

**May
2014**



**Issue
58**

O B A N



Arborfield Old Boys Association

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

President

To be confirmed

Vice Presidents

All Past Commandants

Chairman

Colonel Brian G J Hutchins Bsc(Eng), CEng, FIRT, sq(w), gw (61C)

Vice Chairman

Lt Col Bill Cleasby, MBE, IEng, FIET, sq(w), (61C)

Honorary Secretary

David (Tich) Schofield (65A)

7, St Marks House, St Marks Avenue, Salisbury, SP1 3DL

Tel:01722239174 E-mail tich@arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

Honorary Registrar

Alec Powell (64C)

30, Pyrton Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire. OX49 5LX

Tel: 01491 614142 E-Mail alecreme38@gmail.com

Honorary Treasurer

Laurence (Laurie) Blakley (61B)

47, Chaplain Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hampshire. PO8 8QH

Tel: 02392 258934 E-mail: laurie.blakley@ntlworld.com

Honorary OBAN Editor

Ray Stevens (64C)

4, Golden Grove, Southampton, Hampshire. SO14 1PT

Tel: 02380 491570 E-mail raystevens599@live.co.uk

Honorary Webmaster

John (Herbie) Coles (66B)

20, Upper Cairncastle Road, Larne, County Antrim. BT40 2DT

Tel: 02828 272740 E-mail johncoles51@btinternet.com

Honorary Recruitment Officer

Barrie Parker (65C)

31B, Hawthorns Lane, Keynsham, Bath & N E Somerset. BS31 1BY

Tel: 01173 298380 E-mail barrie.j.parker2@btinternet.com

AOBA Chairman's Report



Each time I am reminded that the Chairman's article is due it catches me unawares - it shouldn't do so - just how long and often have I been receiving these reminders? What is becoming more and more difficult though, is finding something that you will find informative or of perhaps some interest. The

next meeting of the committee falls after the requirement, so no help from that source. I failed to attend the parade at the cenotaph (medically excused) so again no material from that. So perhaps I can keep your interest for a few moments by relating the details of an accident. Somebody else's misfortune is always of some interest. Some old codger (approaching his seventieth) was entering his house through his back door after cleaning a pair of shoes outside. His slipped left foot slipped(!) forward, his right foot had become trapped against the doorstep and he went down with his right leg bent and trapped beneath him with his ankle bent back and straddled across the door sill as his head went all the way back to hit the ground outside (luckily, his fall broke his fall, so to speak, and his head wasn't damaged); the door sill - you know, that part where you would put a piece of wood you wanted to break by stamping on the end! Having cursed as he went down and expecting the worse, he lay there for a few moments letting the pain subside before moving to see what pain that would cause! As it was, he was able to get himself up and hop into the house on his good foot. His wife was upstairs resting,

because only about ten days before she had had a partial knee replacement and he was supposed to be taking care of her during her convalescence. After the worst of the pain had gone he was able to examine the area and decided that if there was any breakage it was probably only toes - the ugly and broken weals across the top of his foot and the severe bruising and swelling meant that there would be little chance of getting a shoe on. Anyway a trip to the local A+E would probably verify this. However, a problem there, getting there. He decided to wait until the next day. Overnight, having slept with his foot outside of the covers with a temporary dressing over the wounds, there had been no great change. He decided against a visit to the A+E as the last thing he needed was the prospect of being told that he should not drive. A few days later he visited the local practice for an earlier organised appointment and decided to have the damage looked at by the nurse - he had now managed to wear an unfastened sandal and had tried his car and found he could drive unimpaired (an automatic anyway). The nurse passed him to the doctor and the doctor sent him for x-rays; the x-ray dept found nothing serious and sent him hobbling on his way - reassured and more importantly in command of his car. So there it is - no real moral to the story, just be careful as you go about - and be glad that it happened to someone else. Only in this case, I wish it had! Anyway, I shall be fit enough to take the parade in July and hope to see you there.

Brian Hutchins 61B

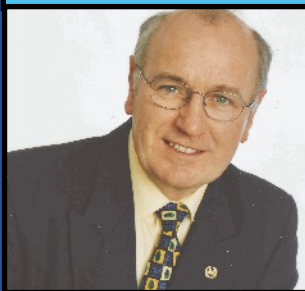
Please note that the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of either the Editor or of the Arborfield Old Boys Association and therefore, no responsibility for these will be accepted. All contributions and articles for inclusion in OBAN are most 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.

Send article and photographs separately, do not embed photographs within the text. 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: The Gravestone of 2547624 Sgt C.J.V. Martin. Intelligence Corps. Ex Arborfield Apprentice. See Page 26 'A Sombre Reunion'.

Rear Cover Photograph: The Remembrance Garden in Rowcroft Barracks, Arborfield.

Committee Members Reports



Honorary Secretary's Report

Many thanks to all who expressed thanks for the reunion weekend. It's a pleasure to organise - even if some of the suppliers are

difficult to communicate with. I'm glad to say the NMA has appointed an Events Manager to oversee all the functions they put on. Mind you this hasn't resulted in them becoming more realistic in their pricing I have to say. However they have introduced a hot meal menu for those using the marquee, which means we will have a better value option for us lunch. Full details of which you will find in your welcoming pack. However thanks to the excellent work of an ex-apprentice we have looked at alternative venues for lunch and will be offering a BBQ option for discussion at the AGM. It will mean leaving the NMA directly after the Drum Head Service and stopping at a 4 star hotel on the way back to our main hotel. Anyway, more detail and full discussion at the AGM.

