlement was a kilometre or two down the road on the coast, a place called Bir Fuqum. Make of it what you will, that was its name and, naturally, it endeared itself to most troops. We were wont to say, when questioned as to our unit, "*We're stationed at Beer Fuckem!*" There was a Signals unit, an engineering detachment and an Army Air Corps unit, which we called '*Teeny-weeny Airways*'. I arrived at 24 Inf Wksp a few weeks before Danny was due to return to the UK, but in that time we produced a good turnover of work. Then, for reasons not known, jobs dried up and we were at a loose end for some time. Danny eventually left for home and his wife, while I took charge of the workshop. Soon after that, Greg Peck completed his tour and went back to the UK. But before all of that, Danny and I took up sailing, at Greg's suggestion. As it turned out, this was a good idea as he was an experienced yachtsman. In a casual conversation, we discovered that not only was he qualified for a number of sailing craft, but that he had a pilot's licence to take the ferries from Portsmouth, into and out of the Isle of Wight. For me, it was a matter of relearning those skills I had acquired in Germany, when a member of 32 Armd Wksp. Soon I was able to sail on my own and take out learner crewmen. We had *Fireflies*, a *Mirror* dinghy or two and a *Sharpie* (I think that was the name). The latter boat was a gift from the *Nuffield Foundation*, but had been damaged in transit and left unattended to for an unknown number of months or years. I took it upon myself, with the help of Staff Peck's contacts, to get the boat to the workshops, where I was prepared to fix it up. Fortunately, the OC 24 Inf Wksp liked the idea and soon the boat was nestling, bottom up, on supports outside of the Armourers' workshop. Having little else to do, and at about the time Danny departed for UK, I spent most working hours attending to the boat.

Once repaired, I scraped the hull down and sanded it as smooth as I could. Given that I had no power tools to help me, it looked very good. The time came to launch the boat and give it a trial run. We chose a beach far from the sailing club, so that any un-seamanlike manoeuvres would go unnoticed. We chose the beach on which, unknown to us, a few days previously Guardsman Norton had earned the George Medal by rescuing his officer, after they had driven over one of a few mines planted in that very beach. The surf was up and the wind was coming off the sea, making the launch process difficult – if not impossible! Although we tried, we failed. We did achieve partial success but, in the process, a side-stay snapped and snagged in the flesh of my left hand, the same one that I had damaged in Germany in a boating accident. Also the same one that, in Bulford, I had accidentally used as a scabbard for a bayonet! The boat was being pushed back ashore, my right hand was occupied by the tiller, as I didn't want the boat to broach to, that is turn sideways onto the sea and be overturned. I had no alternative but to bite the

end of the wire side-stay out of my hand. It hurt but it did the trick. As the stay was released from my hand, it whipped by my left ear and opened it up. So, there I was, blood running from my ear and left hand and getting both soaked in salt spray. The latter probably sterilised the wounds, because I suffered no after effects and they healed nicely.

So, back to the workshops, where I renewed the standing rigging (the wire cables that held the mast in place). How fortunate that there was plenty of this type of thin twisted cable in the stores! The success of our repair efforts led to the workshops rescuing an old aluminium lifeboat from I don't know where, and turning it into a fishing boat for the unit fishing club. The boat was designed for rowing and so had no engine. However, at the end of the exercise, the boat was motorised and had a sun canopy to protect its passengers. Strange to relate, a once serviceable fork-lift truck was suddenly found to be BER (beyond economical repair) because of a lack of an engine! Our mechanics, with no knowledge of inboard-outboard prop shafts, managed to rig a flexible coupling and drive train, so that the engine worked very well. I attended the launching of the new vessel and took some historic pictures of S/ Sgt Greg Peck, supervising the unloading and the official launching of the boat.

If I wasn't sailing (for there was an off-season when the sharks came into the bay to breed), I was trying my hand at developing and pre success of it, after learning the hard way. Our greatest joy was to receive a water cooler. It was properly acquired, seeing that we were operating in an enclosed building, required by the very nature of film developing. This meant that we sweated buckets because there was no air conditioning. On that motivation, we eventually got a water cooler. Naturally it was also used to cool the tap water down for developing purposes. Another hobby prevalent in Aden was Go-Kart racing. There were quite a few carts, mostly powered by an Italian engine, a *Jalo*. As I write, I am very conscious of the fact that I can remember the *Jalo* engine - but not many names, faces, and other things.

There was a rear gate to the Garrison compound, leading to a dusty road around the bottom profile of the jebel. This road took one to the barracks of the Guards Battalion, probably Grenadiers. They were part of the garrison, but their camp was a separate fenced compound about one or two kilometres away. The point of the story is that, with their usual panache, there was an elaborately painted signboard announcing the presence of the Guards. The board was almost filled with the ornate regimental crest and especially picked out was the motto '*Nulli Secundis*' (Second to None), or perhaps it was in English? I don't remember. But I do remember that a small sign, heralding the presence of 24 Infantry Workshops, was situated below and very close to the Guards' sign and someone in the unit had added the words '*Nulli*', quite prominently, to our sign. One would think that everyone would take it in great fun, the Guards being 'second to none' and we being 'none'. Not a bit! Instead of laughing it off, a no-sense-of-humour officer on the Guards part sent our OC an irate message, to the effect that our little joke sign was to be removed immediately, forthwith, straight away, if not sooner. Naturally we delayed the removal for as long as possible, until someone was detailed to take it down.

On occasion we would take the military bus into Aden itself. There was an open-air cinema and a recently completed pool. The pool had been bombed during its construction (soon after I arrived) but was now in full swing. Nevertheless, the lack of shops from which to purchase those souvenirs we wanted to take home, meant a run into Aden town. The journey was boring after the first couple of times. It was also potentially dangerous because there was a lot of dissident action going on, grenades being tossed into military areas, married quarters and even children's parties. Rockets were being fired at the married members' flats in the main road of Aden. Yet, despite all that, and the check-points and vehicle search zones, we were still willing to bear the hot long trip just for the change it made. The main shopping area was at Steamer Point. There were a number of shops to choose from, selling every kind of goods. I bought a twin-reflex *Yashica* camera and had great fun developing my own pictures. There were all sorts of gifts and souvenirs to be bought - a lot was junk, while some were blatant forgeries of well known items, particularly watches. It was almost imperative to wear 'desert boots' when walking out. These were bought cheaply and lasted quite well, I believe they came from Kenya and Zambia.

It was said that, in Aden, there were four prices for every item - American tourist price (these folk came from the cruise ships that called by), other tourists price, our price (soldiers and the like) and local price - the latter being naturally the cheapest. In fact, when bargaining for a price, it was part of the ritual to point to one's scruffy desert boots and indicate that we weren't newly arrived and knew the routine and wanted a better price. Naturally, we would gravitate for a swim to the services club, because that was where the female members of the forces serving in Aden would usually be in their off-duty hours. So, food, a drink and an ogle were the main activities. Few, if any, took up with the service girls, mainly because we were so far out of town to make a daily date impossible. The pace of workshop life picked up quite considerably, following an inspection at an Engineering unit up in the mountains, where the dissidents were hiding and fighting. The Brigade Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (BEME) was apparently so taken aback at the lack of weapons maintenance, that he instituted a repair programme for them. This meant ME, as at that time I was the only Armourer left. Nevertheless, once I got into the swing of things, the programme went off well. True enough, I had recourse to the workshops in Aden itself for rust-proofing, but I had to strip the weapons into component pieces before being dispatch, then re-assemble after their return. All went well and I'm pleased to say I got a verbal pat on the back, or two. (Much later, the affair was to prove advantageous with regard to my promotion to Sergeant.)

Meantime, I was desperate to get back to the UK and take up married life once again. A chance came my way in November '95, when I managed to get an indulgence flight back to UK for three weeks good leave back home with Ann. But there were disadvantages. I had travelled from the heat of Aden, to which I had become acclimatised, to the depth of a European Winter. The change was difficult to get accustomed to, and I was perpetually cold. Ann and I had hired a flat in Bourne-mouth for most of the leave period. It was cheap rates, well affordable, but we hadn't reckoned with the gas and electric meters' insatiable hunger for our shilling pieces. If that wasn't enough, I suddenly developed a nasty itchy rash under my arms and about my upper body. When arriving at the

airport in London from Aden, all passengers were given a pink card that stated the holder was from hot climes and, should any illness develop within 14 days, the holder must report to a hospital and show the card. Being a good soldier, I did just that. And, coincidentally (once again), who should the doctor be but one who had done part of his National Service in Aden. He wanted to know if I had frequented Sheik Ottoman, the implication being had I been entertained by the ladies of free spirit! "*Just joking*", he said, "*you've got a heat rash. Try turning the electric blanket down a bit!*" So much for my exotic tropical disease! Naturally, I didn't want to return to Aden - but it was my duty, so I did. I knew then that I had just over three months before my one-year unaccompanied posting was up. Had I been single, it would have been another fifteen months. At about this time, I got to hear of a scheme that was supposed to pay out a nice sum of money to those members of the forces who were separated from their wives for twelve months or more. So I was now looking forward to a little extra spending money when Ann I were reunited. You can imagine my anger and disappointment when my return flight to UK was promulgated for ten days before the year was up! Still, they said, once you have completed those ten days elsewhere, you'll be entitled to claim. But of course that never happened, did it?

Before all that came to pass, before or after leave I don't remember, I was taken ill with a bout of insomnia. Consequently, I had a stay in hospital for checks and, while in there, my second stripe was promulgated. Under the rules at that time, if a member was in hospital when promoted, he was considered unable to take up the duties of the rank. In this case, the promotion was held over until the member was fit or available, as the case may be. In consequence, it was only after I returned to the UK that my second stripe was awarded.

Heading for home - Tidworth

After my little episode, I was really looking forward to going home but was concerned about where my next posting might be and, additionally, if there would be married quarters available for Ann and me. The OC workshops called me in for an interview shortly before my tour was over. I was asked the usual question, "*Are you willing to complete another tour?*" The answer to that needs no repeating. Then he told me that I was being posted to 7 Armd Wksp in Tidworth, Hampshire. I could hardly believe my ears, as Tidworth was literally next door to Bulford Garrison, separated only by a County boundary. Even better news was forthcoming, a married quarter was available and, if I cared to fill in the application form immediately, it would be signalled through straight away. This was done and the quarter was allocated before I left Aden.

The morning after arriving back, Ann and I went to look at the allocated married quarter and for me to report to the admin offices of 7 Armd. In those days, the older part of Tidworth garrison comprised three separate barracks, side by side on a gentle slope down to the garrison main road. Our house was part of Bhurtpore Barracks, one of a terrace of about ten houses. Each quarter had a small entrance porch leading into a small lounge. The single bedroom was reached by stairs, leading from the corner of the lounge opposite the entrance door. There was a small kitchen in the back and, built onto that, was a toilet and bathroom. In its original form, each terraced house had no inside toilet or bathroom. During our time in the

Army, a married quarter came complete with everything, except pictures to hang on the wall, one simply unpacked the suitcase and settled in. Naturally, the furniture and crockery, etc was not always the nicest of items. In those days, the crockery was any colour you wanted – as long as it was white!

I discovered that the workshops were not the buildings behind our terrace block, but located seven miles away, in a tiny village called Ludgershall. Transport there and back was by a hired local bus company double-decker. The workshop complex was quite small – once upon a time it was connected to the RAF, but when and how I do not know. Apart from the more modern workshop buildings in the centre of the complex, the rest were half-round Nissen-huts, originating from WWII. Even the water reservoirs were ancient, great wok-shaped concrete bowls, set into the ground and surrounded by waist-high wire fences. Having reported in at the unit admin office, I now had to report to the workshop admin office, the workshop OC, and his senior staff. Having done all that, I was shown my Armourers' workshop – what a disappointment. It was built onto what was once a loading platform, quite small and divided into three sections. One part for the workbench, etc; another to store weapons securely and the third was where I was supposed to store my spares and tools. In REME, the first job you ever do when assuming the duties of an Armourer, is to check your tools, spares and, in particular, one's technical publications. In all three cases, things were woefully inadequate. Apart from that, there was no other staff. That was unusual, because an Armoured Workshop should have an Armourers' complement of at least three. I was to discover, from the available paperwork in the workshop, that no work had been done for some considerable time. Enquiries elicited that the previous incumbent had been inadequate and that the units he was supposed to service chose to send their weapons elsewhere! So it was my task to acquire the proper tools and gauges, etc, as well as the proper technical manuals, complete with the latest amendments, and to demand a whole lot of spares. In order to determine what spares, I needed to know the number and type of unit in the garrison area for which I was responsible to provide a service. That would also dictate the technical manuals that I would need for reference purposes. I had to re-establish contact with the next higher echelon workshops, which could undertake the rust-proofing that would need to be done. That workshop was on the outskirts of Portsmouth.

I made my way around the various units, introducing myself to the unit Armourers and literally touting for business, promising to deliver the required quality of service expected of such a workshop. Once the tools, etc had arrived, I notified the units that I was ready for business. Slowly, in dribs and drabs, the work came in and I began to establish a good working relationship with my clients. This must have pleased the OC Wksp, for he or the ASM often dropped in to see the progress. Before long I needed more staff and eventually two young Armourers joined me. You have to remember that, when I began the process, I was a L/Cpl and my second stripe (awarded when I was in hospital in Aden) came through during the first two or three months at 7 Armd Wksp. In between times, I was keen on getting my artificer preliminary paper behind me. Knowing I was weak on maths, I needed a booster course, which I eventually got after almost a year. Meantime, the Armourer section began to make

its name as a safe place to send weapons for repair.

In the meantime Ann had obtained a job with the Military Police in Bulford Garrison, just up the road, so to speak. With being part of the British Army's strategic reserve, I had to make a monetary allotment out to Ann, in case I left in a hurry, as was the case earlier when I was with the RWF. This meant that we had three pay days a week – mine on Thursday, Ann's on Friday and the allotment was payable on a Tuesday. We were never broke. At some time during Ann's employment with the MPs, she was asked to go and work in Wilton, which was Strategic Command's HQ. Once again, with the Special Investigation Branch, Military Police. All of this work was very secret and even involved work that was 'eyes only' for the Prime Minister. Of this I still know nothing, and rightly so. It became a regular thing for a large black car to pick her up at the house at the beginning of the day and return her in the evening.

Fear of Maths!

My request for a maths course to prepare me for the Artificer Prelim paper being met, I was packed off to 3 Higher Education Centre in Beaconsfield. If the name sounds familiar, movie buffs will tell you that a famous British studio was located in Beaconsfield. To confirm this, I saw a familiar face of the silver screen in the local supermarket, while I was there, a leonine-headed fellow, whose name now escapes me. 3 HEC was the centre for language learning as well. One of its functions was to teach a variety of languages to officers and others assigned to diplomatic staff, as well as specialist officers. During the short time I spent at 3 HEC, Prince Michael of Kent was undergoing Russian language training. Following this, he was sent to live with a White Russian emigre family in Paris, to perfect his accent and idioms. In those days (1966), 3 HEC was a mixture of old and new. The accommodation was in WWII huts, although the actual education centre and Officers' mess was very new. Another of those weird coincidences took place when I walked into the half-round Nissen hut. There, sitting on his bed, was my old chum Oscar Holtum. I immediately felt at home, even though the accommodation was sparse, even more so after the relative luxury of my own home.

It was the middle or start of Winter, I seem to remember, when the six-week course started. The only warmth made available for the hut was a pot-bellied stove in the centre of the floor space. Soon we had a roaring fire going and we crowded around the fire, talking and smoking. Among the course members were REME personnel, attached to the SAS, a naughty bunch of so-and-sos. Whether they were full of devilment because they thought that they needed to uphold the SAS image, I don't know. But, if there were any practical jokes, they always originated with this bunch. On the very first day, as we sat and speculated about the course content, we were suddenly sent stumbling from the hut by clouds of noxious smoke pouring out of the stove. It stank of ammonia. One or two of the SAS had managed to climb onto the roof of the Nissen hut, a feat in itself, and stuffed rags into the chimney and then urinated on them. The rags were then pushed down the chimney with a broom handle, as far as they would go.

We had a series of normal classroom lessons, followed by voluntary teaching machine periods. I have never been comfortable with mathematics,

even today. Nevertheless, I persevered, struggled and swore, and vowed to remain a Corporal and thus avoid such future torture. But, in the end, I sat the exam and surprised myself by failing by only a few percent. So it was back to Tidworth, slightly chastened, but having made progress because I only just failed. There was always a next time!

As in any military unit, there were duties to be done. I fell into the Guard Commander's roster and Fire Duty Roster. The former duty was a long tiresome one that was carried out at the Workshops, seven miles away. The latter duty was conducted, with a crew of four or five, from a poky little room at admin HQ. One's duty-list was published in Daily Orders and woe-betide anyone who failed to turn up. At the time, the frequency of duties was about every ten days or so, a far cry from the day-and-day about routine of Aden, but I wasn't about to complain! One evening I was sitting in the local Army cinema, waiting for the advertisements to end and the main feature to start, when a friend slid along the line of seats and told me that I was supposed to be on Fire Duty that night. Naturally I was astounded and said that I hadn't seen my name. I had never missed a duty like that before. "Not to worry", he said, "Ginger is doing it for you, as he is scheduled for tomorrow, but has a date fixed up and so you've done him a favour".

The following day I was called before the OC Unit and faced a charge of failing to appear for duty. "I'm surprised it's you, Cpl Johnson". I explained that although I had read the orders, I genuinely didn't see my name. The OC said that he was prepared to accept my explanation, bearing in mind the good reports he had received from the Workshop OC. Nevertheless, I had missed the duty and therefore he must award a punishment. He then said that I would have to do two extra duties - "March him out Sergeant Major". I

marched out and then I heard the OC call to the Sgt/Maj to march me back in. Feeling somewhat puzzled, I marched back into the OC's office and stood to attention. The OC got out of his chair and leaned over the desk with an extended hand. Naturally, I put mine out in response and, as he grasped it, he exclaimed, "Congratulations, **SGT Johnson** - it looks as though you won't be doing those extra duties!" And he was right, Sergeants didn't do Fire Duty! As I stood there, trying to wipe a smile of absolute surprise from my face, the OC added, "You've got your maths course, at Beaconsfield. You'd best get up to the QM's and draw your new stripes". At this, he pointed skyward, as the QM's store was on the floor above. The OC told me that my performance in Aden, coupled with my efforts in re-establishing the Armourers shop, had contributed to my promotion to 'Acting Sergeant'. I said that I didn't understand how I could get promoted so soon after being 'made up' to full Corporal. He said I was to be posted to the Junior Leaders Regt, Royal Artillery, in Nuneaton, Warwickshire as the Unit Armourer. Another handshake and a slightly dazed, newly promoted Sgt marched out of the office. Outside, the CSM congratulated me and I went into the admin office to sign acknowledgement of the promotion. From there, it was up the iron steps to the QM. Naturally, Ann was busy that night - sewing on my stripes! The following morning, I strutted down the road to the bus point and climbed on board, to the open mouthed looks of my friends. They soon got used to the idea. In a way, I was sad to leave 7 Armd, having worked hard to get the Armourers' shop reinstated. In any event, I had achieved something and been rewarded. So, on a fine Summer's day in 1967, I packed our little Mini estate car and, laying my neatly-pressed uniform on top, so that the Sgt's stripes were plainly visible, I set off through the countryside to Gamecock Barracks in Nuneaton - and my new unit.

(Part 5 of Mikes interesting article will soon follow.)

The Birth of REME- What's in a Name.

From the Corps Archives, by Colonel (Ret'd) Mike Sibbons, 61C

Whilst 1st October 1942 was our 'ruling date', the Royal Warrant authorizing our creation was dated 19th May 1942 and this one sheet of paper, signed by His Majesty The King, masks a robust debate about the title of the new Corps - 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers'. A copy of the Royal Warrant is shown - the original document is in the National Archives at Kew.

Royal Warrant

On 4th March 1942, the Secretary of State for War (Sir James Grigg) wrote to the Private Secretary to The King (Sir Alexander Hardinge):

'The Army Council has recently been considering a question which the increasing mechanization of the Army has forced into prominence, namely whether the functions of mechanical maintenance of the Army's equipment should be concentrated in one corps, instead of being shared among the RAOC, the RASC and, to some extent, the RE and the more actively combatant corps like the RAC etc... . Major change of organization of this kind is not, of course, one to be lightly undertaken in the middle of a great war, when many of the formations whom it would affect are engaged on active

operations. But the Army Council feels that these drawbacks must be faced and that the duties of engineering maintenance should be concentrated in one corps. I should be grateful if you would acquaint The King of the proposal to constitute this new Corps of Engineering Maintenance: we are still considering its precise title and I shall make a formal Submission to HM as soon as possible, but perhaps I might express the hope that, as its constituent personnel will be drawn from corps which already enjoy the privilege of the title 'Royal', the new corps may also be allowed that privilege'.

Sir Alexander Hardinge responded:

'His Majesty approves of your proposal that the functions of mechanical maintenance of the Army's equipment should be concentrated in one corps. The King agrees to the use of the title 'Royal' and suggests for your consideration the title 'Royal Army Repair and Maintenance Corps'.

Up stepped the Council of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers:

'The Council believes that if the new corps is launched with 'Maintenance' in the title its future will be very seriously prejudiced. Maintenance is a part of the function of mechanical engineers, but if

the new corps is limited to maintenance there will be no defined Army Corps whose function it is to seek and pursue the development of improved fighting vehicles of warfare and officered with men of the necessary training competence and authority. If the title embodies the word 'Maintenance' it will be felt in all mechanical engineering circles that the new corps has a secondary and lower grade function... it will put this section of the service on the garage level

that the above title was the most descriptive of the work which would fall to the new corps to undertake'.

This view of the Army Council was passed to Sir Alexander Hardinge by Sir James Grigg. The King responded via Sir Alexander Hardinge:

'The King discussed this matter with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff last week. The upshot is that, although His Majesty still favours his original suggestion of 'Royal Army Repair and Maintenance Corps', he has no strong views and is quite prepared to agree to that of 'Royal Corps of Mechanical Engineers' in the event of the Army Council preferring it'.

Then came the view of the Council of the Institution of Electrical Engineers:

'There should be a dual title (i.e. Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) in order to encourage the recruitment and transfer of the best available electrical, as well as mechanical, engineering personnel. In the course of time it is not unlikely that electrical engineering will play as important, if not a greater, part than mechanical engineering in the equipment of the Army... in the building up of the new organization, the services of the older and more experienced men from other Corps will be needed, but unless they can be made to feel that they are not going into a 'blind alley', which does not lead to the higher executive ranks of the Army, they will be reluctant to sever connections... the new corps must therefore be combatant in the fullest and widest sense of the word and in every respect equal to the other Technical Corps'.

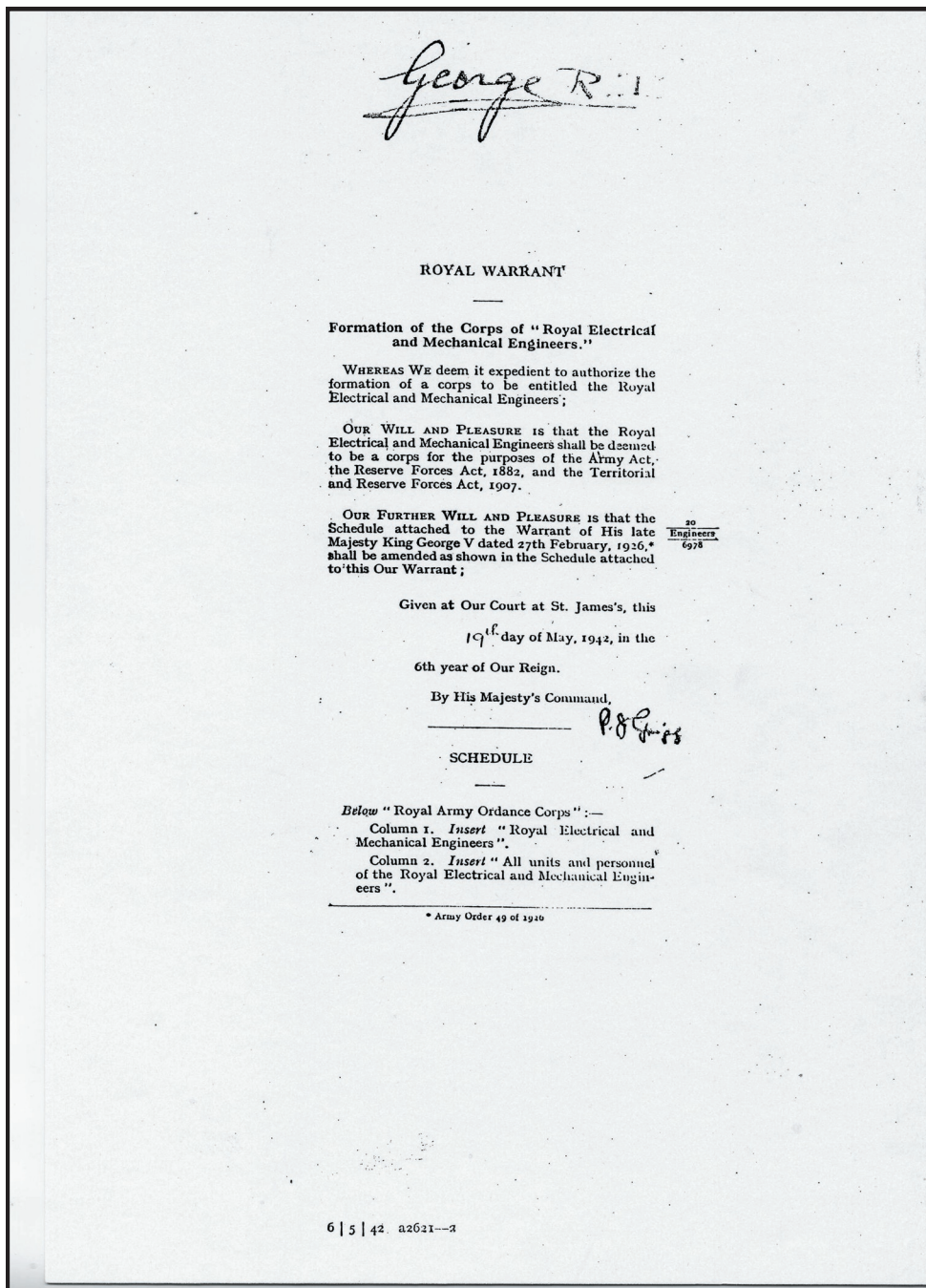
The Executive Committee of the Army Council noted the views of both Institutions:

'The Committee felt that there was substance in the above observations and that, although it meant a change of decision on their part, it would be a pity to ignore professional advice and to start the new corps on the 'wrong foot',

particularly as it would derive benefit from affiliation (as had the RE) with the leading professional institutions, of which the Institution of Electrical Engineers was the senior and not an offshoot of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers'.

The Chairman of the Executive of the Army Council, after consulting with the Adjutant General, recommended that the Secretary of State approve the title of 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers', subject to His Majesty's consent.

'I would therefore like to suggest for His Majesty's approval that the new Corps should be known as the 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)'... The King may be interested to know that the Chief Royal Engineer has been consulted with



instead of on the design, production, development, operation and maintenance level which it should properly occupy, requiring officers of the correct professional standing'.

Following this intervention by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Executive Committee of the Army Council noted The King's suggested title and recorded:

'The King had suggested a title, but the Committee was inclined, with respect, to think that the proposed title was on the long side. A number of alternatives were considered and the majority agreement was in favour of the 'Royal Corps of Mechanical Engineers'... the Committee thought

regard to the title. The latter entirely agrees that the word 'Electrical' should be included, but would prefer that the title should contain the word 'Corps' as in the case of the Royal Corps of Signals... I consider that the title 'Royal Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RCEME)' is rather cumbersome!

Sir Alexander Hardinge responded:

'The King attaches a certain importance to the inclusion of the word 'Corps', even though the initials RCEME would be rather cumbersome, as you say; at the same time His Majesty has no strong

views, and is prepared to agree to whatever the Army Council prefers'.

The Executive of the Army Council agreed on 3rd April 1942 to:

'...reaffirm their previous decision that the title of the new corps should be 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers(REME)' and...invited the Permanent Under Secretary to prepare a formal submission to The King in the sense of the above for signature by the Secretary of State'.

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The Geriatric Ski Club. By Clive Soords 54B

If you started skiing in the 1950s or 60s, you probably qualify for membership of the 'Geriatric Ski Club'. This is a series of light-hearted recollections that I hope will strike a chord with some of you fellow geriatrics who may be out there and perhaps persuade you to write in about your experiences on skis. In those days, skiing was considered an elitists pastime, mainly for toffs and the rich. However, the services began to encourage the rank and file to have a go through activities such as 'Exercise Snow Queen' in Germany. In 1962/63 I was stationed in Duisburg at 56 Station Workshops, which was a lodger unit with 36 Regiment RA, and was invited to join then on a skiing exercise near Winterberg in the Hochsauerland. Our accommodation was a barn hired from a local farmer. Not the height of luxury - and full of animal smells, but it kept out most of the weather. A couple of space-heaters warmed the place, but were switched off at lights-out. I was in the habit of having a mug of water by my sleeping bag in case I woke up with a thirst. In the middle of the night, I lifted the mug but nothing came out - the water was frozen solid! Our equipment was quite basic; combat jacket and trousers and whatever one could get under them to keep warm. Ski boots were standard issue boots CWW with a strip of leather nailed to the heel to hold the cable binding. Skis were quite primitive, laminated wood, with cable bindings not designed to release in the event of a fall! (No elf & safety then!) At that time, the accepted theory on correct length of ski was to hold your hand straight

above your head and bend your fingers at right angles, so I ended up with skis 2m 10cm long.

Our instructor was a PTI who had started skiing just the year before, so it was almost a case of the blind leading the blind! However, we did learn the basics of the 'snow-plough' and 'snow-plough turns' before being let loose on a slope with a drag lift. We also learned that a few beers in the nearby Gasthof, at lunch, did wonders for our confidence but not for our skills on skis. The locals were not amused by our antics and it still amazes me that we survived without serious injury. Although not a natural skier, I enjoyed the experience and volunteered to go again the next year. The one thing which I had not liked was cold, wet feet with the modified boots CWW, so I invested in the proper ski-boots of the day. These were leather lace ups with an inner and outer boot, still not much protection for ankles, but much warmer and dryer. Unfortunately, we only managed a couple of days skiing before warm weather set in and the snow melted, but the skiing bug in me had been established.

I left Duisburg for SEE at Arborfield and booked my first private skiing holiday when the then Wilson government had imposed a limit on foreign currency one could take abroad. I went on a chalet ski holiday to Saas Fee in Switzerland, with the princely sum of £30 to spend in resort. Hardly enough for one day now! I joined the local ski school for my first proper lessons. Our instructor was a 60-year old local farmer who impressed us with how fit he was. There was one day when he could not be with us and handed over to his 68-year old brother. We were amazed that someone so old could still ski, let alone instruct. (A case of 'yesterday I could not spell geriatric skier - now I am one!'). Saas Fee is an impressive resort with skiing to over 10,000ft. With a few others, I ventured up to Langfluh, which was then the top station with a mountain restaurant - and where I was caught short and desperate for the toilet. The toilet was a small shack stuck on the side of the building and, when I sat on the throne, I discovered that it emptied directly down the mountainside. What made it more interesting was that there was a considerable up-draught! This



was not long after the notorious typhoid outbreak at nearby Zermatt, which eventually forced the Swiss to modernise their mountain-top sanitary arrangements. One other memory from Saas Fee was getting to the same top station when a storm suddenly blew up, causing the cable car to stop operating and reducing visibility to a few yards. Instead of waiting in the safety of the cable car station, I decided that I had to make my way back to the resort. After falling countless times, getting lost, and being frightened out of my wits, I eventually made it back to the bottom when the wind dropped and the cable car started working again!

I got married to Jeanette in 1968 and then started a family. That put a stop to skiing for a couple of

anyone could explain how to stop, he started sliding, gathering speed as he went in a straight line down the crowded piste, where the skiers parted miraculously to let him through, until he reached the bottom at high speed into a deep snowdrift. If nothing else, he had demonstrated a good sense of balance and later became a very good skier. At Oberjoch, we saw a few skiers with only one leg but there was one remarkable individual who had no legs. He was strapped to a frame fixed in a saucer like metal dish. He had two short sticks with mini skis on the end which he used to catch on to the T-bar drag lift and then used them to steer on the way down.

Our son, Adrian, was born in Germany in 1972 and then, in 1973, I was posted to 13 MAG, based at the Westland Helicopters factory in Yeovil. We bought our first house in Yeovil and, like most families taking on a large mortgage, we found it hard to make ends meet, so no more skiing for a while. My next posting was to Middle Wallop, in 1977, to join the Lynx Intensive Flying Trials Unit and, when that disbanded, to the MAG looking after the introduction of the TOW anti-tank missile fitted to the Lynx. That was also based at Middle Wallop, so we sold up in Yeovil and moved to Laverstock, near Salisbury. That is where I had my next opportunity to ski. Our house was on quite a steep slope and when we had a large dump of snow, in 1982, I got out my old skis and skied down the road. However, it was hard work going up!



years. Our daughter, Rachel, was born in April 1969, while I was with 669 Squadron AAC based at Wildenrath in Germany. When Rachel was ten months old, we drove from Wildenrath to Soll in Austria for two weeks skiing. It was a bit of a risk with such a young child, but it worked out well. We took it in turns to ski and to look after Rachel, taking her to the slopes in a sledge, well wrapped up against the cold. She seemed to enjoy it.

669 Squadron organised its own 'Exercise Snow Queen' to Oberjoch in Southern Germany. A party of about 20 of us were based in an old converted farmhouse near the ski slopes. On the first day, we lined up at the top of one of the main pistes and those who had skied before were trying to explain to the others the finer points of the snow-plough. Vic Smith, a slightly rotund individual, set his skis in position, pointing downhill. Before



In early 1983, 70 Aircraft Workshops organised 'Exercise Cold Start', a skiing jolly based at the REME Hotel in Wertach in Bavaria. Nine of us drove there in three cars. We had heard that there was no snow in Wertach and very little in Oberjoch. However, as we were nearing our destination, we noticed some dark clouds following us. This turned out to be a cold front which dumped nearly a foot of snow and gave good skiing conditions for a week, before warm weather arrived again and melted the snow. With skiing nearly impossible, we decided to visit the Schloss Neuschwanstein, the castle built by Mad King Ludwig and featured in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. However, it was a Monday - and all castles in Germany close on Mondays!

In December 1983 I was nearing the end of my time in the Army. Our children were growing up,

at 10 and 15 years old. Jeanette and I decided to throw caution to the winds and borrowed from the bank on the strength of my expected gratuity on leaving the Army. We booked a two-week holiday at Westendorf in Austria over Christmas and New Year. We had a great time and the children were quick to learn at ski school. The weather was mainly good with plenty of snow, but we had a warm spell near the end of the holiday which partially melted the snow, which then froze again when the cold returned, creating dreaded icing conditions. On our last day, we were skiing together as a family and came to the edge of the only black run above Westendorf. It was a short, steep section of moguls known locally as 'Death Valley'. I was going to take the easier route down but Adrian, full of confidence, pestered me to let him try the black run. Against my better judgement, I agreed. He went a few yards before losing an edge on the ice, fell and bounced from one mogul to another, screaming at the top of his voice, gathering speed, with his skis, sticks, goggles and hat flying in all directions before he eventually came to a stop at the bottom. Edging like mad, I slowly made my way down to him and



much to my surprise, he seemed unhurt. Other, better, skiers collected his scattered equipment and we made our way to the easier slopes. Did he learn his lesson? No! He still seeks out the most dangerous runs.