I'm delighted with the pickup for this year's reunion, of course there are still a few days left as I write this, but I can confirm numbers are looking good. It's also great to see the effort 1964 have made for their 50th anniversary with over 40 lads booking in. You might also be interested to read the number of apprentices bringing their partners is increasing as well. This year almost 60% of lads are bringing their other halves. Some have raised concerns regarding the cost of the weekend and of course the kind of weekend we enjoy does not come cheap when measured against past reunions. But sadly we have lost the benefit of the Sgts' Mess and Transit Block for accommodation, however I

can confirm that to be totally transparent to all concerned your committee will be identifying each composite cost that goes towards the weekend at the AGM.

You may also be interested to know that your Benevolent Committee has had two requests this year from either Old Boys or their families and we have been able to help out. Please remember if you hear of any old boy in difficulty or need and you think we can be of help, please do not hesitate in contacting me, the Honorary Registrar or the Honorary OBAN Editor, all of whom will be only too pleased to help.

Just another reminder if you were not aware, your committee have organised an Edition Two to the wonderful book Peter Gripton wrote for us all to enjoy - The Arborfield Apprentice. This second edition includes the final chapter very kindly added to the first edition in loose leaf format by Peter after the college closure in 2004 and is a must for all Apprentices whether your intake was in 1939 or 2004.

So if you want to keep updated with the latest edition, or never bought the book in the first place you can obtain your copy for £30.00 plus P&P by visiting our website.

www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk/shop.html links.

God bless

David Schofield 65A



Honorary Treasurer's Report

The accounts have been examined by an independent accountant and I can report that all is in order. You will be presented with it at this year's AGM for your approval.

After a few tweaks the new database is up and running, no doubt as I carry on there will be other functions that would be helpful in the running of the accounts.

Whilst still using the manual double entry books, from the beginning of this year, I have been using a PC accounts package on the computer running in tandem and will carry on to the end of the year, then in consultation with the accountant, see if it is suitable for our requirements.

Laurie Blakley 61B



Honorary OBAN Editor's Report

The newsletter is being well received, judging from the replies to the articles that I am getting. However I must apologise to several members, as I made a couple of errors in OBAN 57. Firstly to Gordon Bonner and the AANM Committee, for not printing the details of their Trustees AGM and Memorial Service. (See Page 19). I did not notice the significance of the dates between the issue of the OBAN and the Service date. The other mistake was to attribute the article 'A most Peculiar Engine' to Nory Wilson, when it should have been Chas Pepper. These were due to the last minute panic because of the number of late obituaries I had received. In trying to make space to fit them in, I looked for articles of roughly the same size, to remove, and did not read them properly. I hope it does not happen this time as I have had to do exactly the same thing this time..

I am particularly looking forward to the next reunion as it is my intakes 50th. Rumour has it that there is going to be quite a few people to catch up with.

Can I ask members to have a think about writing a short, (or long) article for your magazine, as I am starting to run short of choices. It can be about what ever you want. If it is linked to Arborfield all the better, but not mandatory. Don't worry about spelling or grammar, the computer I am typing on at the moment is a whizz at sorting that out. Again photographs are not mandatory but can help.

Many thanks,

Ray Stevens 64C



Honorary Registrar's Report

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.

a) Since the last OBAN we have had 3 applications for life membership, 4 reactivations and no resignations.

b) New Members:

2765	Catchpole	N B	A-77C-C
2767	Williams	NTS	A-72C-D
2768	Parker	I A	A-74C-C
8	McIntosh	CW	A-68C-A
38	Gundry	A D	A-64A-B

PLEASE NOTE!

I am finding that a lot of members are not updating their contact details. Please let me know of any changes to your address information especially post codes and email addresses. It is important to know where you are located

Alec Powell 64c



Honorary Website Administrator's Report

Although I no longer keep a record of "hits" (accesses) to our main website, feedback received thus far suggests to me that it is visited on a regular basis, even if some of it is to correct errors and omissions made by myself, and any such information is most welcome!

I am pleased to inform you that another 2 Old boys have volunteered to take on the task of being the representative of their intake or year, and I am pleased to publish details of any "mini" reunions that are proposed for various intakes in the future. I have again this year included options for paying reunion fees and membership by PayPal, but it is unfortunate that we have to levy the PayPal surcharge for all members, this is to offset the cost of transactions from those outside of the UK, but hopefully this might still be a little cheaper than bank fees on electronic transfers would be.

Please be aware that there is a section under the "noticeboard" for the Army Apprentices' Memorial

Association and details of the AGM and forthcoming events can be viewed there.

Arborfield Old Boys' Association Forum

I am very pleased to be able to report that a necessary update to the Arborfield Old Boys' Forum operating system software was accomplished uneventfully. Although this in no way affects the appearance or every day running of the "board" it is always best practice to keep it updated to the latest version if any problems are to be rectified with ease.