I left the Army in 1984, got a job at Westland Helicopters and moved back to Yeovil in 1985. Now, with a smaller mortgage and with an Army pension to supplement my Westland pay, we were in better financial health, so managed quite a few family skiing holidays in the following years. Most of our holidays were in Austria because we preferred the atmosphere there rather than in France. Here are just a few memories from those days:

We returned to Soll and Westendorf several times, where I usually joined the ski school for a few days. On one occasion, after a fresh fall of snow, our instructor took us to a lightly wooded area where he met another instructor. They linked up with an arm around each other, lifted their outside ski and skied towards a small tree. As they neared the tree, they split up, still on one ski, going each side of the tree before linking up again on the other side. Anyone who tried to follow in their tracks would be in for a bit of a shock! Ski school

improved my confidence enough for me to tackle moguls, until I became over confident and approached a mogul at high speed, the tips of my skis dug into the mogul and I did a somersault and landed with my face in the snow and everything went black! Had I been blinded? Still half dazed, I put my hands up to my eyes and felt that my head band and ears warmer had slipped down over my eyes like a blindfold!

I expect that some of you are familiar with Soll and the Ski-Welt area and know the Hohe Salve mountain, which has some of the main slopes on it. With the system of lifts, it is possible to ski all the way around the mountain. We did it as a family but it took us all day because Jeanette was a very cautious skier. I was always able to pick her out on a busy piste, I looked for the slowest moving object and that was her! We enjoyed the après-ski in Austria, particularly the table top dancing in ski boots in the pubs at the end of the skiing day. We never found that in France.

Just as I was thinking of retirement from Westland, I was asked to go to Canada to help with promoting the EH101 for the Canadian replacement search and rescue helicopter in 1997. By now, our children had left home so we upped sticks and went to Ottawa for a year. There were a number of skiing areas within an hour's drive from Ottawa and we managed to ski on most weekends in the winter. We had brought our ski boots with us and I decided it was time to invest in a new pair of skis. There had been a bit of a revolution in ski design in the 1990s and I bought myself new carving skis, much shorter, lighter and with a large amount of side-cut. What a difference they made, giving a new lease of life to my skiing! With the old, long, heavy skis, I felt knackered after a couple of hours but with the new skis, turning was so much easier and I found that I could ski all day without getting too tired. At the bottom of most ski runs, by the lifts, were metallic mirrors. I thought that the Canadians must be a vain lot if they had to check their make-up before each run. A Canadian colleague scornfully explained that the mirrors were there so that skiers could check for frostbite on their face. The temperature often went below -20 degrees C.

Shortly after returning to Yeovil, I retired from Westland and managed to ski for at least a week every winter. Jeanette and I often went to Austria with Len (54A) and Brenda Symonds, on package holidays. One year, Len suggested that we drive to Obergurgl, which at 6,000 ft is one of Austria's highest resorts with skiing up to 10,000 ft. We went in Len's people carrier, sharing the driving and had a couple of overnight stops in Germany. I was happy for Len to drive the last stage on snow covered roads. He had winter tyres fitted and snow chains, but the chains were not needed. Len invested in a new pair of skis but kept his 20-year old black plastic boots. The man in the ski shop warned that it was unsafe to ski in plastic boots over ten years old because the plastic became more brittle and could crack. My boots were over ten years old but we ignored his warning thinking that he was giving us the hard sell. A couple of days later, after skiing down to the gondola which connected with Hochgurgl, I noticed that a bit had

come off one of Len's boots. The toe-cap had disintegrated! We went over to Hochgurgl, where Len's other boot disintegrated! He managed get a gondola down to the valley station, where he caught the ski-bus back to Obergurgl and invested in new boots. Although not as old as Len's, I got rid of my boots and hired new ones. By now, I was suffering from arthritis in the hips and thought that my skiing days were numbered, so did not think it was worth buying new boots. My old boots had been the rear entry type, on which one lever closed and locked the boot. The new ones had multiple lever latches which I found difficult to reach and lock, so that I felt exhausted even before putting on my skis!

Nothing lasts forever. Len has had a problem with his health which has prevented him from skiing for the last couple of years but he is now rearing to go again. My arthritis got to the stage where I had to have a hip replacement operation a couple of months ago (August 2011). I had two last flings with a holiday over the Christmas week with my daughter and her family and finally, with my son and his family in February. Strangely, actual skiing did not aggravate my arthritis - but walking in ski-boots was agony.

With my skiing days are probably over, I have been looking back over the years and realising just how lucky we have been. No serious accidents but many near

misses. Skiing is at its most enjoyable when one is skiing close to the edge of control and it is surprising how often, when a fall seems certain, one somehow regains balance and recovers. When I have realised that a fall is inevitable, the time between that realisation and hitting the snow seems to pass in slow motion, allowing many thoughts to run through my head about all the nasty things which could result from the fall. I expect that many of you have also had hairy moments and could tell a tale or two. I'm sure that there are some oldies out there who will carry on the finest traditions of the Geriatric Ski Club!



After Arborfield. (Part 4) by Mike Larby 42C

DDME London District, 1947 (Deputy Directorate of Mechanical Engineering)

The London District Assembly Centre (LDAC) was basically a transit camp, but was also the base for many soldiers who had postings in London District but without parent unit accommodation. These were mainly Whitehall staff, but there were also many small specialist units, some of which I can remember. There was the Polish Resettlement Corps, the London District Postal Services; SIB (Special Investigation Branch) and RMP; Signals; RAOC ammunition examiners and many others, including myself and two other Craftsmen plus an ASM, who were attached to DDME London District. Our office was in Leconfield House, Curzon Street, which, post-war, was to become the home of the Security Intelligence Services, or some of them anyway. In addition to the three ORs and one ASM, there was Captain Oscar Heim REME, a civilian chief clerk and three staff, and presiding over the lot of us, Colonel Drake-Brockman, DDME. After a couple of weeks, the three ORs moved to a

requisitioned hotel in Bryanston Square; it is still there to this day. I often meant to re-visit it and stay in my old room, but I never did. Maybe I still will, if it's not too late! The hotel is on the corner of Seymour Street and Bryanston Place, about 100 yards from Marble Arch; Curzon Street is off Park Lane, by the Hilton Hotel, so it was either a twelve-hundred yard walk or a No.32 bus ride to and from the office. Usually it was a combination - walk some of the way and hop on and off passing busses as the chance came.

Capt Heim and ASM Lamb soon acquainted me with our duties. We four, ASM Lamb and three Craftsmen, were collectively London District Vehicle Inspectorate. Golly! Our task was to pay biannual visits to all the minor units in London District, who had vehicles but no unit fitters - therefore capable of driver maintenance only. Anything more than this was therefore a REME workshop job. During these visits, we would carry out a full mechanical inspection to their vehicles (then known as a '406' inspection, because that

was the number of the form) and enter it up into the vehicle log book, stating any action required by the driver, fitter or workshop. General condition, cleanliness, standard of maintenance, etc. were also reported on. The inspection system had two objectives: (a) to help the unit to take care of its own transport, and (b) to ensure that the vehicle fleet in London District was maintained to an acceptable standard. To get around London, we had a *Hillman 'Minx'* 5 cwt. utility, which would carry the four of us plus our tools. This little *Hillman* lived quietly in its garage under Leconfield House, feeling very insignificant parked alongside the *Humber Pullman*, *Daimlers* and assorted American limousines of the time, which belonged to the various Great Panjandruns of the War Office - well 'belonging' in the same sense that the *Hillman* belonged to us!

I have no recollection of how I was notified of the posting, (probably from the orderly room of the Assembly Centre) or of my first day at DDME. I think I actually met the rest of the team (the two ORs anyway) at the LDAC and they took me to Curzon Street. Anyway, it was obvious to me that it was a good posting - with maximum freedom from Army major unit routine, but plenty of responsibility trade-wise. In fact, the level of vehicle roadworthiness and maintenance within London District was the responsibility of the DDME, with only the four of us to monitor it and report accordingly to Captain Heim. In turn, our performance would have been checked annually by the Vehicle Inspectorate and, during the time I was there, we received only one adverse report on one vehicle, an *Austin* utility - more of that incident later. Our days would go something like this: 'Lammie', as the ASM was called by us, would have given us a time to meet in the Leconfield House garage the evening before; it would be any time from 06.00 to 09.00, depending on the distance we had to travel; our e.t.a. at the unit nominated for inspection was usually 10.00 hrs, to enable them to line up their vehicles and lay out the vehicle kit.

We had a daily ration allowance of 3/6d *per diem*, so breakfast would be taken along the route, usually costing, in total, about 1/- (one old shilling). This would entail a mug of tea (1d), a 'doorstep' of bread and marge or dripping (2d), and maybe sausage (of the soya variety), bacon and beans (9d) or a herring or a kipper, usually 6d. The midday meal was usually with the host unit and, after lunch when the inspections were over, we'd go back to the garage, pack up and hand in our reports. Then it was back to Bryanston Place, clean ourselves up and usually head out for an evening meal. In Edgware Road there were several dining rooms, now long since gone; they were in between a basic transport café and a restaurant. The tables always had calico print cloths, the long counter was imitation (or maybe

real) marble, and there would be, at one end of it, a huge ornate, chromium-plated gas geyser emitting clouds of steam. These dining rooms were always warm and cosy - and they never did fried food. It was always meat (stew, pie, or shepherd's / cottage pie), liver and bacon or fish (steamed) and always mash and two veg. Dessert was steamed pudding of some sort, or a *Lyons* fruit pie, with a jug of custard on the table. Price: anything from 2/- to 3/6 but, if we'd had a large lunch meal with a unit, the evening meal could be skipped and a couple of pints imbibed instead. So, you see, we could live on three shillings and sixpence a day.

However, I found it difficult to manage on a Craftsman's pay after six months on full Corporal's pay. (See my previous article re Brighton.) I didn't mind not being an acting Sergeant anymore either, although I found it difficult to tell my father - I knew he would be disappointed: WOSB (failed), Sergeant (failed)! My two colleagues didn't know at first that I had been a Sergeant, but one noticed the outline of stitch marks on my BD blouse, so I told them about it. Anyway, I resolved to do something about it after three or four weeks there. I mentioned to Oscar Heim that I'd been a Sergeant in my last unit, and asked him what he could do about it. "Well", he said, twinkling at me benignly through his gold-rimmed glasses, "*I can't make you a Sergeant, but would full Corporal do?*" Would it! In the money again! My two colleagues weren't best pleased, but they left on demob a few weeks later, and were replaced by a little ginger Welshman - whose name I don't recall - and a pale skinny Cockney, whose name I definitely do. His name was Ben Rood and, I hope, still is. I last heard of him a couple of years ago on *Anglia News*, when his light plane was involved in some escapade at Sywell Aerodrome in Northamptonshire.

He joined us from MELF (Middle East Land Forces) - "*Never go to Tel-el-Kebir*", he told me. His father had run a sweetshop in Hackney until it was 'Blitzed'. With the awarded post-war damages he bought a small back-street ice cream plant and, by 1947, must have been well on his way to his first million pounds. He sold all of his ice cream in bulk to the top London hotels - I thought it best not to inquire too deeply into how the business worked! Ben often asked me to his house for weekends, a bit of a pile near Theydon Bois. There, he had a new 1947 *MG TC*, a *Triumph Speed-twin* and a 500cc *Matchless*. He'd let me ride the *Matchless* and we spent many a happy hour racing up and down the Southend arterial road. He would beat me on the straights but, because of the better handling of the *Matchless*, I was faster on the roundabouts. Once, having out-braked him at a roundabout, I was in the lead when I saw from the corner of my eye the familiar maroon mudguard of a *Speed-twin* creeping up on me. As it drew

alongside, to my horror I realised it was a traffic cop. *"Thought I was your mate, didn't you?"* he smirked. My 'mate' had long since seen him and slowed down! As they did in those days, the TC gave me a wiggling and let me off.

Ben and his family were lovely people and very kind, and Ben was really good company, always looking for ways to brighten up the day. He had a *Remington .22"* pump-action rifle, a real poacher's tool, which he'd fitted with a silencer. We kept it with our overalls and tool kits in the back of the *Hillman*, for pot shots at pigeons and squirrels in the various parks we drove through. One day, we were 'road-testing' an *Austin* ambulance belonging to an RE Bomb Disposal Unit in Richmond Park. *"You drive"*, he said, *"I'll ride in the ambulance and when it's all clear we'll get some venison"*. Being the son of a yeoman, a bit of poaching is neither here nor there - but one of King George VI's stags was something different! I managed to persuade him that a .22 bullet wouldn't kill a deer anyway (it maybe would if one was a good enough shot) and I didn't really want to lose my stripes and do 28 days 'in the glass-house' at Colchester.

One more anecdote concerning Ben. His father had ordered a new *Rolls Royce* from *Jack Barclay*, a dealership in Hanover Square, and it had duly arrived in the showroom. Out on test one day, in a *Bedford* 15 cwt. and dressed in only denims, Ben suggested we pop into *JB's* and have a look at Dad's *Rolls Royce* (not a 'Roller' in those days). This we duly did, entering through beautiful double glass doors and sinking up to our gaiters in powder-blue Wilton. Immediately a tall imperious salesman in an elegant pin-stripe came up to us and enquired superciliously as to our business there. *"We've come to see me Dad's Rolls"*, said Ben, putting on his best Cockney. *"Oh and who might he be?"* asked the salesman loftily. *"Mr Rood"*, replied Ben. Without turning a hair, but with a total change of demeanour, the worthy bowed and said, *"Ah, Mr Rood, Sir, come this way"*. And off he swept with Ben in tow. Thinking about it, that era must have been the beginning of the new class of *RR* owners, replacing much of the aristocrats' market share.

A one-man team

We didn't always go out as a team. Sometimes there was only enough work for me, if there were four vehicles or less. Consequently I'd often find myself alone, whilst Ben and Taffy were somewhere with the ASM. One unit I recall was the Polish Resettlement Corps, whose job it was to demobilise and relocate Polish troops wishing to remain in the UK. Over a period of time the PRC had collected a load of staff cars - American *Dodges*, *Fords*, *Chryslers* and the like, even a couple of *Cadillacs* and *Packards*. They were kept

in the corner of a huge building in the Olympic complex at White City, looked after by a RASC WOII. When I saw them, I said there was a week's work, not just a few hours. *"Oh no"*, he said, *"only six are on active service. All the rest are decommissioned and the property of the Polish Army"*. What Polish Army was that I wondered? My guess is that they were all *in limbo*, waiting for that long journey to Mecca, a.k.a Warren Street. Why didn't he keep them separately from the six in use? Not everyone was as trusting as I was. Ben, for one, would have loved 'a piece of the action'. Warren Street, by the way, was a massive street-trading market, mostly in expensive cars, but with little or no provenance. Many traders went on to become major franchised dealers in the 60s and 70s.

Another unit was much more tragic - or sombre would be a better word. It was in Kensington Palace Gardens, roughly where the Russian embassy now is. It was a huge house ringed by two thick barbed-wire fences, a gate in each, guarded by real sentries. The quartermaster was an affable WOII Irish Guardsman, who met me in the road outside and took me through the two gates and through a large kitchen. In this kitchen were a number of gaunt and dull-eyed men in PoW uniform and wearing the German peaked forage caps. They were seated and peeling huge piles of potatoes, placing them in large bathtubs of water. As we passed them, they looked at me with totally expressionless gazes and no spark of life. When we got to the courtyard where the QM's truck was, I asked who on earth they were? The QM's chuckle was mirthless. *"To be sure"*, he said, *"they are all Nazi SS generals and the like, accused of war crimes and waiting their turn at the Nuremberg War Tribunals"*. As I left he added, *"Oh, and be a good little Corporal and don't talk about what you've seen"*. I never did until many years later. When I got back to the street and my warm cosy *Hillman*, it felt like a bad dream; although that kitchen was probably as light as any other, I can only picture it as dark and full of utter despair. Social life in London was as one would expect on a Corporal's pay. A couple of pubs which we made our locals in Edgeware Road; long strolls around the West End seeing the sights; Service clubs (another source of cheap meals) including the *Victory Club* - at least I think that is what it was - just outside Victoria Station. There, one could get free tickets to shows and concerts; liking classical music, I used to go to Wigmore Hall a lot, mainly because it wasn't more than 600 yards from our billets. A lot of it was a bit dreary; one can only take so much Schubert and Delius, and I think a quintet was probably the largest number of musicians I heard there.

Strange to say, there weren't many girls about in our local area. Those that worked locally by day

were heading for home in the suburbs at 5 p.m. Local residents tended to be elderly or business people, living either in nearby up-market flats (apartments they'd call them) or in bug-houses in the residential squares. This left pub and hotel staff, nurses and so on, who had digs or worked locally. I can only recall two girls that I had a sort of relationship with. One was a raw-boned six-foot Scot, who worked in the kitchens of the Charing Cross hospital and would bring me vast quantities of sandwiches (courtesy of starving patients, I guess), which I used to distribute amongst my room-mates. They were quite aggrieved when we parted company, but I couldn't get to grips with her IQ. The other was a lovely Irish woman, who was my favourite barmaid at the *Dickens Wine Lodge* in Edgware Road (still there). She was a good mate and full of fun, unfortunately sometimes at my expense! Knowing how easy it was to embarrass me, she would often flirt with me over the bar, making the most outrageous suggestions; or pretend to be extremely angry because I'd taken advantage of her intoxicated state when taking her home, and so on. She was a brilliant actress, the customers loved her - and I don't think I minded too much! Looking back, I can't remember how weekends were spent; we finished work Friday p.m., started Monday a.m., there were no duties or anything like that. The Forces concessional fare was ten bob (10/- or 50 pence) return from King's Cross to Retford and travel warrants were frequent anyway, so many weekends could have been spent at home. A lot of time was spent at Ben Rood's place at Buckhurst Hill, or we'd go to visit various farming friends and relatives in Bedfordshire, in Ben's nice new *TC MG*. He had a *Purdy* 12 bore (a pair for all I know), so we'd spend a weekend shooting. I don't think there was time for anything else alas!

We also used the *Hillman* utility a lot. Col D-B and Captain Oscar often got me to perform chores for them, involving trips to outlandish places like Arborfield. They were quite happy for me to use the 'tilly' for days out, as long as we had a work ticket, were uniformed and had a plausible reason to be out. Of course, if we were really bored, we could walk down to Hyde Park (300 yards) to Speakers' Corner, and sit and watch the world go by. Or go to Marble Arch in a real pea-souper, when huge braziers were lit at the junction in a futile effort to disperse the fog, and listen to the crunch of buckled metal and tinkling of broken glass. Or watch dispatch riders trying to remain upright on the wooden-blocked surface of Park Lane, made treacherous by traffic film and a shower of rain. Small pleasures fondly remembered!

Life continued at an even tenor until about September/October, when the *Hillman*, which by now I considered mine as only I drove it - I even

polished the brass *Hillman* badge on the bonnet - was involved in a road traffic accident (RTA). Taffy and I had just left King's Troop RHA in St John's Wood in a really thick fog, when at a junction we were T-boned by an evil *Bedford* coal lorry. The damage appeared superficial (driver's door and front wing), so Lammie decided that, rather than get it straightened unofficially by the friendly RASC workshop who maintained the *Hillman*, we'd send it officially to 10 Command Workshops, Mill Hill. Wrong move! The poor little creature had suffered a bent chassis, and was sentenced BER (Beyond Economical Repair), never to be seen again. Even worse, there seemed to be no replacement vehicle in sight, so it was public transport from then on to all our locations. It didn't work, for obvious reasons, so Capt Heim and Col D-B decided we would move to 10 Command Workshops and the vehicles would be called into there as and when necessary. So, it was 'Goodbye' Leconfield House, 'Goodbye' Bryanstone Place and 'Hello' 10 Command. And 'Hello' CSM Greysmark!

Under '10' command

The time at the DDME office had been great. Col D-B was a kindly man, although he could get a bit exasperated at times. For instance, all officers, even at that time, wore civilian clothes, ergo indistinguishable from civilians. Therefore one only saluted those you knew to be officers; Col D-B and Oscar said 'once a day was enough'. One morning, I passed Col D-B in the corridor; he was deep in conversation with a bowler-hatted gent so I didn't salute. On the way back I thought that maybe I should - so I did. Col D-B looked a bit startled but said nothing. A little later, passing our desk, he said, "*Thanks for saluting the Brigadier, Corporal Larby, but you ought to have removed the pipe from your mouth before doing so!*" At the time I had a rough briar pipe, which was seldom out of my mouth. I was a non-smoker until I was 18, when for my birthday, a then current girlfriend bought me a very nice *Meerschbaum* pipe with a black stem and a white shiny bowl. It lasted all of eight weeks, until in fact Paddy Steval borrowed it to show off in the NAAFI at Arborfield and broke it. I think that girl thought I lacked that '*Je ne sais quoi*'. I'm sure I did, but it wasn't a lack of tobacco. Anyway, I've been a pipe and cigar smoker ever since. I tried fags once, but they made me cough. Pipe and cigar tobacco is not inhaled - not by me anyway, but 'real' men might! Anyway, I digress. Before leaving the subject of DDME, there are two incidents that I recall, both of them concerning Col D-B.

One was a shameful lack of duty on my part, when I gave a 'fair' report on an *Austin* utility that was in a disgusting state. It should have been given an immediate VOR (Vehicle Off Road) certificate and the driver charged. The said driver was in fact a

plausible Irish Captain, who lived by himself in a hut in the yard of a chemical factory - a boffin of some sort, I guess. He blarneyed me, against my natural instincts (and job risk) to fudge the report, and he promised me that he would get the vehicle sorted (Irish pigs can fly). Unfortunately for me, REME Inspectorate checked his vehicle a few weeks later, VOR'd the vehicle and, reading my 'fair' report of a few weeks earlier, sent it to Col D-B with a nasty note. Knowing the Inspectorate (civilians), they would, with glee, have circulated the same report within their own hierarchy. Col D-B told me that I had let the side down. I had and regretted it bitterly, especially, as he said, I knew better. Another lesson learned.

Apart from that one incident, I'd bucked my ideas up no end and done my best at all times. So much so that, on one occasion, I arrived late at a location because I hadn't checked the route beforehand. An irate MT officer rightly told me off about my late arrival. He then launched into a tirade about my scruffy appearance. (He'd accosted me in the urinal, where a call of nature had summoned me, when half-changed from BD to denims) He criticised my poor example as a British soldier to his German PoWs, etc, and said he would report me to Col D-B. After the inspection, I made a bee-line to the Colonel's office, giving him my side of the story before the letter from the MTO arrived. *"Let's leave it until the letter comes"*, said the Colonel, *"and we'll see what's to be done"*. About three days later, he summoned me once more. *"Read this"*, he said, showing me the vituperative letter from the PoW man. *"Now read this and, if it's OK with you, I'll send it off"*. 'This' was Col D-B's reply, stating that I was a truthful man and a good tradesman with an excellent record and that he did not doubt my version of the event. He went on to say that, furthermore, the whole inspection system was done as a favour to his unit, and if the MTO didn't like our standard of service, he was at liberty to go elsewhere! What a man! Needless to say, he was my hero and got 100% loyalty and effort from me. Next time I went to the POW unit, there was a new MTO, full of concern for my welfare. For my part, I wasn't bloody late!

When the DDME staff first operated from 10 Command, we had our own inspection bays and, although billeted and fed by the workshop, we were under the aegis of Capt Heim, who visited us most days. We walked from billets to work and had virtually every weekend off, unless there was a backlog of reports to write. This did not sit well with CSM Greysmark, a loathsome bully, who treated the National Servicemen abominably, and definitely itched to get his fingers on me. The Workshop Officer, whoever he was, also thought that we three musketeers (or should that be trucksteters?) might be part of his inspection system. In the beginning, Oscar Heim visited us

nearly every day (he lived with his mother in an opulent flat in St. John's Wood, nearer to Mill Hill than Curzon Street). But gradually his visits decreased and, as they did so, the dreadful influence of 10 Command increased. At work, we found ourselves being integrated into the workshop system, sharing our work with theirs. Regimentally, we paraded with the 10 Command complement and marched to work. The final straw was Regimental Training on Saturday mornings with Greysmark. I made sure that my drill was impeccable. I also made sure my appearance was as scruffy as I could make it and get away with. I had Canadian boots (courtesy of Canadian Army, Aldershot), which were of soft black leather with no toecaps - the leather was of matt finish and resolutely refused to shine. Greysmark thought that they were medical boots and I didn't disillusion him. My cap-badge shone brightly in an oily beret, my BD trousers were pressed but I wore a scruffy blouse, and so on. Greysmark used to shout and bawl at me, and I used to reply from time to time, but only when on firm ground. Still, being DDME staff, we couldn't do guards, fatigues, etc, as we weren't on Greysmark's strength. However, the situation was impossible for me to bear and I pestered poor old Oscar for a posting 'asap'. Looking back, maybe I should have done a VM1 trade-test and applied for an Arm Arts course - but I didn't, either then or ever. I would have enjoyed the technical side, having got my maths sorted, but the thought of all that Regimental stuff scared the living daylights out of me.

Anyway, my next posting came through in November 1947; Oscar had done the job for me. What was my new unit to be? REME School. Where? MELF 11 - Tel-el-Kebir! Poor Ben Rood was disgusted - he suggested he would arrange a RTA, or some such event, which might hospitalise me. Anything but TEK! Anything, that is, bar an Arm Arts Course. But, with my usual inertia, I did nothing to avert my impending doom, so it was 'Goodbye' Ben, 'Goodbye' Oscar (I sold him my *Irvin* jacket for £10 so it wasn't all gloom) and 'get stuffed' Greysmark! (At what price, I was soon to learn.) I suppose that I must have returned briefly to Mill Hill after embarkation leave for vaccinations, inoculations, documentation, etc. before going to Otley, but I don't remember. Embarkation leave at Welham Villas must have been pretty uneventful too, as I've no recollection of any specific occurrences. I suppose I must have seen Sheila, my only steady girlfriend, a few times; gone out on farm visits with my father, and gone into Gainsborough to seek out old 'Six Sub' haunts and friends (you can't go back!). Mainly it must have been all doom and gloom! Anyway, one cold December day - or maybe November - it was farewell to family and off to Otley, 'Gateway to the World'!

(To be continued)

The life of an Imperialist Warmonger (Part 5)

by Peter Simpson, 56B

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

Other members of the Commissioning and Advisory Team (CAAT)

Although we still socialised extensively in the team house with the other CAAT members, the Wilsons and the Hewitsons were the only team members we were really closely involved with during our stay. We invited Vic Chaszewski and his wife, Karla, over for dinner occasionally. Vic was the REME ASM, who took the place of Pete Roberts, the RAOB Conductor. Vic was Polish by birth and was mad keen to obtain a commission as a REME officer; unfortunately his father was also Polish, so Vic was not eligible for a commission until he had been a British citizen for another four years. With a name like Chaszewski (pronounced Has-chess-ski) he was in for some stick from the average soldier, he was nicknamed 'Charlie Whiskey'. It appears that his 'claim to fame' was that the author of "*The Robe*" was his uncle; unfortunately, as most British soldiers' idea of a good religious read is the *News of the World* articles on Catholic priests and little boys, this did not win him any kudos!

Arthur and Jan Everett were one of the couples that succumbed to the lure of the almighty dollar and Arthur left the Army to join one of the local firms. Unfortunately, within three weeks of joining them, he had a nasty accident with a ventilator fan that removed half of his right foot. We visited Arthur in the local hospital and, while we were there, the surgeon who had operated on him walked in without a word, and took the sheet off his foot. Then he put his nose down and took a good sniff, replaced the sheet and walked out. Arthur explained that this was the daily check for gangrene, necessary no doubt, but not the best bedside manner in the world. The hospital in Ahwaz was extremely well equipped, with all the best and latest equipment, but only one or two doctors were trained on these equipments, so you had to wait for a long time to receive a check-up.

While on the subject of medical care, it reminds me of Margaret's appointment at the dentist. She had a slight toothache, so made an appointment with a dentist who was recommended to us. It turned out that the dentist was very competent, having been trained in Germany, and he had up-to-date equipment. What was disconcerting, however, was the fact that there was no separate waiting room and surgery. The patients sat in chairs all around the dentist's chair, while he

calmly did the fillings and extractions. I am just surprised that there were any patients left after that first high pitched whine of the drill! I know for a fact that I would have been waiting outside until I was called, but Margaret said most of the patients showed a great deal of interest in the procedures, rather than any sign of paranoia.

I felt some sympathy for the CO, Maj Richard Wellings-Thomas, and his wife Susie, as Capt Harriman and his wife were the only other Officers' family in Ahwaz. Capt Harriman and his wife were two peculiar people, deadly intent on not fraternising with anybody else, if they could possibly avoid doing so. Consequently, the CO and Susie were very much out on a limb with regards to the CAAT personnel. We did go around to their house a couple of times for dinner, and Susie turned out to be pleasant company. She had spent her teens as a 'hippy', wandering around the Far East, mostly in India, and had been employed there as a nanny for some rich family. The first meal we attended, she served up this recipe which she had learned from the servants of this family, it was absolutely delicious. Margaret persuaded her to write out the recipe, and since that day, Margaret has made it for many a dinner party; we don't know what the original name was, so we just call it 'Chicken Susie'. Maj W-T also shared an interest in music with me, and we often had a talk about Hi-Fi in general. I got on very well with him and later on, when I was back at Bordon in the UK, he popped in on me to see how I liked the new posting.

The Disco

About three months after I started work, my name came up on the rota, along with that of Pete Hewitson, to arrange the entertainment for that month. As I've said, we were always trying to find something new to impress the rest of the members and to enhance the reputation of the CAAT team house in the eyes of the ex-pat community. I have always been interested in music, so took a large collection of LP records and cassettes with me to Iran. One thing we never had at the team house was decent music to dance to. Usually, members just brought along some of their tapes and, as their tastes varied so much, you could finish up with Scottish Country dancing or Frank Ifield's yodelling hits. I had this idea of putting together a form of 'disco', but the usual disco consisted of a couple of turntables with a huge selection of 45-rpm 'single' hits on record that you could play. We didn't have a selection of single records, so this conventional form of disco was a non-starter. However, I did have a lot of LP records where one or two tracks were hits, and

also a lot of cassettes where, again, the odd track was danceable.

So I got together with Pete to see what equipment he had. He owned a cassette recorder, while I had a fairly powerful amplifier, a cassette recorder, a microphone from my-reel-to-reel tape recorder and a set of headphones. What I decided to do was to buy about a dozen blank cassettes and then we could make up a series of tapes that contained different types of music. So I firstly put together a selection of disco hits, by recording from various LPs and cassettes - for instance, *'That's the way I like it'* by KC and the Sunshine Band, *'Play that funky music'*, by Wild Cherry, and so on. I then numbered the tape as 'No.1' and made up a card that listed all the hits on that cassette. I then made another tape of slower dance tunes and carried out the same procedure. By the time I had finished, I had about eight one-hour tapes of different music for all moods, all properly itemised, so that we would know what the next tune was, or be able to find a request. You must remember that, at this time, we were only trying to provide one night's entertainment and then that would be that.

I got together Peter, Margaret and Chris and we had a dress rehearsal. We used the fade controls to fade in the tune and tried switching to the other cassette player, where Pete had set up a request from the girls. It worked perfectly. We could seamlessly play a number of hits one after the other and, if there was a request, then I could listen on my headphones to the second player, select the start of the track and, when Pete had finished his track, fade his out and mine in. Now came the showmanship and presentation, it was not enough to give them the music we had to give them a disco. Firstly we needed a catchy name; Pete suggested that as we were two Pete's, we should call it 'Diddy Pete's Disco', which sounded pretty good, so we plumped for that. Although we were not really a 'disco', as we had to cater for all ages, we at least had a selection of party-type dances that could get everyone on the floor - including the Hokey Cokey and the Conga. Margaret and Chris really came up trumps with the decorations and ideas. They bought some black cloth and sewed sequins all over it, then made the name 'Diddy Pete's Disco' from silver stars. They then borrowed two long-haired wigs from Eddy Wilson's theatre props and we were on our way.

The last piece, to complete the showmanship, was an introduction number that would get everyone's attention. I had just the tune, it was a thunderous version of the William Tell Overture, (or to some, the Lone Ranger theme), played by a group called the Piltdown Men. Came the day of the dance and it was a knockout! All the ex-pats and team members loved it. About two in the morning, the President of the Golf Club wandered over, it

appears that they were going to have a grand St Georges Day dance and he wanted to book us to provide the music! This dance was an annual event and invariably every ex-pat in Ahwaz went to it, the guest list would be about five hundred and the tickets were pretty expensive.

This was something that we hadn't foreseen, we were only having a bit of fun in our own team house and, if we made a pigs ear out of it, it didn't matter. But to provide the music for a grand affair like this was something that we were just not prepared for. However, he was very persuasive and made us an offer we couldn't refuse. W-T was also very enthusiastic for us to take up the offer, to ensure that CAAT kept a high profile. We now had to put together a much more comprehensive repertoire of music to cater to all needs - a lot of the ex-pats at the Golf Club were in their fifties, but there were also a lot of younger members. That was when we had a real piece of luck. David Chellam, the assistant manager at the Ahwaz Hotel, gave me a call and asked if I would like to drop in and see him, as he had something that might be of interest to me in regards to the disco. The next day after work, I drove around to see him. He offered me a drink and then asked me to follow him down to a room they had in the cellar. In the corner of this room were three large cardboard boxes and when I opened them I found that they contained hundreds of 45rpm records.

It appears that the year previously, the Ahwaz Hotel was going to have a disco in the cellar but, due to a combination of circumstances, it never eventuated. Dave said I was welcome to tape whatever I wanted and then return the discs, on the condition that I would make a couple of appearance at the hotel. This was for suitable remuneration of course and included free meals for the family. This was a real boon and myself and Pete spent days putting together another ten tapes of assorted music that we hoped would cover every taste.

The St George's Day dance

On the 'big night' we were both so tense that we put away a good many vodkas before we even started. We had set up the equipment on the stage in the afternoon and were nervously awaiting the MC to announce the disco. Nearly all the ex-pats had heard about the new disco and the place was absolutely packed. Margaret and Chris were sitting on a large table of about twenty, we had a lot of friends there from the ex-pat community, but there was also a heck of a lot of people I had never seen before. The MC gave us a great build up, it nearly had me looking over my shoulder to see where this terrific act was! We walked on, I turned the volume up and we launched into the William Tell tune. Within a minute the floor was packed with couples and we were off to a flying start. As I said, we had music for all tastes and

that included the old favourites for the over fifties. Watching a drunken pack of Poms and Colonials, trying to explain the Hokey Cokey to a mixed bag of equally drunk Swedes, Germans, Americans and various other nationalities, had myself and Pete nearly hysterical from laughter. There were groups of people going into the middle, while other groups were trying to get out of the middle, while an assortment of other groups were putting arms up, legs in and generally causing total chaos.