Whilst I endeavour to inform the membership of important developments via the Arborfield Old Boys' "Blog", the forum remains a useful point of contact and source of news on the more distant members of our Association, and I'm delighted to report an increase of 21 new members to the forum, including some from more recent intakes. I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this year's reunion, if you have anything to discuss informally in relation to the Website or Forum, please feel free to sound me out.

Herbie (John) Coles 66B



Honorary Recruitment Officer's Report

I am continuing to 'put the word out', it appears to be having some effect. I would, however, like to thank Nigel Canning (77C) who has been attempting to rally many from the 70s, Jeeps do have some use, seriously thanks Nigel! As ever, those from the latter years still think it a sort of Darby and Joan club or an exclusive 'old boys' club, this is the type of negativity that needs to be 'broken', any ideas would be gratefully accepted.

I am still discovering more 'outlets' for recruiting, but again all ideas welcomed. Hopefully I will see many of you at the reunion, although I am awaiting the results of a kidney test. I will hopefully lose the left one as it's more trouble than it's worth, we live in hope. Onwards and upwards, and let's keep the 'show on the road'!

Barrie Parker 65C

Flying with the Army Air Corps. Pt4

Royalist v Republicans.

I have been in 'Aden' some six months now, and until recently there was no F.R.A. presence at Beihan. However, some months ago the simmering antagonism between the Royalist and Republican factions in the Yemen erupted into civil war. Under the guise of assisting the Republicans in their struggle to wrest control from the feudal system of the Royalists, the President of Egypt, Abdel Gammer Nasser, has provided men, arms and equipment from his army and air force. In truth, most commentators believe Nasser is using this as a cover for eventually taking over Saudi Arabia. However, there have been a number of border incursions along the border near to Beihan. This prompted Brigadier Lunt to order a battalion of the F.R.A. to Beihan to build an encampment close to the airstrip in the valley of the wadi Beihan.

Although not yet finished, they are now well entrenched with a smooth operating garrison. Within three weeks of Lunt's decision, 653 Squadron had been requested to provide assistance to the F.R.A. in preventing border crossings. Thus it was that each pilot of 15 Flight spent a week every month at Beihan to perform reconnaissance, liaison and supply tasks for the F.R.A. And, as Auster 9's are no longer permitted to fly at this altitude, we are using Beavers, a decision welcomed by all pilots in 15 Flight, particularly me, as I was the first to encounter the oil-gulping problem. The aircraft, too, are to be rotated to maintain a consistent level of hours and servicing.

The war is not going well for the Royalists; they have been steadily pushed south and west, nearer and nearer to the W.A.P. These factors are worrying to the British government and to Middle East Command in Aden. And Nasser's influence on and his logistic support for the Republican movement is of particular concern. The British authorities would far prefer the existing feudal and sometimes cruel Royalist regime prevailed. It's medieval hierarchy; a closed society that lacks modern arms and with an army that poses little or no threat to British occupation in Southern Arabia. Yemen republicanism, on the other hand, is an entirely different scenario. If they succeed in overthrowing and sweeping away the Royalists, there is little doubt their next objective will be to strengthen the insurgents uprising in the Radfan, ultimately to gain control of the W.A.P. Those insurgents have already made British control of the border in the Radfan area untenable. And it is feared revolutionary ideas, fervour, materials

men are, even now, passing unchecked through that area into the W.A.P.

To those of us who spend most days "up-country" there are obvious signs of change. Ten days ago I went to Dhala and was surprised by the number of tribesmen congregating near the airstrip. Many of them are different to the local inhabitants. Their deep-lined, very dark-brown faces are hard; eyes are set into deep sockets; noses curved and sharp edged like scimitars. They look rough and tough, and carry Arab "baggage". But, above all, they are well armed; all of them carry the traditional jambiya - a highly decorated, curved knife - and the 'jezail', an ancient, long barrelled, embossed rifle with a curved butt. About twenty minutes after I arrived a Beverley landed. It's a large four-engine transport that looks a trifle like a whale with wings and a forked tail. To land one is like rolling a block of flats on to the runway.

It disgorged some equipment and a few passengers, but little compared to its total capacity. Then, to my utter surprise, the Beverley's Loadmaster signalled the hard-faced tribesmen to climb aboard. "What the devil is going on here?" I muttered to myself. An R.A.F. officer standing nearby must have heard me, for he answered, "They're Royalist tribesmen going to Beihan. Once there they will cross the border to where their Royalists friends have a much stronger grip on the land". All of this is said tongue in cheek. My intuition tells me I should cast a Nelsonian eye at it.

Being busy talking to the R.A.F. officer I didn't count how many of them boarded, but from what I saw I guessed it to be over the normal amount. As most Arab men don't weigh as much as us, I doubt the A.U.W. was exceeded. Anyway, I can't imagine the captain allowing that to happen; were anything to go wrong while carrying out this covert operation, large dollops of a smelly, brown mixture would impact on a fast spinning fan. By chance the following day I went to Beihan and witnessed a Beverley unloading its cargo. There are no prizes for guessing what it was, but it was not carried off; it walked!

My wife, Susan, and I have a flat in Maalla; that part of Aden between Khormaksar and Steamer Point. Yesterday evening, while reading "The Telegraph" that was published four days ago - it takes that long to get here - a particular article took my attention. In it was the answer the Minister for Defence gave to a question in Parliament. He categorically denied that, "British armed forces are giving support to the Yemen

W.A.P. from where they can cross the border to a Royalist stronghold". Aghast at such a blatant lie I said to my wife, "But I saw this happen only a few days ago. How can he have the audacity to refute it?" But he did. It's called political expediency.