Gino came up to me and asked, "*Peter, OK if I ask your wife to jig a jig?*" Well, I just burst out laughing and Gino looked a bit askance at me. So I explained that the request for 'jig-a-jig' was normally surreptitiously whispered from the corner of a soldier's mouth to a lady of dubious profession in a back alley. It was certainly was not requesting the pleasure of vertical terpsichorean activity in a ballroom, but was more likely to be horizontal sexual activity in a bedroom! Gino was absolutely mortified; if he had been Japanese, I believe it would have been out with the sword and we would have witnessed ritual Hari Kari - but I calmed him down and we had a good laugh about it.

The evening was a roaring success, the only problem we had was trying to shut down the disco for the night. We were only booked until midnight but, every time we tried to stop, we nearly had a riot. The Golf Club president then announced that they would have to close at 2:00am, as they could not pay any more overtime to the waiters. This didn't faze the ex-pats one little bit; they had a whip-round and raised enough money to keep going for hours. By this time, Pete and I were absolutely whacked; the generous ex-pats were buying us drinks all night and, between the booze and the fact that we had been playing for six hours, we could hardly see the equipment, let alone operate it.

We made a lot of money and new friends with 'Diddy Pete's', we played a lot of the team houses and also a regular session at the Ahwaz Hotel. We ran it for about a year and then, as Pete Hewitson was going home, we sold it for a handsome sum to another ex-pat. There was an awful lot of 'good will' in the price, plus of course the equipment and all the tapes we had put painstakingly together over a long period.

Some other strange happenings

There were some extremely strange events that occurred while we were in Iran and I shall try to recall a few of the mores bizarre ones.

The money

All the bank notes in use were extremely worn, most of them stuck together with pieces of Scotch tape and so grubby that the numbers were barely legible. Also, they never had any small change in

the shops. As a result, after you had payed for your goods, instead of receiving silver you would receive some small goods to the value of the silver. Inevitably you would finish up with a pocket full of chewing gum, razor blades, matches, bandaids and sweets; and of course none of the shops would accept any of these items for payment. Probably the most unusual change I received was when I offered to collect Margaret's dry cleaning - I finished up walking home with six wire coat hangers, this was my change!

Corruption, the Middle Eastern endemic

Corruption was also rife in Iran, particularly in the building trade, as there were so many foreign companies involved, and also because of the convoluted system they had in place for payment of any government projects. Gino, who was the head of the Italian firm *Saipam*, had a couple of instances of the corrupt processes he encountered. I thought that these were particularly relevant, as one involved officials at the lowest levels and the other went right to the top of the Iranian government.

The first instance was in the docks; all Gino's materials for the building of the desalinisation plant they were constructing had to come in by ship to Bandar Abbas. The very first time that his trucks left to collect the materials for that week, they returned empty; it appears that they had to wait for an unloading time to be available and there was not one to be had on that day. After a word with a friend, who worked for another Italian company, Gino went up on the truck himself the next day. He found the minor official in charge of the schedule and, after some haggling, they agreed on a price per truck and bingo, no more problems obtaining a loading time.

The second instance was much more complex and the end result was that the corruption also provided extra payments to *Saipam* as well as the officials involved. Every month, Gino had to submit a progress claim for the work done to date, including any extra payments because of delays due to local problems. He made out the paperwork and then sent it to the head office of *Saipam* in Tehran, firstly for approval and then forwarding to the government for payment. The first month, Gino calculated the amount due and forwarded it to *Saipam*. It promptly came back from Nick Cresci, with a note requesting he double the amount on his request and re-submit it. Gino picked up the phone and called Nick, to find out the reason for this, and also point out that if the government officials checked his calculations there would be trouble. Nick explained the system. There were three government officials involved in the approval process, starting with a junior engineer, and the final approval coming from the Minister for Industrial Development. Each one would 'rubber stamp' the claim and then there

would be a nice brown envelope given personally to each one of them. The upshot being that *Saipam* were paid approximately a quarter of the extra they requested and the rest was shared, according to rank, by the officials concerned. This was the norm for business dealings in Iran.

There was a scandal that appeared in the English tabloids about a year after I left, where a Colonel in the Royal Signals was court-martialled for allegedly providing bribes to Iranian officials, involved in the tender process for the supply of communication equipment. This poor 'patsy' was obviously hung out to dry by the powers that be, after the process had become known to the media. In truth, if you wished to tender for any contract in Iran at that time, you would be required to supply a bribe purely to get your submission to be considered. If there was no money provided, you didn't even get a chance to tender. This was obligatory, everyone in the tender process knew this.

1977 or 1356, I'm so confused

In the last year I was there, which was 1977, the Shah dropped a bit of a bombshell. Iran at that time used the Gregorian calendar, as did all the western world. But he suddenly decided that Iran would discontinue the use of this calendar from the 1st July 1977 and would then commence to use the Islamic calendar. What this meant was that, as from the 1st July, the year would not be 1977, but would now be 1356! The calendar commences on the date that Mohammed migrated to Medina, which was 622 AD in the Gregorian calendar. The number of days in each Month is not set in the Islamic calendar, but depends on the sighting of the lunar crescent after the full moon. As you can imagine, this threw the country into a panic, particularly the business community. Fortunately, the Shah was persuaded to allow businesses to use the Gregorian calendar, until they had a process in place to move to the Islamic calendar. Being soldiers, the first thing we calculated was the amount of back-pay due on the 622 years extra years we had served in Iran, but unfortunately our Pay Clerk would not entertain the request! It still was not sorted out by the time I left.

Life in Iran

The polite Iranian way of doing business was really epitomised at the bank. Whenever we visited, no matter what business we had, even if it was just a simple withdrawal, the bank manager would deal with us. Mr Brian Asfour would cordially invite us in; we would then be offered a drink and spend ten minutes discussing the weather and what date the rains would start/end. This was after enquiring about the health of myself, my wife and so on, down to my second cousin once removed - a very polite, but at times frustrating, way of doing business. Eventually we would arrive, in some convoluted fashion, at the business in hand, and

we would discuss this. After the business talk, there would be polite conversation until we finally managed to leave. The banking system was fairly haphazard and Margaret used to keep records of any transfers, etc that we made, to ensure that they were accurate.

This *laissez faire* attitude to banking was exemplified by an incident we used to refer to as 'The case of the mysterious twenty-five thousand rials'. One month, Margaret checked our balance and found that we had a deposit of twenty-five thousand rials that we could not account for. The next time we went to the bank, we asked Brian about this deposit; he had his staff check the details and then informed us that it was quite correct and that it had come from the UK. Well, there was not much else we could do, so we just left the amount in our account in case anything came up. About six weeks later, I just happened to hear Dave Simpson, one of the ex-pats, complaining about the speed of the transfer system and that he had still not received the money he had requested from the UK. I interrupted him, "About twenty-five thousand rials?" I enquired. "Yes", he replied, "how the hell do you know that?" To cut a long story short, we eventually sorted it out, well I expect at least they had the surname right! It served however to ensure that Margaret was even more vigilant in checking our account details.

In the western world, I was used to bank staff being well dressed and well groomed, but here you may find a teller with a couple of days stubble on his face. The same general sloppiness in dress applied to the police force. The police was divided into two separate arms, the traffic and crime police and the Gendarmerie, who were the armed force and more like the Army. It was not uncommon to see two burly policemen, both with a heavy stubble, strolling down the street with their little fingers intertwined; this had no sexual connotation, but just meant they were good friends. Different cultures, different ideas of what could be termed normal behaviour.

The Iranian attitude to death was also entirely different to western concepts, mainly due to the fact they were Shiite Moslems. On the mountain roads, we often passed fatal accidents, one in particular where the driver was hanging out of his shattered windscreen and his passenger lying dead in the road. None of the bodies were covered or even being attended to. When I enquired about this, I was informed that the priority was to the living, they placed no urgency on the dead, as they were just bodies. This simple statement does make sense, but in the west we tend to place more emphasis on the rights of the dead; to have some respect shown to them, even if we cannot heal them. Whether this is more humanitarian or just unrealistic is a matter for conjecture.

The Shah was what I termed a 'Benevolent Dictator'. By this I meant that, although his rule was autocratic, he did try to improve the living conditions of his people by a variety of means. These included giving the peasants their own land, building many power stations, de-salination plants and improving the country's infrastructure in general, by improving the roads, universities etc. However, it was still clear that he was the supreme ruler and his secret police, the *Savak*, were ruthless in finding and quickly stamping down on any perceived threat to his rule. Unfortunately for him, this could not include controlling the clergy;

and Iran was an extremely religious country. Whenever you have a country where poverty is rife, there is bound to be an increase in religious fervour. People must have hope and, if there seems no hope of improvement in their earthly life, then they will turn to the priests or Ayatollahs, who can promise them salvation in the hereafter.

*This brings to an end this epic tale of life in Iran.
Thank you very much Peter.*

Arborfield Old Boys' Association Web Shop

Here we have a few items which we hope are of interest to you. They can be ordered and paid for using Paypal, or credit/debit card. We have added 4% to the prices to cover the cost of this service, plus £1:50 postage and packing per item. The web shop is run by our Honorary Treasure Mike Davis, and he will have items available at the reunions.

Ties



Available in 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

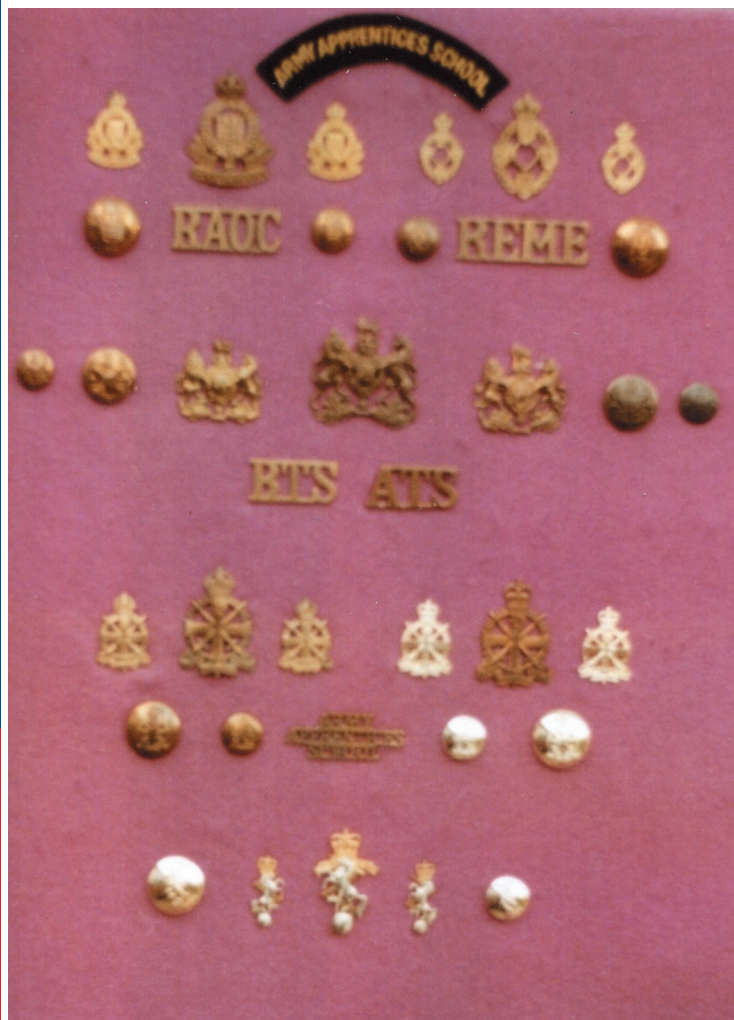


Also available are a small amount of Blazer Badges @ £10.60 + £1:50 P&P, Mugs with the AOBA badge @ £5.88 + £1:50 P&P

Please contact Mike for overseas postage costs, and any other enquiries.

Eggy' Egleton's Badge Collection

Barry 'Eggy' Egleton of intake 52B has kindly sent in several photographs of his fine collection of badges, some of which appear here:



My Army Career—(Part5) by Terry O'Callaghan 42C

BAOR Germany, 6th RTR, Munster, Westphalia

We worked long hours, but it was a part of Army life I enjoyed. Unfortunately, the armoured regiments were short of personnel for LAD and I was posted to 6th Royal Tank Regiment (RTR). The regiment still had Comet tanks and, in due course, was posted to BAOR. We sailed from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and then on to Munster, Westphalia. The barracks were a German Army barracks, alongside of the Dortmund-Elms Canal. The first thing that struck me was that the barracks were of a much higher standard than the average British ones in UK. New hangers and roads were built for the tanks, as previously only wheeled vehicles had been housed in the camp.

The regiment was issued with *Bedford* QL 3-tonners (with the noisy transfer box), *Jeeps*, and a few *Daimler* scout cars. The REME stores vehicles were *Ford* 3-ton and the fitter's vehicle was the *GM* personnel carrier. The machinery vehicle was a pre-war *Leyland* of about 1935 vintage. The two *Scammell* wheeled recovery vehicles were the latest models, with petrol engines. They were 6x6, with modern controls and far easier to drive than the old type. The regiment also had *Volkswagen* (VW) cars and a *Bussing-Nag* bus, issued under the war reparation agreement. The first VW cars had 'crash' gearboxes and cable brakes, with bodies that would crack badly. The road holding was poor, they badly over-steered and occasionally a right-hand front cylinder of the engine would seize. When I left the regiment, the latest cars with synchromesh gearboxes, hydraulic brakes etc, had just been issued. Vehicles like the cars and bus had yellow number-plates and had to be destroyed, if the regiment was ordered to battle stations. The bus intrigued me; it had a large straight-8 diesel engine, about the largest engine I have seen in a vehicle of that size.

The regiment took delivery of the *Centurion* Mk 3 tank, shortly after we arrived at Munster. Most of the tank regiment personnel had been trained on *Centurion*, but not one REME tradesman. I was the only REME tradesman to have any knowledge of 'Cent' and I found the Colonel's (REME) comment, "*We can pick it up as we go along*", most unhelpful. The tanks were delivered by rail to the nearest siding, across the fields from the barracks. Several tanks got bogged down crossing the fields and it was my first experience of recovering a *Centurion*. I now realised the extra weight of the *Cent*, when compared to *Comet*. We had no ARV and the recovery, using only wheeled recovery vehicles, was very difficult. Later on, we were issued with a *Centurion* 'Aldershot' ARV. It had been designed and built at the REME

Command Workshop, Aldershot, and was a stopgap, awaiting development of the 'official' ARV. When I later worked at Chobham, I was involved in low temperature tests of the *Cent* Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers (AVRE) and bridge layer.

Originally, the idea was to operate *Churchill* ARV, AVRE and bridge layer with the *Centurions*, but *Churchill* was a slower vehicle and this caused problems. Also the *Churchill*'s equipment was designed for a lighter tank than the *Cent*. On exercise, *Churchills* were sent ahead of the *Cents*, on account of their slower speed. It was soon realised that, in action, this was not tactically feasible; all vehicles must have equal speed. Also the support vehicles should have the capability to recover and repair the tanks with the minimum of effort. Supplying separate spares for the *Churchills* also increased the supply problems.

A good recovery crew (including the fitters to repair the vehicle) saves an enormous amount of time and effort. It is only after working in poor conditions over several days, possibly weeks, that the true abilities come to the fore. Personnel for crews should be good recovery mechanics, the fitters should be very competent, and all personnel have good strength and stamina. Several times in my Army career I asked for a replacement, because the soldier was not physically capable or could not perform well under arduous conditions.

There were several recovery jobs I remember well in Germany. The first was when three tanks were stuck in a lush green grass field, some way from a road. The officer said, "*Just tow them out and we'll be on our way*". My reply was, "*You must be joking - and have you tried you bowler hat for size lately?*" - to which he took exception! He was of the opinion that recovery would be simple and the CO would never know that he'd taken three tanks into a field where 'angels feared to tread' (a RTR saying for when a tank was driven into an area where it shouldn't be driven). Anyone who has recovered a tank in such conditions will know that the tanks 'become bulldozers'. The mud under the tank belly seems to act as glue. We were working away, when I felt 'a presence' - the CO had arrived! His only comment was, "*You have quite a job there*", but I never saw the officer again in the regiment!

The *Centurion* track was wider than any tank before. This was to reduce the ground pressure due to the extra weight. But, due to the extra width, the track was liable to tilt and jam when driving over such as a tree stump or the

embankment of a road. This was a major problem until the crews became aware of the problem. A modification was made to the tracks, by increasing the track horn height (the horn is a projection, which runs between the twin road wheels). This reduced the problem. A serious problem we had with the initial batch of tracks was breaking of the links. Fortunately the links mainly broke under maximum strain i.e. in muddy conditions, when the tank was going slowly. Another problem was that the front idler brackets cracked and there were no spares for one side. This was due to the fact that someone had decided that the right and left brackets were the same, but all the spare brackets were for one side only. We tried to repair the brackets by welding, but this was not very successful. It must be remembered that welding in this period was not as easy as it is today. I learned later that loading the bracket at the high speed of the tank was incorrect. A tank is pushed along through the front idler and this loading must be taken into account, besides the loading when the tank hits a bank travelling cross-country.

Replacing the tank tracks presented a transport problem and this was overcome by using tank transporters. This brought home to me the many stories I heard of tanks during the war, not being able to move due to track wear, and with no transport to supply new tracks. I will return to track design and wear, plus the effect on transmission and engine due to 'track patter'. Patter is caused by the track passing around the sprocket, setting up a vibration, which can be fed through to the transmission and engine. The gearbox selector forks, for moving the gears on gear-change, were always breaking. The forks were made from phosphor bronze and we were told these couldn't be brazed. But our LAD welder worked in his father's blacksmith's shop, mainly repairing farm equipment. He often repaired phosphor bronze fittings, and so repaired the selector forks successfully. We had to keep this quiet, otherwise we'd have lost our welder to a REME workshop to utilise his skills.