It's Monday, and my turn to go to Beihan for a week on detachment for the F.R.A. I fly XP775 up there and as usual when flying in "Aden" I only wear a pair of pants beneath my clean tropical flying suit. In a couple of days, though, it will have a halo of salt across the back, because it's the hot season and every day is just that, very hot and sticky. However, once at 9000 feet the temperature is lower and there is some relief from the heat.

On arrival I get a quick briefing on the current situation from David Ashley, the chap I'm relieving. Then he makes an enthusiastic departure in his Beaver, obviously looking forward to a slightly more civilised period in Aden. The present state of affairs is quiet, but tense. Tense because the intelligence 'boys' are aware the Republican forces are still pushing the Royalists back towards the border on the other side of the jebel to our west.

I report to the F.R.A. Quartermaster, an English major. He greets me with the news, "I want you to take some kit to Ain; they're short of one or two things". He and I have met before and I know what he really means: he's got a pile of equipment waiting for me. "Right, sir, I'll just park my kit in the Mess, and I'll be back".

I make my presence known in the Mess, dump my kit on a bed in a standard army bell tent, whose sides have been rolled up to increase the oven like ventilation, and return to the major.

There I find he has already removed all the seats from the Beaver, except mine. In their place he has squeezed in a very large, tractor like tyre and surrounded it with an assortment of other gear. Immediately my brain throws the words 'Weight' and 'Concern' into my mind. Exasperated at not being consulted I ask the major, "How much does all that weigh?" If he notices I haven't used 'sir', he doesn't remark on it. And he can only give me a vague estimate of the total weight.

"Well, sir, I think there's too much weight on that aircraft. Without going into a lot of detail, over-loading it can result in a nasty accident. My Squadron commander has invested me with the captaincy and responsibility for this aircraft. If anything goes wrong I get it in the neck twice: once when it crashes and again at the court of enquiry. In future, I need to see the gear on the ground to assess its weight, before it's loaded". I place considerable emphasis on the last three words.

I can see this 'mouthful' has stuck in the major's craw and upset his digestion, for the normal chain of command is downwards. Sergeants do not give

orders to majors; it's the other way round. However, he says nothing and that is as good as I'm likely to get.

Now I have to sort out this problem so I take-off carefully and climb to 6000 feet. Under normal circumstances I could easily get through the pass to Ain at 4500 feet, but I'm going to do a stall check just to set my mind at rest. Normally a fully loaded Beaver with landing flap and no fuel in the tip tanks stalls at 44 knots and that enables us to land at 55 knots. I do the stall and I'm only a little surprised to find it's not 44, but 55 knots! And that's without much fuel in the belly tanks either, so that tyre weighs quite a bit more than I thought. Had I not done that stall check and approached Ain at 55 knots the aircraft would have stalled and crashed. I mentally thank those Army Air Corps (A.A.C.) instructors who taught me theory and practice, but more importantly, how to use that knowledge.

On to Ain, and with a curving approach I settle on 65 knots as my 'finals' speed. Sure enough, 'she' sits down promptly soon after the 'round-out' and only moderate braking is needed because Ain is slightly uphill. I supervise the removal of the tyre because I don't want any parts of the Beaver inadvertently removed with it. Now back to Beihan, only to find a second 'trip' is necessary for another range of equipment the major has selected for Ain. The Major isn't here, but the message has got through because it's all laid out for me to check. Satisfied all of it can go, I show the soldiers where I want each piece stowed. Then it's off to Ain again. With no weight problems this time it's straight across the pass, but I give myself enough height to be safe from any turbulence caused by hot up or down draughts over the mountains. Then I do the checks, lower flap, get the speed back, swing left and make every effort to complete a smooth landing.

On the way back I don't go through the pass. Instead I make a detour to another 'strip' by following the border north to the end of the mountains and then turn east to meet up with wadi Beihan. At this point the wadi has passed the end of the mountains to disappear into the beginning of what eventually becomes the Saudi Arabian Empty Quarter. On the western side of the wadi is an airstrip called Timna. Well, a sort of airstrip, for there are no markings and the surface is sand. I'm landing here because shortly before David Ashley left for Aden he showed me a sculptured face in polished hard, green, stone; almost certainly jade. And he picked it up here, at Timna. Even I, with no knowledge of antiques, saw its beauty and guessed it is worth something to a collector. Can I find another, or similar, figure? I search for about half an hour, to no avail. So it's back to Beihan.

Some weeks later the subject of the jade figure arose in the crew room. David seemed to think it

could be part of the Queen of Sheba period. And it could be, for Timna is only 35 – 40 nautical miles away from Marib in the Yemen, where there is a palace said to belong to Sheba. If so, it is very old, rare and valuable. He says he will attempt to get it back to England to sell it to the British Museum. But I never find out what happens to it.

This evening there are four of us in the Mess: the F.R.A's Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant (R.Q.M.S.), a medic sergeant in the R.A.F., a Lancer sergeant, and myself. While we stand there supping our beers a Camel spider makes a brief appearance in one corner of the tent. It takes only seconds for it to race, upside down, across the tent top and disappear out of sight. They're about three to five inches across the legs with a mottled, sandy brown body. They sport a nasty bite and if unlucky enough to be bitten, it's a trip to the hospital.

In the middle of the night I am awakened by an electric storm. The lightning is almost continuous and so bright it's like daylight for brief periods. The storm persists for about an hour and then goes away. But there's no rain, not a drop. With difficulty I get back to sleep, but within minutes – or so it seems – I'm being awoken by the 'bearer' bringing my morning mug of tea. After breakfast I go out to the aircraft to check with the mechanics as to its health and am reassured to hear good news. I did not expect hear anything else, for Beavers are, on the whole, very reliable. One of the F.R.A. officers wants to make a 'recce' along the border in about an hour, so the day starts slowly, just how I like it.

I do the 'recce' at 300 feet above the ground to give us a close look, but this means flying close to the towering ridge of rock to our right as we go north. We notice the build up of Royalists supplies and troops on the Yemen side of the border. So far, though, there have been no incursions to our side, for we are still flying in their supporters. When satisfied he has seen enough I go back the long way instead of through the pass. In the afternoon I take another officer and two soldiers to Ain, and follow that with a supply flight, also to Ain.

It's now Friday and the pattern of flights has been much the same every day, the only change being the temperature: it just keeps on getting hotter. Today it's even more noticeable. When I take off at 14:30 the radios don't function; not even a carrier wave signal. What I do notice is the outside air temperature: its 55° C – that's 131° F. Minutes later, on reaching 5000 feet, they come back to life. I'll get the mechanics to check them over, but I'm sure it's the heat.

Tonight, while standing in the mess, the R.A.F. Medic sergeant tells us about an experience he had a couple of weeks ago. As an act of humanity he goes to Beihan each day to tend any sick villagers,

who accept him as a doctor. The authorities are agreeable to this, for they see it as means of gaining the hearts and minds of the locals. One day he is approached by an Arab man who says his wife is ill. As they walk to the Arab's hut, 'Doc' asks what the problem is. "She's got this wound in her side", he says. "Well, let's take a look at her, then". "Oh no, you can't see her; that's not permitted". This is the Arabic law of purdah, where a married woman must be covered by a burqa when is being seen by men who are not relatives or close friends of the family.

"Look, unless I see the wound I can't diagnose what's wrong and suggest a remedy", says 'Doc'. The two of them stand and argue for a few minutes, but eventually the Arab relents and shows 'Doc' into another 'room' where his wife is laid on a very rudimentary bed. The Arab gabbles to his wife, gesturing with his hand she should turn over. In considerable pain, she does so and pulls her robe to one side. In the dim light 'Doc' sees she has a deep, septic wound some three inches long and an inch wide. She is listless and her skin is hot and tight. It's clear to 'Doc' he can do little for her. What she needs is a surgeon with drugs in a hospital, medication 'Doc' does not have.

"I can make your wife comfortable, but you need to get your wife down to the "Queen Elizabeth" hospital in Aden as quickly as possible".

"I see" says the Arab, in a very worried voice, "How long will she have to be there?"

"I don't know". 'Doc' thinks for a moment. "About six weeks, I should think".

They leave the room. Outside the Arab stands there, deep in thought. It then becomes obvious he is trying to calculate the cost of the return airfare on an Aden Airways DC3, the surgeon's fees, and the costs of the stay in hospital. He turns to 'Doc' and says, "Forget it; I can buy another wife for less than that".

'Doc' is dumfounded by this callous attitude and pleads with the Arab to reconsider, but he will not. Sadly, the woman died ten days later. Some Arabs still believe women are 'belongings', to do with as they see fit. Life can be very cheap here.

Derek Palmer 54B

Four Years from AAS to AAC.

Having just turned 16 years of age I entered the Army Apprentice School at Arborfield on 13 January 1960 (intake 60A) and was therefore one of the first new "Soldiers of the Sixties". My aim in joining up was to escape the secondary school education that I found so boring but little did I realise that I would spend a good part of the next three years in a classroom being taught to be an Instrument Technician (Field) Class III. Maybe "classroom" sounds a bit grand as at the time Instrument Technicians were taught in two old large Nissan huts at the top of the Arborfield Apprentice School camp.

When not in the classroom doing "education" our small trade group from 60A consisting of myself, Bas Birch, Alan 'Shag' Twynning, Col Cameron, and Peter Donnison would be either taking a piece of equipment (Clinometer, chronometer or pair of binoculars) apart or carrying out a fitting task. Taking things apart is easy but then we had to service, assemble and test the equipment. Most of these jobs were interesting but adjusting a pair of prismatic binoculars so both images were focused and in alignment could be frustrating. Collimating, as it was called, was carried out by sighting on a white disc pinned to a distant telegraph pole. By the end of the day you had spots before your eyes and a thumping headache – or perhaps we were doing it wrong!