The *Centurion Meteor* engine was basically the same as the *Comet Meteor* engine. The *Cent* was about fifteen tons heavier than *Comet* and engine power had been increased from 600 BHP to 650 BHP, meaning the load cycle was higher. The *Cent* was the first British tank of this class not to have a co-driver and machine gun. This presented problems in the Korean War, because Chinese infantry would swarm over the tanks. The co-axial machine gun (with the main gun) had to be used to fire at other *Cents*, to remove the Chinese. This resulted in the main gun being out of action when the machine gun was used for this purpose. The weight of a tank for operational use is difficult to define. For example, on the *Cents* we put extra brackets to carry road wheels, lengths of tracks and other assorted parts.

This happened on tanks during the war.

From previous experience on *Comet*, I recommended a strict maintenance schedule of magnetos, spark plugs, fuel filters and air filters. The spark plugs had a shorter life than I recall on *Comet*. One of the crucial factors, when changing plugs, was not to over tighten the plug and screened ignition lead. If this happened, the next time the plugs were changed there was an awful lot of swearing (there were twenty-four plugs!) and damaged knuckles. Carburettor flooding on a very few engines (this I mentioned previously) was a minor concern. There were several other minor problems with the *Meteor* engine, but with experience and minor modification to the engine reliability increased significantly.

Clutch failures increased with a new intake of drivers, this we had to accept. Several attempts were made to overcome this problem, without success. It was just a case of experience. The controls to brakes and clutch were by rods. This got rid of the constant problems with hydraulics on *Comet*. This did increase the effort on changing gear and using the brakes. It was considered that driving cross-country for twenty-five miles in one day was the maximum for a driver, before exhaustion set in. The bouncing around of the crew in the turret could be a limiting factor to the speed and distance travelled. When I researched the load cycle on engines, the crew comfort in the turret often governed the way the tank was driven and hence the load cycle on the engine.

The *Centurion* was the first tank to have exhaust silencers, fitted on the track guard. When the tanks were operating in woods, the leaves would collect under the silencers and start to burn. In dry weather, this could cause fires in the woods. Several modifications were made but were not successful. It was a question of clearing the leaves at every opportunity. It was quickly realised that the *Cent's* fuel capacity was totally inadequate for the distances they had to travel in Germany. The tanks were normally re-fuelled after twenty-five miles. The first solution was to fit a large capacity jettison fuel tank on the rear. The two straps had an explosive device for jettisoning; but these very rarely worked so the fuel tanks became a permanent feature. The next idea was a single-wheeled trailer, which was also designed to be jettisoned. Handling these trailers was a nightmare. Recovering a trailer with a single wheel, and loading the tanks on the railway, took considerable effort. An attachment for wheeled vehicles for these trailers was required, but hadn't been thought of.

One of my first jobs at Chobham was to be involved in the investigations to increase fuel capacity on *Centurions*. The solution was to fit an extra fuel tank behind the gearbox. This required modification to the rear of the gearbox. The

interesting story attached to this is that a draftsman measured a *Cent* and obtained the hull drawings. When the fuel tank was made, it was too big to fit the chosen tank. The draftsman was adamant that he was correct. The tank that he'd measured was located and it was then discovered that *Cents* had been produced to two different lengths! The reason for this, I never did discover.

The auxiliary engine was basically a Morris 8 car engine. It drove a direct current (DC) generator and a fan for pressure charging the turret when the gun was fired. The *Cent* Mk 3 tank had a 20-pounder gun with no fume extractor. The turret was pressurised, so that when the breech opened, smoke and fumes were extracted through the barrel. Later tanks had a 105mm gun and a fume extractor. A fume extractor is fitted approximately halfway along a gun barrel and can be described as a canister with small holes leading from the barrel. The smoke and fumes are trapped in the canister and, as the shell leaves the barrel, the depression behind the shell extracts the fumes and smoke from the barrel.

The *Morris* engine and generator had many faults initially; some were very giggly and this caused a heavy workload. The car engine cooling system had an impeller, to assist thermo-syphoning of the coolant. Thermo-syphoning is when the hot coolant rises to the top of the radiator. The coolant is then cooled and flows back down through the radiator. A pump was fitted to the engine in *Cent*. A pump requires a head of coolant to work efficiently and should be fitted near the bottom of a cooling system. Unfortunately the pump was fitted where the original impeller was fitted, causing the pump to form a steam pocket, stopping the coolant from circulating. It took a long time to diagnose this fault, which was known by the REME Maintenance Advisory Group. There were several failures of the shaft driving the generator and this was where I began to realise what torsional vibration was. I had worked on many engines where failures were attributed to torsional problems. Without understanding the problem. Torsional problems plagued me throughout most of my engine research career. The fan blades often failed at the root of the blade, partly due to torsional vibrations. But gradually the engine and generator problems were overcome and the unit became reliable.

I have ridden cross-country in numerous tanks and *Cent* in its day was a good ride. Occasionally, a suspension hydraulic damper would fail or a spring would break. The construction of the unit suspension made the repairs very simple compared to previous tanks. The *Cent*'s greatest asset was the gyro-stabilised gun. This enabled firing on the move with a fair degree of accuracy. For demonstration purposes, a tank had a white line along the side and barrel of the gun. To see a

tank bouncing cross-country (this was 1950), with its gun remaining dead steady on target, was very impressive. The Sergeant gunner who demonstrated the advantage of *Centurion* was exceptional. He could get three shells in the air at once and hit the target. He had learned in the desert to fire on the move, using manual controls. He maintained that, due to the inferiority of British tank guns compared to German tank guns, if a British tank stopped to fire, 'you were dead'. I later learned that development of the gyro-stabilised gun was due to the fact that many British tanks were destroyed when they stopped to fire. I am not certain this would have been true after the war, with the development of a gun as good as or better than a potential enemy. The enemy would not have had an advantage of 'range'.

A subject that I have never seen mentioned is gun barrel bending; many times this problem came up when discussing guns in tanks. Another problem, in the war, was when a gun barrel had to be used way beyond its acceptable life for accuracy. It must be appreciated that, if a gun barrel bends slightly, then the target will be missed. With a field gun this is not so important, because a target can be 'bracketed' with shells. Gun barrel bending was a problem in all tanks in the last war, especially if the gun was fired repeatedly and quickly in wet and cold weather. With improved heat treatment of metals, the 20-pounder and 105mm gun barrels didn't suffer this problem. I was never directly involved in guns, but in the development of the *Chieftain* tank, I was aware of gun barrel bending. The early gun barrels would bend when fired repeatedly and quickly, with a cold, wet, strong wind, blowing on one side of the barrel. Unequal cooling of the barrel caused the bending, and so a thermal jacket was fitted along the length of the barrel to cure the problem.

(An interesting story of gun barrel bending was when I visited *Vickers* at Newcastle, in the early days of development of *Chieftain* and FV432 personnel carrier. Gun barrel bending was under discussion and reference was made to the large guns on warships at the turn of the century. The inside of a gun barrel should be under tension and the outside under compression. To achieve this on the large naval gun barrels, the barrel was produced in tension and then wound with red-hot wire. When the wire cooled and contraction took place, this produced the compression on the outside of the barrel.)

When the *Centurion* tank arrived in my regiment, no one in the LAD knew how the electronics of the turret functioned. Fortunately, a Corporal worked hard with little information to understand it. When we were on the firing ranges, the majority of the turrets were functioning, in contrast to other regiments, who had very few turrets functioning. Unfortunately, when the REME

workshop was told about the capabilities of our Corporal - he was immediately posted to them! But at least we had learned from him and always prided ourselves on having the turrets functioning.

At the end of each day, the regiment had to be 'ready to move', fully armed with shells and weapons. There were often practice call-outs. The barracks would then be checked to see what was left behind. If a tank was 'not fit', an explanation had to be given to the CO, who would invariably check personally. The Divisional Commander (DC) himself checked on one occasion, when we were waiting for two replacement engines for several days.

A visit to the RAF I found very interesting, after they had been observing the regiment on exercises. We examined the aerial photographs and how the RAF and Royal Engineers interpreted the results. The use of latrines, invariably in a field, gave a good indication of the numbers of troops. This was indicated by the amount of area trodden by troops. If the rear of a cargo truck wasn't covered, goods the truck was carrying could be ascertained. On first parade, i.e. when the tanks start up, from the smoke and heat haze, the number of tanks and location could be found. Often they could interpret what the regiment was going to do as regards to the next movement. On one exercise, we had to camouflage the vehicles and the RAF photographed the area to see how many vehicles they could locate. Nearly every tank was located by the Commander's hatch being left open, showing up as a small black dot on the photograph. At night, if the tanks were running under load, the exhaust would glow and be easily detected by the RAF. I have seen *Comets* and *Centurions* climbing a hill at night, with their exhaust fishtails glowing red. The exhaust temperature of a petrol engine, at the exhaust manifold, under load, is approximately 900 degs C. For a diesel engine, the temperature is approximately 600 degs C. Therefore, a petrol-engined tank can often be detected at night visually by its exhaust glow, but a diesel-engined tank is unlikely to be detected. There were several other ways of locating vehicles and the question was asked, why hadn't we been briefed on these results before? The RAF reply was they had briefed the Army, but no one seemed to take any notice!

Locating tanks in the last war was often a major problem. It was not only true of enemy tanks, but also true of the British Army's own tanks. Radio breakdown was common and poor radio security gave away positions. I have met several former COs of tank regiments who said that radio security was a major problem in action.

The Dutch Army bought *Centurions* and about twenty Dutch army personnel operated with the regiment for training. One of my tasks was to

explain the operation of the *Merrit-Brown* gearbox. Fortunately one of their officers spoke good English and we talked a lot about the German occupation of Holland. He was a schoolboy when the Germans attacked and many of his family didn't survive the war. He said that the worst part was just before the war ended, when they were starving. They hadn't had anything to eat for days and were saved when the British tanks arrived and shared their rations with local people. I visited Holland on a social visit and toured the area around Arnhem, where my eldest brother was captured. My other brother was wounded in a tank regiment trying to break through to Arnhem, so I was very interested in the battle there. The Dutch at that time disliked the Germans intensely, due to their treatment during the war.

The *Centurion* tank had become very reliable and, on my last exercise, the LAD was congratulated on the recovery and repair of vehicles. The DC congratulated the regiment - and he even mentioned REME! On one of the de-briefings, the consensus of opinion was, "*If we'd only had Cents in the last war. Also the support to keep tanks running, what a difference it would have made*". It has to be remembered however, that technology moves on and we were on exercises, not 'the real thing'. The Army repair and recovery organisation was still 'smarting' from criticism, especially in the early part of the war, and didn't want a repeat.

I was married in June 1952 and I decided to leave the Army. I left the regiment on Coronation Day 1953 and arrived in London, a still crowded city, the next day. I finally arrived at Aldershot for demob and was demobbed on July 9th 1953.

Suez Emergency

Despite now embarking on my civilian career, I will give an account of my call-up for action, known as 'the Suez emergency'. My call-up was from August 14th to December 7th 1956 and I was posted to Fremington, North Devon. A Brigadier informed me that I had been called up as 'an expert on amphibious warfare'. When I told him that I'd never been involved in amphibious warfare, he replied that others would help me! I then had to tell him no one else had been involved in amphibious warfare. A few weeks later, the Brigadier informed us that someone had pressed the wrong button at REME Records, but we had to make the best of the situation.

The unit composed of an assault group and a supply group. It was supposed to be ready in 10 days to leave for Suez, but it was realised after a few days training that this was impossible. The assault group, all regulars, was sent out to Cyprus after about ten days. The assault vehicles were at Westward Ho! and were only used for training. The fitter's vehicle was a DUCW amphibious vehicle, which (I was told) was for recovery and

repair on the high seas. We all had a cocktail of injections and we felt lousy, with arms about twice normal size and shivering for about three days. I was familiar with the area around Fremington, and the beach where we practised at Instow. This was the location of the MoD Wading Trials Unit. (My later work at Chobham included wading trials.)

I have previously mentioned that I first encountered the DUCW at Gosport, just before D-Day. The US sailors now showed me how to operate the vehicle, and how to enter and exit the water. Initially, I was the only one in the unit who had any knowledge of the DUCW. From a discussion I had with a US engineer several years later, I learned that the craft was designed and built in a very short time. DUCW performance was excellent for an amphibious vehicle but, on the narrow roads of North Devon, it was difficult to drive because of its bulk.

When the unit first entered the water with the DUCW, it was on an ebb tide. The river flows out into the harbour and the water was flowing very fast, so the whole unit was swept down into the harbour. We hit several sandbanks, finally becoming stuck on one. If we hadn't hit the sandbank, I think we would still be in the Atlantic now! I learned that one disadvantage of the DUCW was that its suspension hangs very low in the water - but that day we were grateful for the suspension hanging low, and hitting the sand bank. The unit was supposed to be in the water for one hour, but it was several hours later when we managed to struggle ashore. The amusing story was that the Harbour Master and Police were waiting for us to come ashore and wanted the name of the person who had hit a buoy in the harbour! The Harbour Master was finally pacified, but he requested the unit be moved to a deserted island off Scotland, where we could do no further damage.

Naval personnel were drafted in to help with the training. After a few weeks, we could enter and exit the water with some degree of confidence. When the tide was flowing fast, manoeuvring the DUCW took a lot of practice. When the tide was flowing really fast, the DUCW hardly made any progress against the tide. After several weeks training, it was decided to go out of the harbour. What we did not know as there was a 'bar' at the entrance of the harbour. This 'bar' is where the incoming water meets the outgoing water and a wave is produced. On this particular day, the wave was about two feet high, so it was decided we couldn't cross the bar. I thought this was rather odd and was of the opinion that at least one DUCW should have attempted the crossing. We never did cross the bar.

We were constantly training, working on repairs and maintenance every evening. The DUCW requires a lot of greasing of joints etc when

operating in salt water. Tyre pressures require constant adjusting, according to the type of beach, and the driver controls tyre pressures from his cab. The pipe controlling the tyre pressure passes from the vehicle body to the hub of the axle on the outside of the wheel. Until drivers became aware that the pipes were easily damaged, we had constant problems. Often, this meant disconnecting the pipes and selecting an average tyre pressure for all beaches.

The stores and equipment supplied were in generally good condition, but the generators supplied were the wrong voltage for the tools and machinery vehicle. An incident that I remember shows how inflexible the Army can be. The DUCWs were well maintained in storage and presented us with few problems. The exception was that all the headlights were corroded and wouldn't work. They were 'sealed beam' i.e. the bulb is a part of the lamp and the whole unit has to be changed. I arranged with the store department (COD) at Chillwell to send new lamps by train and we would collect them next day. Later in the day, an officer insisted that we send a lorry to the COD and collect the lamps as laid down in orders - as far as he was concerned there was no emergency. I tried to point out that it would take at least two days, possibly three, and we were due to move within two hours notice. We had a contact number for queries and it took twenty four hours before the Brigadier ordered the lamps to be sent by train. What annoyed me was that no senior officer would help, even when I pointed out that, if we moved at night, the DUCW had no headlights. Driving in country lanes would be highly dangerous. The good outcome to this was that, if an incident like this occurred again, the Brigadier was to be informed immediately.

On three occasions we were ready to leave for embarkation; finally, at the third attempt, we travelled to Southampton by train and embarked on a troop ship. The vehicles had preceded us and were loaded on a separate ship - I never saw them again! We were aboard ship for three days and then the Suez action was stopped and we returned to Fremington. In the remaining days before disbanding, the problem was in finding something for the troops to do - many thought they could just go home immediately.

I was again demobbed, travelling to Taunton on my favourite railway line across Exmoor. My Army career was finally over but, in a way, the experience had been very interesting; it gave me an insight to amphibious operations. As a footnote, later at Chobham, the US replacement for the DUCW was tested and I took an interest in the testing. Briefly, the new vehicle was expensive and of poor design and I was later told that the US forces had rejected it.

(This brings to a close Trevor's musings.)

The Homecoming (Part 2) by Mike Oulds 57B

Boys in the Black Stuff

Shortly after the dust had settled somewhat on the above incident, I was slouching my way yet again to my usual rendezvous at *The Angel* when a voice behind me called out, "Howya doin' Mick?" It was Dave, an old school pal. Although he was a couple of years older than me, we had always been friends. He had been unlucky enough to catch the last call-up for National Service duty and, due to his Scottish heritage, had served in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, reaching the dizzy heights of Corporal. We chatted for a while and I advised him of the sad conclusion to my Army 'career' and jobless plight. "Now isn't that a coincidence, Mick? I'm a 'ganger' for Stewarts Engineering. We're installing sewerage connections to the villages out in the wilds of the Cambridgeshire fens. One of my guys is off sick an' I'm looking for a short-term replacement for him. I need someone with a bit of technical know-how. You're an old REME man, so you'd foot the bill perfectly. How do you fancy it? You can start first thing tomorrow." Dave said all this with a glint in his eye and a sly grin on his face.