Before arriving at Arborfield I quite liked working with metal. School metalwork lessons were the only ones I really enjoyed and before I left school I had made a wrought iron hall table which survived in

the family home for many years. However, after a short time in training at Arborfield, repeatedly filing bits of brass and steel "square" I began to lose the will to live. A lot of this "fitting" seemed to take place at the end of the day on dark winter evenings when all we wanted to do was get back to our pits or, if we had any money left, to the NAFFI. I remember that we devised games of "bench cricket" using files and bits of chalk to try to make the time pass quicker. Eventually we graduated to manufacturing grander things and our last trade test piece, the engineers scribing block, which we manufactured in the main machine shop, still lurks in a dark corner of my garage to this day.

We passed out in December 1962 and were posted to SEME Bordon where we were supposed to continue our training to be Instrument Technicians (AFV). Soon after arriving we were informed that we were going to be "converted" to Aircraft Technicians Electric & Instruments (Ac Tech (E&I)). Thus began another eighteen months of training at SEME Bordon then on to SEE Arborfield and eventually the Army Air Corps Centre Middle Wallop. I believe we were a 'one off' conversion course needed to fill a shortfall of Ac Tech (E&I), known as Greenies, in the Army Air Corps. This belief arose from the fact that no one had any idea what to teach an Instrument Tech (Field) to make an Aircraft Tech (E&I) and most instructors just seemed to cover the subjects they preferred to teach or asked us what we needed to know! I don't think the Mellor Loop had been invented at this time so there was little thought of course syllabi, lesson plans or the like.



Back Left, Myself, Jock Henderson, Dennis Beckett,

Front Row, Jim ???.
And Siggie Bleck.

Despite all the training, or lack of it, Ac Tech Course No 6 (E&I) finally passed out from the Aircraft Engineering Training Wing (AETW) on 24 April 1964 and we were posted to the five corners of the world. I went from one end of the camp to the other and joined 651 Sqn. AAC Wksp REME. As this unit was on a UN tour in Nicosia, Cyprus at the time, but due back to the UK within a month, I thought there was little chance of my joining them there. However, the clerk in charge of the rear party did not want to go to Cyprus and he immediately sent all new arrivals out there in the hope that he would not be needed. So my first posting in the real world, after over four years training, was three weeks in Nicosia helping the unit pack up for their return to Blighty. Most of the time was spent in the sun at the nearest swimming pool as you can see in the photo.

Would that all my other postings had been as cushy as that one.

One aspect of my three week UN tour in Cyprus that I found strange was the accommodation arrangements. I was allotted a bed in a barrack room of about sixteen bed spaces that had a door in each end but internally had been divided in two by a partition made up of personal kit lockers. One side of this partition was occupied by the aircraft technicians whilst the other end was filled with other personnel – vehicle mechanics, clerks, storemen etc. As there was no room in the technicians' end I was given a bedspace in the other

end. Each evening a tirade of abuse passed between the two ends of the room which sometimes ended in missiles flying over the partition in both directions. Being new to the unit and the only aircraft technician in the wrong end of the room (so to speak) I found it a somewhat uncomfortable experience although I was made more welcome by my immediate roommates than I was initially by my work colleagues.

During my short time living here I learned a valuable lesson. So far in my Army life I had not been party to any gambling within barracks but here there was a card game in progress in the room most evenings – usually three-card brag. I was eventually drawn in to playing but of course tended to lose most evenings. After a week or so I wised up and decided that playing cards for money within a barrack room does not make for a good atmosphere and it left me short of cash for beer. I never indulged in barrack room gambling again.

On the units' return to the UK things sorted themselves out as most of the more senior technicians lived off camp or in quarters and the rest of us living in personnel became a more tolerant group.

Barrie (Tich) King (60A-B)

Germany Experiences. Part 7 by the late by Mike Larby, 42C

5 Armoured Workshops, BAOR (1951 - 1952)

The military ferry was standard 1950s; narrow steel three-tier bunks, cold and damp, and smelling of paint, diesel, bodies and vomit! It was an overnight crossing and a cold grey morning awaited us at the Hook of Holland. The military dock looked exactly like Harwich, but facing west instead of east; the disembarking process was exactly the same as the embarkation, but in reverse. RTOs and their staff harangued and bullied us in the same sort of order, ready to embark on military trains running to various destinations, from Austria in the south to Flensburg in the north. The catering arrangements are beyond my powers of recall; we probably had breakfast at 'the Hook' and small-pack rations for the ongoing journey. It was all very well organised and ran like clockwork, but set to Army time. Our destination was Hamm, an industrial town on the eastern edge of the Ruhr Valley, a journey of some 300 kilometres. The train journey was great; the comfort of the coaches far exceeded anything in Britain even to this day. There were roomy compartments, containing beautifully upholstered,

soft and large seats, with pull-out sections to rest legs; good controllable heating and large windows, from which we could watch the countryside unfold.

It was my first ever visit to Europe - and how interesting and exciting it was. Holland proved to be neat and tidy, with pretty red and white houses; good roads with cycle tracks and thousands of cyclists, and then the huge *Phillips* model town, with its factories going flat-out. On over the Rhine into Germany and through the heart of the devastated (and I mean devastated!) towns of the Ruhr Valley. There were hundreds of acres of twisted steel and mountains of rubble, some chimneys were smoking and one could see the occasional furnace glow. But, even six years after the war, the incredible damage done by years of aerial bombardment was still plain to see, far beyond my expectations. Names such as Essen, Dortmund and Dusseldorf were familiar to us, having heard them announced as bombing targets almost weekly for five years. The reality was brutal, but already shiny new skeletal structures were beginning to spring up, like willow herb on our bombsites!

Detraining at Hamm, we had our first opportunity to look at the town (or at least the station concourse), which was to be our new home, whilst waiting for the RTO and 120 RASC Company to sort out the transport to Newcastle Barracks. The station area and the main part of the old town was comparatively unscathed, unlike the marshalling yards to the south, which had virtually been carpet-bombed into extinction by 1945 and finished off by American *Sherman* tanks. The *Bahnhof* (Station) *Hotel* was still operating, thriving in fact; it had several bars, from a nightclub type of bar down to the standard beer bar at the station entrance. This was to be 5 Armd Sgts' Mess Annexe for the next few weeks; the trams ran door-to-door, and anyway we were only about two kilometres from the town centre. As the cognoscenti know, in any unfamiliar European city, but more especially in Germany, the station hotel is always a good place to start from. Indeed, I know of chaps who've gone to spend weekends in attractive towns and never got any farther than 50 metres from the arrival platform! But I digress.

Eventually, we were loaded up in the QL troop transporters, and a 2km trip (or less) took us to our new barracks, known to the Brits as Newcastle Barracks and to the Germans as the Dannevoix Kaserne. Pre-war it had been an artillery barracks, so it had plenty of potential workshop space. The barrack blocks were of standard basement, 1st and 2nd floor construction, all centrally heated and double-glazed, with huge tiled showers and ablution rooms, and accommodation ranging from 8-bed rooms to singles. All senior NCOs had single rooms, with better furniture than our most modern sergeants' accommodation has today (judging by Arborfield reunions!). We, the workshop, had two accommodation blocks, a third admin and NAAFI, and the Sgts' Mess and cookhouse in the fourth block. The Ordnance Field Park (OFP) and mobile bath and laundry unit occupied the fifth and last. There was a super gymnasium, a 25-yard shooting range, football and hockey pitches and a tennis court. I was to spend six years there and seldom wanted to be anywhere else. A large new 'Panzerhalle' - tank workshop - was being built for us by the Germans, with overhead gantry, inspection pits - the lot. When completed, we'd want for nothing; well a rugby pitch maybe, but I quickly acquired a reasonable site and soon had a 5 Armd Wksp Rugby Club. We didn't win much to begin with, as all the other sides were of regimental strength, but it kept me fit enough for Corps Rugby.

(Many years later, it occurred to me that although I had played for REME Canal Zone for three years, never missing a match, and REME BAOR for five years, ditto, I never got my Corps Colours. I must

have been in civvie street for at least 25 years before I thought about it, triggered off, I suspect, at a boozy pink gin Arborfield reunion! Anyway, my then day job brought me into contact with the 'corridors of power' in Whitehall, and one of my business relationships was with the Project Manager 'B' vehicles (part of the MGO's hierarchy), one Colonel Brian Fleming - a good guy and a good friend. I mentioned this to him. *"Give me your rugby CV and I'll see what I can do"*, he said. A couple of weeks later, he contacted me. *"Sorry"*, he said, *"No can do, but we'd love to have you as a guest of honour at our Rugby Weekend during our 50th birthday celebration at Bordon. There'll be Australian REME, New Zealand REME, Canadians and your old lot BAOR. Oh yes, I nearly forgot to ask, could your company (Bedford Trucks) sponsor something?"* No colours then - and just a few pounds short in my budget and one massive hangover! Only wish I could remember more of the event. I do recall the New Zealanders were serious, dour, somewhat cliquey, and naturally won every game! And how big is ANZEME? What, you may ask, has that got to do with BAOR in 1952? Nothing whatsoever, but I thought I would just have awhinge. I may even touch on the subject of REME rugby again.)

Back to Hamm and Newcastle Barracks. The advance party and the rear party of 2 Inf Div Wksp, who were moving down the road to Dortmund, showed us our billets and our new WOs' and Sgts' Mess. Well appointed, good big bar, parquet floor and divided as usual by a folding partition to create a dining room. Loads of attentive German staff, and our bar steward was Sgt 'Ferdie' Fox, also ex-Arborfield, 42C. Anyway a fine chap and brilliant in the field. I recollect that we had several German bar staff (not all at once) but eventually Herr Raymond Rotemund, aka 'Ray', became the incumbent for many years (when he wasn't having a nervous breakdown, that is!).

The married members of the mess (which was about 90% of them) made the most of their few short months of freedom, or many of them did, anyway. Not one bar or café, nor any gasthaus or wirtshaft in Hamm and our local villages, was left unreconnoitred; even the out-of-bounds bars were regularly checked by the Officer of the Day and the Orderly Sgt; our HQ Platoon *Jeep* did more mileage around Hamm than it did on exercises! The bar never seemed to close, but in reality it did, usually at about 02.00. There were no other British Army units in Hamm except for 317 MSO Company RASC (Mixed Services Organization - Eastern Europeans who had been fighting on our side and couldn't go back to the Eastern Bloc) - a tank transporter company, of whom more anon. We'd have regular games nights with them. We also always seemed to have a lot of visitors from other armies - the

Canadians were about 25km away at Soest and would pop in, plus US Army people, who were either lost or had broken down on the nearby autobahn - and Belgians and French of course, whose zones were also close. So, all in all, we didn't get tired of just our own company.