I was chuffed. However, after my extensive Army training at avoiding voluntary work, I was slightly uneasy at the 'technical knowhow' element required for the position. Nonetheless, needs must, and I accepted his generous offer. The donkey jacket emblazoned with *Stewart Engineering* on the back, which Dave had supplied, did not exactly meet with my idea of the day's fashion requirements, but matched perfectly with my old khaki denims and boots acquired from the Army. In fact, as I strutted in the direction of the meeting place in a nearby car park, I thought I looked quite the 'navvy'. Dave was standing next to the company's single-decker bus and waved as I approached. Jonesy's charabanc was indeed luxury compared to this vehicle! Coloured a battleship grey, someone (probably a blind stoned gorilla) had hand-painted the *Stewart* logo on the side – very badly. Upon reflection, it seems that buses had played an integral part in both the Army and my civvy life to that point in time. I was introduced to the six or so co-workers, who were a great deal older than me – a couple I vaguely recognized. They were all quite tanned and muscular in comparison to my pasty demeanor. "Lads, may I introduce our new part-time technical assistant, Mick Oulds", Dave proudly declared.

My new work-mates smiled sagely and nodded their heads wisely at this statement, as we scrambled into the bus. Once again I felt somewhat uneasy. Inside was like entering the black hole of Calcutta, it was absolutely evil. The whole interior was covered with discarded sandwiches, paper,

rotting fruit etc, and smelt disgusting. You name it – it was there. Also, stacked at the front were several wooden fruit boxes, about which I shall relate later. We set off jauntily and I was joined on my rickety seat by a small balding muscular guy with a large number of his front teeth missing, who presented himself as 'Arfur'. Arfur then proceeded to relate his life story, where every second word began was **** this or **** that. After a while I switched off and watched through the grimy window as we stopped at various villages on the way to collect further members of the three 'gangs' involved in the sewerage project. My companion whispered to me that all the workers we picked up were the result of incestuous relationships and that they were all a collection of village idiots. You must feel at home then Arfur, I thought wryly.

The scenery began to change dramatically as we entered the flat uninviting and desolate black earthen landscape of the fens. After nearly being shaken to death on the bumpy and scary dyke-edged roads, we finally arrived at a tiny village. It was still early morning and not a soul was to be seen. In fact, as the days went by, I thought perhaps it was just inhabited by fenland ghosts or aliens. No matter what time of day it was, human existence was questionable. Two of the gangs remained in the village centre, excavating huge trenches in the street and installing massive concrete sewerage pipes. It was complete chaos everywhere. Dave's little band of brothers was stationed just on the edge of the hamlet, also digging trenches, but laying smaller connecting pipes to the main system. Tramping up to our dig, I was confronted with a weird dilapidated-looking tracked machine with numerous huge buckets, which I later discovered rotated and extracted the earth for our trench. It was controlled from the side by gear sticks, similar to a bulldozer (I learnt later that it was an old vehicle purchased cheaply from local US forces). Apart from two council houses nearby, we were certainly out in the sticks, as surrounding us were just vast fields of ripening corn, vegetables, fruit etc. stretching to the horizon. "C'mon Mick, let's show you our luxury accommodation", my new boss said grandly. He and his companions then led me to what appeared to be an old wooden gypsy caravan, parked precariously in an adjacent field. In the next few weeks, this grotty old van was to become a sort of sanctuary and the epicentre of some of the most hilarious and weird experiences I would have in my first 'proper' job. Dave pulled out a bunch of keys and opened the door, then came out holding a tatty looking spade. I was then informed that this was an important part of my equipment, but before I could acquire this precious tool I had to be sworn in!



Mick of the Fens' spade - resting

"Mick ol' son, I as Dave - King of Spades - command you to kneel". All the other members of the gang then encircled me gravely as the grand master recited something like the following: *"In the great tradition of Stewart, you must now take the sacred oath 'Spades of the Earth' and swear after me that you will protect your spade from all foreign workers; you will remain loyal to your spade; you will clean and polish her occasionally; you will love and obey her every spadeful; you will treasure her until death, dismissal, prison or marriage do you part. (I cannot recall the exact contents, but the above is similar and it was hilarious). Then, if there is anyone present who is against the union of this happy couple, please speak now or forever hold your spade"*. Not a murmur was heard. "I do", I replied humbly, as the spade was gently lowered on each shoulder. "Then arise, Mick of the Fens", Dave announced proudly. This part of my initiation ceremony complete, he beckoned me to follow him to the rear of the van. Dave then started to undo a large worn tarpaulin covered with locked chains. He then turned and, with a great flourish, indicated a strange looking object. It was round, about four feet tall, rusty, with a large metal handle. "This, Mick, is 'The Stomper'. You will be in charge of this highly technical apparatus", the chief ganger declared with a smirk.

Without going into great detail regarding my reply to this statement, I was then informed that I had the highly important task of backfilling the completed trench with my trusty spade and then

stomping down the earth. (I'm afraid the correct technical terminology for this machine eludes me!). Then, following King Dave, we set off with a 'ha! ha!' and a 'ho! ho!', with spades at the ready like seven scruffy dwarfs. Thus started my day and career as Technical Backfiller. Arfur, I soon discovered, was the commander of the dreaded trenching machine, which he had lovingly named Eileen after his beloved wife. Apparently, this lady had identical habits as the trencher which were: a) she needed a good stroking on her important bits before she got warm; b) once started was hard to stop; c) needed occasionally a bit of grease on her working parts and, if this did not function, d) a bloody good kick up the backside!

Two or three other guys were in the trench, responsible for laying and adjusting the pipes which were lowered to them by a sort of JCB tractor. The trench had to be shored up safely, as the shifting whispering bogs of the Fens were treacherous and quite dangerous, so I decided diplomatically to remain earthbound. Not wishing to bore you with too much detail, I soon realized that I was completely unprepared for what I had let myself in for. The stomper was really hard to start and control and would suddenly leap into the air with a great explosion, catching me unawares. My so-called new mates were obviously impressed with my inability and, at the end of my first working day, I could barely lift my arms and was overjoyed to sink into the grimy bus seat homewards. However, I was able to acclimatize quickly and get to know my workmates more intimately. They were an absolutely scream to be with and I felt very much at home. But the first few days were a nightmare. As I was no longer the fit lithe fighting machine of the famed REME and not accustomed to a great deal of hard work, of which, in any case, I was quite adept at avoiding, it came as an unpleasant experience for me. My whole body ached from the unusual shovelling and stomping, while my skin was bright red from sunburn with a topping all over of nasty itching bites by midges from nearby cornfields.

The eagle flew on Friday - payday - which I was looking forward to after a seemingly dry spell of the readies. Around midday the money man appeared with a box of small brown envelopes, amidst the cheers of my fellow workers. Without further discussion, work was quickly abandoned and six thirsty men leapt aboard a rusty dumper, driven precariously by 'our Arfur', to the small village pub. Clouds of smoke and a cheer greeted our entry from members of the other two gangs, who were also celebrating pay day. Dave treated us to the first round of foaming pints and soon we were all sitting chatting merrily. This was more like the work environment that I had envisaged. In the middle of our lunchtime festivities, the door opened and a large form entered the saloon bar who, in appearance, looked like a sort of mini-Arnold Schwarzenegger, only a whole lot uglier! An imme-

diate hush ensued. Dave slid over next to me and whispered in my ear, "*That's Paddy McGinty (name changed - just in case!). He's Irish and is the 'Oberganger' and a right pain, Mick. Just stay out of his way an' don't mention the Army!*" Paddy sidled over to the bar and ordered a drink, turned and surveyed his team of technicians with a bleary eye. "*Orlright there me laddos?*" "*Orlright Paddy*", we chorused.

We tumbled out of the pub in good spirits and I drove the dumper back, as our Arfur could only just about stand. During the afternoon we sneaked in and out of the 'Savoy' hut, playing cards and shooting the breeze. Arfur was cajoled into performing his so-called 'Indian war dance' naked! Theoretically this was to bring on rain, enabling the crew to down spades. It was a crazy display and, to our utter disbelief, it poured down! During our 'rain stopped play interlude', discussions were in progress about the acquisition of the weekend's fruit and vegetable supplies. Apparently, raiding parties were organized every Friday into the nearby fields and orchards, where resources were in abundance. Dave handed me two grubby sacks and advised that my partner in crime would be the naked Indian - Arfur. With some trepidation, I glanced over at him. He was grinning toothlessly as we and the two other pairs of thieves set off. It was like some wartime underground expedition against the Nazis. Our brave leader said that it would be best if he remained behind in case Paddy decided to pay a visit. Due to the downpour of rain, it was really muddy in the black sodden earth, as we stumbled into various fields, filling our sacks with goodies - and we soon resembled a couple from the '*Black and White Minstrels*'. An hour or so later, back at base camp, all the spoils were split evenly between us. As was the usual procedure on pay day, due to our illicit contraband, the bus picked us up at the Savoy and we scrambled aboard, laden with our swag. Inside it was like Covent Garden, as the other two gangs had been up to the same scam. I staggered home that evening with enough produce to last a month.

During a half-drunken conversation with Dave, I must have inadvertently bragged that I possessed an HGV and Tracked Vehicle driving license. This had been acquired during my REME service. One day he approached me and enquired if I would be interested in a promotion! Now, knowing the consequences of agreeing to my controller's suggestions, I grunted a halfhearted affirmative. "*Paddy needs a man to take over the lorry and bulldozer duties. The other lad gave in his notice last week, so I told him you had 'vast experience' in this field Mick - what do you think? It would mean a substantial increase in shekels*". After my initial mistrust of Dave and my constant quizzing about the job, he convinced me of its authenticity and I reluctantly agreed to give it a whirl. My spade and stomping activities had become boring so, true to

form, I was 'on the road' again and next day I reported for duty with Paddy. Standing in front of a battered Bedford seven-ton tipper truck, the man himself informed me importantly that I had a very vital mission to fulfil. I felt like snapping my heels in salute but, seeing his grim Irish countenance, thought better of it! My vital duties consisted of waiting next to the massive trenches for the truck to be filled with excavated earth, and then to cabby it to a field outside the village. There, a rusty *Caterpillar D8* waited for me to bulldoze said earth into a flat-top mountain - the reason for this still escapes me. To begin with I was like a small boy with some new *Dinky* toys and I happily whizzed about around the village in my shabby lorry, clunking up- and down-hill on my *Caterpillar*. However, my bulldozing skills were not exactly pristine and primarily the whole mound had the appearance of a massive bomb blast.

Out of the blue and amidst a frenzy of excitement, we were informed that a human skeleton had been unearthed near one of the trenches and in front of a council house. Of course this caused great furore amongst workers and villagers alike. All work stopped immediately as the police and local archeologists were called to investigate. The fens in general - and that area in particular - were steeped in ancient history. Not far away, the great Mildenhall treasure-trove had been unearthed and supposedly, as legend has it, King John's treasure had been lost in a fen bog or in the waves of The Wash. Naturally we were all intrigued about the find and all activities halted until the research had been completed. Speculation was rife. Was it murder or an ancient burial? Dave advised me on the bus that evening that Arfur was ecstatic at the news and had been waffling on about carrying out his own investigation around the village for any evidence of archeology. It was a sort of early version of 'Time Team' and a possible opportunity to get rich! This was not such a crazy idea, as lots of finds had been discovered throughout the years. Not having a great deal to occupy me, I pretended to service my truck and cruised around the countryside for a while. That is when the first confrontation arose with my friend from the Emerald Isle.

There was a small shop-cum Post Office in the village and, driving past one rainy morning, I spied a woman standing forlornly outside, clutching a large shopping basket. Being a gentleman, I stopped hurriedly and enquired if she needed a lift somewhere. Evidently she was waiting for her husband, a local farmer, to collect her but he had not appeared. Gallantly I offered to drive her home, which was not far away. We began chatting and soon arrived at a somewhat rundown farm. Nora, as I discovered was her name, asked if I would like to come in for a drink. I was in a bit of a quandary, as the investigation regarding the skeleton had in the meantime been resolved that day and I should have been back at my work-place long ago. The

skeleton was in fact the remains of an ancient being and both the police and archeologists had given the all-clear for *Stewart's* excavations to proceed. But Nora was looking at me speculatively and I decided to partake of a cup of *Earl Grey* and a jammy dodger. The kitchen left a lot to be desired in the hygiene stakes and I was slightly apprehensive to drink from the grubby beaker presented to me with the tea-bag still in it. My host was not exactly unattractive. However, shall we say she was built more for comfort and not for speed I decided, eyeing her over the rim of my mug. Not wishing to outstay my welcome and, most of all not wanting to meet her husband Willy, who should be home at any minute she advised, I did a quick exit. We arranged to meet outside the village the next day as hubby was away at market somewhere.

"Where the **** 'ave yew been? Ya banshee ya", spewed out my Irish friend on my return. "The truck broke down Paddy", I quickly lied. I was kept under close scrutiny for the rest of the day. Of course I began to ruminate about finding a plausible excuse for my forthcoming rendezvous with chunky Nora and whether it would prove to be a wise move. As usual, the following day I had not decided on a plan of action but naturally did not want to disappoint the farmer's wife. Paddy was continuously hovering in my vicinity most of the morning and I kept complaining to him that my lorry was still not functioning correctly. Eventually I suggested that it would be essential to have the vehicle inspected in a workshop in the next village. Eyeing me speculatively, he just nodded and I sped quickly away. Nora was standing at the entrance to a small wood, apprehensively clutching a battered looking bicycle, as I chuntered up. After initial embarrassed greetings, I requested her to join me in my luxurious cab. She seemed to have changed in appearance. Her lips were now a horrible smear of probably *Woolworth's* bright orange lipstick, her cheeks plastered in a covering of what appeared to be brassic foot powder and her 'barnet' looked rock hard, being held in place with cheap-smelling hair-spray. I swallowed a little uneasily as I stared at her with what I thought was untold desire. Then we began a short provisional exploration and I was just about to demonstrate to Nora my world renowned 'step over love lock' when there was a furious banging on the truck door. It was the 'Führer' – Paddy McGinty. The so-and-so had followed me in his pick-up. Mouth open in surprise, a shocked farmer's wife scrambled out of the cab door, leapt on her bike and disappeared at a rate of knots homeward to Willy. Out of my life forever! Actually I had to admit I felt a mite relieved at her hasty departure. There then followed a great volume of cursing and threatening recriminations from Paddy resulting in my instant demotion.

Head hung low, I approached my old gang of diggers. A lusty chorus greeted my arrival as I explained that, due to my over-enthusiastic trucking and bulldozing performances, Mr McGinty had

thought it better for me to return to my back-filling duties. Of course there was also a cheerful reunion with my lonely spade! Arfur' was pleased at my return too. Actually it was great to be back and the status quo returned to somewhere near normality for a couple of weeks. That was until someone was celebrating a birthday or such and had brought some booze with them for our delight and consumption. During our lunchtime break there was some hefty guzzling. Consequently, we all ended up more than three sheets to the wind. In fact it was more of a force ten gale that hit us, especially the balding, toothless Arfur'. He was paralytic and we tucked him up in the Savoy to sleep it off. Unfortunately, we had just begun to create a trench across a soggy grass meadow to install piping to a nearby farm complex. Dave was worried in case the 'Oberganger' made one of his regular visits to inspect progress and discover that our trencher was not in action. That was when I made a further gross miscalculation of my technical prowess - by offering to operate the digger for the absent Arfur'. "I have driven tanks ya know!" I slurred proudly.

Dave was a mite circumspect at my offer but, with some trepidation, gave me the go-ahead. Now the usual procedure was that Arfur' would dig about six or seven metres in front of the advancing pipe liners. In my drunken haze, I advised those in the trench that I would cabby on for a lot longer, to give us some leeway in case of a visit. In my euphoria and with a great theatrical flourish I set the machine in motion. To my horror, the inebriated form snoring nearby had not exaggerated in describing the peculiarities of Eileen. She was an absolute nightmare! I briskly started excavating and had soon achieved what I assumed was a great long trench. Sweating profusely sometime later, after fighting gamely with the controls, I looked up in amazement. Dave and the lads in the trench some fifty or so metres back were shouting and gesticulating wildly towards me. Switching Eileen off, I proudly staggered back to my friends. Dave was jumping up and down in rage and nearly foaming at the mouth. "What's up?" I enquired innocently - sensing disaster. "Down there you stupid t.....! Look at the trench. It's up and down like a bloody helter-skelter and curved like a boomerang, Mick. We'll have twice as much work on our hands now", Dave fumed.

In my haste I had obviously forgotten to adjust the depth lever and not paid enough attention to the marker guides. Although I thought it did have quite an artistic touch! We all stood in distracted silence, gazing at my handiwork as a dirty pick-up pulled up! The ensuing outcome of my accomplishments was that my ex-mate Dave and the slumbering Arfur' received voluminous verbal threats and a severe warning. I, however, went to the Savoy and 'packed up my troubles in my old kitbag and smiled, smiled, smiled, 'cause what's the use of worrying as that weren't my style' I tried to convince myself as I hitch-hiked homewards.

Tee Cee's Rhymes of our Tymes

The Uniformed Engineer

Seemingly, at casual glance, a typical British soldier stands

In readiness to carry out his duty, with the fears and doubts

Anticipated combat brings, when all the valued, precious things

By which his life is so defined are sharply focused in his mind.

But then, on further close inspection, there's a varied odd collection

Of the tool-chests, kits of parts which he must carry; written charts,

To aid his task, to give support to others who, engaged in fraught

Combat conditions must rely on expertise that he supplies.

This is an army engineer, a REME soldier, always near

And close at hand when something fails, with instant help when war assails

The fighting troops in forward line. Split seconds passing can define

That help, on which they must rely, and means that men could live or die.

This is a REME Craftsman's lot, and though he may be far from shot

And shell, his work can mark success or failure if, under duress

He falters in an urgent task, to give the help that others ask

For, in their time of urgent need, relying on the REME Creed.

The Creed that says it will provide, at all times, aid, and will abide

By that which when it first was formed, where all privations would be borne

To be at hand and share the plight, when needed, and prepare to fight

If urgent circumstances beckoned; "Soldier first, and Tradesman second".

So those who wish to join and fight for glory, kudos; wear the bright

Medallions of the regiments whose bold, historic past events

Add glamour to their daily lives, forget the REME; it relies

On quietly working, meeting needs of those performing front-line deeds.

But it is worthwhile to record that in all regiment's awards

Of battle honours so displayed as when in glittering parade,

The REME show no honours there, for since formation they have shared

A presence, fighting EVERY action, so they have the satisfaction

Of quietly knowing, if awarded, battle honours, so recorded

Might stretch so far as they unfurled to be the longest in the world!

Tony Church (Tee Cee) 55A

LIGHTS OUT

The bustling vigour of the day fades in a calm, reflective way,

To thoughts of restful, quiet things. Conclusion of that time now brings

The nightly veil to cover all in cool, dark blackness, then the call

Is heard - low, softly, urgent, clear, inviting everyone who hear

Its message, as nights shades creep into the world. It's time to sleep.

Notes hang, suspended, on the air. Echoes seek the shadows there,

The studded stars, the moon so bright, contrasting the dark of night.

Another day draws to its close, the busy scene turns to repose

As muffled calls from rooms around, fade away, until the sounds

Are finally quieted. All is still. Until the dawn, a sweet idyll.

Tony Church (Tee Cee) 55A

'The Royal Engineer'

To all you men assembled here,
My toast tonight is to the 'Engineer'.
Here's a man we know little about
For the 'Sapper' doesn't boast or shout.

The slave of the infantry, this silent one,
Who carries a shovel as well as a gun.

During the war he'll work and fight,
He's the silent worker of the night.

There's mines to lift, a field to breach

Before the enemy we can reach.
He lifts each one with calm and care,
Suddenly an explosion rents the air.

Some wounded moan, some lives are lost,
The ones that're left say, 'that's the cost',

And carry on with double care,
But can be sure each says a payer.

A road to lay, this is the test
But this is a team that will do its best.
The road complete, supplies roll past,
The 'Sapper' thinks of rest at last.

Ready to answer that urgent call,
Ready to fight or ready to fall.
They'll destroy or they will build,
Though oft it means they will be killed.

He's not a hero, nor yet very brave,
though his work might mean the grave.
So I'll leave the 'Sapper' at his post,
And to him I'll give this toast.

Let the infantry all be praised.
But the man to whom my glass is raised,
And may he ever have good cheer,
The ever silent Royal Engineer.

Pte D W Hall. The Black Watch

In past years many former Arborfield Apprentices were posted to the RE's, according to certain trades such as mine Draughtsman Mech/ Elec. This being at the time War Office Policy, I not know why! Surely, there was vacancies in REME for ex-Arborfield draughtsmen.

I wondered if the RE poem might be published in OBAN in conjunction with the poem 'The Uniformed Engineer'. The poem composed by our Bard of Arborfield, Anthony Curch, Tee Cee55A and published on our Forum on Oct 23. I feel the two poems reflect a significant number of us who were drafted, without choice, into the RE's, parting from colleagues who were to serve in a Sister Corp of REME.

The RE poem was composed by an infantryman, D.W. Hall of the Black Watch, recognising the frontline support given to his regiment in the Korean war by the Sappers. A friend of mine introduced the poem to me, he being an ex-boy from Harrogate AAS. REME were also there in Korea, otherwise no-body could have been transported.

The poem is published in a book 'Fight Dig & Live' by General Sir George Cooper, GCB. MC. DL. He served as a Young Lt. in Korea as a Sapper Troop Commander. He has given permission for the poem to be reproduced, providing the author of poem is named plus the book title.

I feel the poem reflects part of our AAS history.

Pete Henry. 49B

I hope this is the answer to your wondering Pete.

E-mail to the Editor from John Worland 52B

Football Team 13 Inf Wksp, Kluang, 1958.



Kneeling-extreme right- Ted Slater, ex-boy Chestow 1951?intake, played for the Corps and the Army.

2nd from right- 'Q' Colby.

Standing- 3rd from right- Arthur Cross, 3year regular.

There are three of us who would like to know the name of the player standing on the extreme right. He was senior to us at Arborfield, we think- 'C' Coy?- 1951? And was an Inst Tech: can anyone help, we think he became an A.S.M.?

The year was 1958 because 13 Inf Wksp: moved from Ipoh to Kluang in 1957 and took over from 22 (Malaya) Wksp. I left in March 1958 and Ted Slater left in early 1959.

Other names to think about with 22 (Malaya) Wksp, are

' Freddie' Fox and Tabrook (A/CSM) both from Arborfield 1951. They have to be as I am 52B and I moved to 'C' Coy in Feb 1953. Left Arborfield in 1955.

John Worland 52B

A Plea from your Honorary Secretary.

Your Association Needs You!!!This is a call for a volunteer. Mike Davis has been our Treasurer for the last 13 years and he feels it's time to stand down, and who can blame him, he's done a fantastic job for us all.

Now it is someone else's turn. **Please don't just dismiss this call to arms, thinking someone else will step forward.**

Get in touch if you've a few hours a week to spare

from time to time, keeping our books in order.

You don't need to be an accountant—just someone with a bit of time, and if you've got a little understanding of spreadsheets, that would be helpful, but not essential.

Come on time to man up and share the load.

Get in contact with the Honorary Secretary David (Tich) Schofield at tich@arborfieldboys.co.uk and chat through what is needed.

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Army Apprentice School Plaque



This Army Apprentices School badge (believed to be made by Apprentices in the 1950s) once adorned the display cabinet in the Guard Room of the original Arborfield Apprentices School. It housed all the important trophies such as Award of Honour, Commandants Cup, Inter-Company Boxing Cup, Inter-Company Physical Training Cup to name but a few.

In 1964 it was 'liberated' from its position within the Guard Room by Len (Traff) Hutchinson (61C) - he hasn't said if he was a resi-

dent at the time, so you can draw your own conclusions on that one!! Anyway he looked after it until 2011 when he donated it to The Arborfield Old Boys' Association.

Today it is mounted on a stunning Elm and Beach plinth expertly made by Simon Gaylard (64C) and we are grateful to both his efforts and to Traff for saving it in the first place.

Obituaries.

Robert Harvey Liddell 46B

Raised in Gateshead and joined Arborfield Army Apprentices School, gaining a Vehicle Apprenticeship and later transferred to REME – the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Served in the Suez Canal protecting British interests. Those who served were never at the time decorated for their bravery, but the Government finally announced that those who served would be awarded a medal, which my Dad finally received in January 2004. In 1958 when he was a Sergeant he left REME and the Army and joined Reyrolles in Hebburn as a Mechanical Engineering Draughtsman and met his wife Lillian. In 1961 he took a drop in pay for a chance to work with his beloved buses and was employed as a Technical Assistant with Newcastle Corporation. In 1963 was promoted to Rolling Stock Superintendant at Colchester Corporation. He also taught Maths and Science at the local technical college on an evening. In 1969 moved to Barrow-in-Furness as Works Superintendant and later as Chief Engineering Assistant. He also taught Motor Mechanics at the local technical college. In 1972 took role of PSV Maintenance Engineer with Leeds City Transport and was responsible for the maintenance of 700 Public Service Vehicles and six operating garages. He was later promoted to Divisional Engineer where he was responsible for 250 staff. He studied and achieved a BA with the Open University. This was a feat in itself bearing in mind this was on top of working full-time and helping to raise a young family. In 1986 he took early retirement, but after two years wanted to get back to work and was employed at the Vehicle Builders and Repairers Association (VBRA). During this time he took on additional responsibility for Industrial

Tony Strong 56B

Pete Gripton writes: *"Tony died on 03.12.12. He had not been well for several weeks. In the end it was a massive heart attack and mercifully very quick."* That was the essence of an e-mail that I received around the middle of December 2012 – and it brought back many fond memories of the summer of 1956, when Tony and I found ourselves in the same barrack room at Arborfield, having just joined up as 'boy soldiers'. After the initial six months, having left HQ Company and

Relations and represented Association members at Industrial Tribunals throughout the country. He was also appointed and served for 10 years as a governor of Joseph Priestly college in Leeds. In 1993 he retired from the VBRA and was later appointed by the Department of Employment and Department of Trade and Industry onto their Industrial Tribunal panel. On early retirement, he started long distance walking as he approached 60 years old, he took up half marathons and raised money for church charities. He ran in Lincoln, Blackpool and did the Robin Hood Run. But by far the favourite was the Great North Run which he did five times, the last in 1997, two years after a heart bypass operation. On early retirement, he started long distance walking as he approached 60 years old, he took up half marathons and raised money for church charities. He ran in Lincoln, Blackpool and did the Robin Hood Run. But by far the favourite was the Great North Run which he did five times, the last in 1997, two years after a heart bypass operation. In 2007 he was diagnosed with dementia, it was diagnosed early and the medication he was given gave him a quality of life that so many others are denied. He didn't suffer as so many other people do and you won't be surprised to know that his sense of humour and love of Gateshead FC saw him through to the end. A life long Methodist and life long fan Gateshead FC, beloved father of Diane and Jane, father-in-law to Dave and Grandad of Greg and Brandon.

Originally supplied by his daughter Jane to the 'Transport Engineer' magazine of the 'Institute of Road Transport Engineers', and reproduced with their permission.

Forwarded to me by **Chas Pepper 43A**

the inevitable splitting up of that barrack room's members, our career paths deemed that it was to be many years before our paths crossed once again. That event happened in the Sergeants' Mess of Princess Marina College in 1999, which was the 50th anniversary of our Div having its Passing-out Parade from the Army Apprentices' School in 1959. Tony and his wife Heather attended several 56B reunions after that, despite the fact that in latter years Tony was confined to a wheelchair.



He bore his invalidity with good heart and an innate sense of humour. The last time we all saw him was at Alvaston Hall up in Staffordshire back in 2009. Attached is a photograph of some Room F1 members taken in 1956, with names as far as memory serves:

Back row: Jock Massie (Room NCO), Tony Strong, Fritz Fry, unknown, George Fleetwood, Derek Coates and Roger Nixon.

Front: Bundock, Alan Dagless, Sid Urwin, Tex Bradley and Chris Huxford.

Johnny Stewart writes: Tony was a good mate of mine. We had much in common, having both been Gun Fitters and having also come from Portsmouth. I frequently carried him on my old *Matchless 350* down to Pompey for weekends. This experience probably contributed to his early demise! I remember telling him about how, as a kid, I used to steal lemonade from the lemonade factory next to the *Brunswick Laundry* at Stamshaw, near my home, once a week through a broken window. Suddenly his expression changed from amiable to that of genuine shock horror. "*That's my granddad's factory you tea leaf*", he said! (He actually used a more colourful adjective to describe his opinion of me) We often laughed about it afterwards. In later life we discovered we had something else in common, having both made a commitment to Christ along the

way. He shared with me his disappointment that no-one suggested we said Grace at one of the reunion meals, so we bowed our heads and gave thanks together. I remember him with great affection and respect. I look forward to our reunion in eternity Tony, or should I say '*Stonge*'.

Dave Braithwaite also writes: If I remember correctly, I boxed against Tony in the final of the novices' competition at Arborfield - and beat him, as he reminded me of at one of the 56B dinners. He was also a bit of an athlete (400 yards I think) and we were both in the College Team. He was a nice guy, rather modest I seem to recall. R.I.P

George Fleetwood adds: Firstly let me say how sad I am to hear of Tony Strong's demise. He was not a very close acquaintance of mine during those three years at Arborfield and, after our Passing-out parade, I never did see or hear anymore of him. I do have memories of him being a stocky blonde-haired chap, quiet and easy to get on with; I think he was an Armourer or perhaps Gun Fitter. We came into slight contact with each other through the School's small-bore shooting team, of which we were both members. His character, to me, was always typified by his surname, and I'm sure that he bore all his problems in the same way.

Pete Gripton continues: I contacted Heather at home in Bracknell and she later kindly sent me the following potted history of Tony's career:

Tony was born in the great naval seaport of Portsmouth in May 1940. He later attended Portsmouth Grammar School and spent some of his formative years as a Sea Cadet. During the Fifties, National Service was still a major part of adult life, but in August 1956 Tony chose to join the Army as an Apprentice Tradesman, and was stationed at Arborfield. After his three-year apprenticeship and qualifying as a Gun Fitter, he was posted to 45 Regiment, Royal Artillery.

He served in Germany (BAOR) and was involved in both the Malayan emergency and the Borneo confrontation. The Regiment returned to the UK in January 1963 and was stationed at Shoeburyness, just outside Southend-on-sea in Essex. It was there that he met and later married Heather, which was in March 1967. He then went on a course at Bordon to become an Artificer Weapons and, upon its completion, he and Heather were sent to Catterick, by which time they had a daughter, Nicky.

On a wet and muddy exercise in Germany, Tony applied for service with the Gurkhas and was posted to Hong Kong to join the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Regiment in June 1970. He loved working with the men and taught them the technique of discus throwing. He had the distinction of having his picture on the front of the Gurkha '*Parbate!*' magazine when the team was successful in the games. Tony and Heather's son Eli was born in Hong Kong. The whole regiment

was posted to Brunei in October 1971, where Tony played cricket with a mixed side of school teachers and VSOs (Voluntary Service Overseas), as well as a few Army personnel.

Their next posting was to Northern Ireland and, although it was during 'the Troubles', it wasn't as bad as it could have been. The family then had five years in three different locations in Germany before Tony finally left the Army as a Warrant Officer Class 1 (ASM) in 1980.

In civilian life, Tony first went to work for *ML Aviation*, initially as a technical author, and subsequently for the air-crew equipment department. The company later became *ML Lifeguard* and eventually moved to Wales. Tony was then approached by *Martin Baker Aircraft* and he joined their AEA department - he always used to say that he dressed life-size dolls for a living! He finally retired in 2005, having had an operation for bowel cancer the previous year. Unfortunately, the treatment he had been given caused sensory nerve damage to both feet, which meant that Tony could no longer be as active as he would have liked.

Tony had become very weak in his later years and his death was not unexpected. He had a massive heart attack, which was very quick, and his family knows it was the best for him. His ashes were scattered in the sea at Portsmouth Point by the family on Sunday 13th January 2013.

Pete Gripton, 56B

John Pewsey 45A

Former WO1 John William Noel Pewsey died peacefully at home on 18th July 2012; his health had been declining for some time. John was born on Christmas Day 1929 at Paignton, Devon.

In February 1945, when John was 15, he joined the Army Apprentice College at Arborfield and so began his REME career. Many ex-boys will remember John 'experimenting' in the workshop and blowing off part of a finger and thumb and damaging his left eye, none of which affect his ability to carry out some very intricate electronics work or in the 1950s shooting at Bisley in the Army 100. Worn with pride, the Army Apprentice Badge is mostly his design. At the College a competition to design a badge was floated and John's design, with some alterations, won. He was awarded the princely sum of 2/6d and always found that amusing.

The College was also where John met Molly, Captain-Quartermaster Ben Cook's daughter.

Shortly after becoming engaged in 1948 John was posted to Ceylon for three years but Aden and Malta were added during those 3 years. In 1951, on his return to Arborfield to join SEE, Molly and John were eventually married which led to over 60 years of marriage and four children. 1953 saw John posted to Larkhill on Salisbury Plain working with the Royal Artillery and it was here that their daughter Briony was born.

His army career included a 48 hour notice to Cyprus - taking out searchlights - to help in the fight against EOKA. John's small family joined him which grew with the birth of William in 1957. Most of John's army career was based in the UK, at Arborfield, where Arthur arrived, followed by six years at the Royal Radar Establishment, Malvern - and the arrival of his youngest son Robert. John ended his army career at the Army Apprentice College as an instructor in 1969 but went on immediately to write EMERs and "easy read" illustrated books for training electronics students.



In 1970 John "emigrated" with his family to the Isle of Wight to join Plessey's which was to become BAE Systems. Those that knew him there will remember how much he loved wearing his 'Thank God it's Friday' ties – the more garish the better.

Ever good at nurturing the younger employees into the intricacies of electronics he travelled widely for the company (including Spain, Iran, Brazil, Denmark and S Korea) working on projects and dealing with the hazards that go with them; like being In 1970 John "emigrated" with his family to the Isle of Wight to join Plessey's which was to become BAE Systems. Those that knew him there will remember how much he loved wearing his 'Thank God it's Friday' ties – the more garish the better.

Evacuated, at the last minute, from Iran with the fall of the Shah. John should have been an ad-

venturer, he was ready to go anywhere at the drop of a hat; wanted few possessions, so could always travel light.

In Civvy Street on the Isle of Wight he became very involved in the running of Brading Town, where the family lived and Molly still does. He became a Town Councillor and one time Mayor. He edited and helped deliver the Brading monthly magazine. He was Father Christmas at Brading Primary school, and each day, on his early morning walks picked up the litter from the bus shelter.

He was an excellent photographer and at the Brading Roman Villa Big Dig arrived with his step ladder, and with it lashed to a telegraph pole climbed it to take photos from above the trenches being worked upon. He had no fear of heights and would hang out of a light aircraft to take aerial views of the excavations.

John will be remembered for his huge enthusiasm for science and technology. His son Arthur has inherited John's mathematical skills, son Bob and grandson Richard his skills in electronics and communications, and son William his practical mechanical skills while Briony has his interest in adventure and exploration.

John had a good life and leaves behind his wife, Molly, children Briony, William, Arthur and Robert and five grandchildren – so his legacy and skills forge on.

Briony (John's daughter)

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 £15.00 for life membership, plus an annual subscription of £15.00. Application forms are available by post from the Honorary Secretary, and on the website www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

Front Cover Photograph: Lt Col Rtd Bill Cleasby, taking his final leave of the REME Museum of Technology, Arborfield.

Rear Cover Photograph: However the Old Boys' Association are not going to let all that knowledge waste away. He is going to enjoy his time where he most desires, that dream allotment that every gardener wants.