If anyone wanted to drink after 02.00 - and quite a few did - or to just pop out for a quickie, the local gasthaus was called '*Der Kanone*' for obvious reasons, (remember the barracks had been artillery). It had served many generations of soldiers, and we were just the next; different language, same objectives! It closed about two hours a day, very occasionally; just to clean up (clean being a comparative term!). This was because it also catered for the miners from a nearby colliery, who worked three shifts a day; one shift seemed to finish at 02.00 hours, so the pub was just coming to life as the thirsty colliers poured through the door. Unlike British miners at that time, they didn't go home black and unwashed to a tin bath in front of the kitchen range; they had super pit-head baths, proper working gear, and big lockers for their dry clothes. They appeared at the bar shiny and clean, in good suits, all with briefcases carrying their 'snap', or whatever was the German equivalent. Can't say they all left like that though.

S/Sgt 'Brad' Bradley had been captured on Crete in 1942. According to him, having been told that there were no more Germans, we'd won, and they were to make their own way to the docks, where the NZ Navy would pick them up. Brad and his band of brothers decided to try the Cretan wine in a bar not far from the quay. Suddenly, in burst a little harassed infantryman, "*Run for your lives*", he cried, "*the German Paras are coming down the street!*" In no time at all it was "*Hande hoch!*" and Brad was in the bag for three years, in Berlin. Most of the time was spent re-laying railway track that the RAF had blown up. He used to tell us that he didn't know who he hated most - the Germans or the RAF!

All through our year at Tidworth, Brad had been looking forward to being really, really, nasty to any poor German who should cross his path, and we were a bit worried about what might happen upon our arrival in Hamm. But within two or three days, he paid his first visit to the *Kanone*; and within a week, he was the darling of the miners, they absolutely adored him. They'd spend hours together at 'their' table (the '*stammtisch*'), telling the most unlikely war stories and getting drunker and drunker. Brad spoke German in a highly personal and idiosyncratic way; for instance, he might know that the German verb '*schlafen*' means 'to sleep'; therefore, should the occasion arise when he might wish a German 'to sweep' the floor,

he would say '*schwafen*'! None of this presented any hindrance to a perfect understanding and male bonding (as they say today). Alas it was to end all too soon - but that is another story, for a later page.

And so to work ...

So much for our social and domestic first few weeks; but what about things military and technical? Bit by bit, our vehicles, stores and kit arrived, or most of it anyway. Virtually every bin lorry and repair wagon had been broken into; all our coffee, chocolate and other trading supplies had gone, as well as personal kit; and goodness what tools, spares and other high-value stuff had been stolen. Welding the doors didn't work; no one told us it would have been better to leave them just locked. Apparently this was common-place, even so long after the war. What must it have been like in immediate post-war conditions? On the personal side, my *Velocette* KTT was OK, as was my *Matchless*. Eventually, new kit was drawn, vehicles repaired and order restored.

Time to start work; we'd inherited most of 2 Inf Div Wksp's German technical staff, and they had workshop space already designated for the various trades - we only needed a few more bays for 'A' vehicles until the new tank hall was ready. The civilian element of the workshop complement was under the control of one Herr Weber, an ex-German army artillery Major who, rumour had it, had been stationed in these very barracks before the war. A large man, quite stout, he played the part of the regular German army officer to the full. He always wore Loden Green suits, usually with knickerbockers, stout boots and leggings (gaiters) with a Tyrolean-type hat, plus a beautiful swirly cloak in the winter. Dressed as though for boar hunting in the forests, he made do instead with hunting down absent and malingering employees! In fact, he was a charming man, and one realised that there was an element of self-mockery in his dress code and behaviour patterns, knowing that the past 'days' of glory would never return in his lifetime. He and G R (the OC, Maj George Riddick) got on just fine.

Initially, our 'A' vehicle platoon was about 50% German fitters, 50% REME craftsmen, the idea being that our chaps would teach them the rudiments of *Centurion* tank repairs. Virtually all of them were ex-tankies from the Russian and American fronts, although there was one 'desert rat' (or should it be fox?). They were brilliant; hard working, hard drinking and totally trustworthy. They soon had the measure of our kit, from *Churchill* bridge-layers to *Sexton* SPs, with of course the mainstream *Centurion* battle tank as their speciality. Naturally, on exercises and all

external military operations, the civilian element was left behind in the barracks but they had no separate management structure, other than Herr Weber, initially. Later on, some military remained in barracks as well, maybe one of the ASMs and a Staff Sergeant or two, on a rotational and convenience basis. This was eventually to be firmed up into two separate divisions of 5 Armd - a static workshop and a mobile workshop, but more of this subject later.

As 5 Armd settled into its new home the workload steadily increased, obviously due to the rising tempo of training throughout 20 Armd Brigade. The 'B' vehicle 'In'-park gradually filled with accident-damaged 3-tonners, which were no match for the heavy goods vehicles of the German transport industry. At that time the German vehicles were virtually 100% of normal control configuration (i.e. long bonneted) with huge bumper-bars and heavy chassis which could, and did, decimate the standard 3-ton *Bedford* 'O' & 'QL' cargo lorries. Even the 8-wheeled *Leyland* Hippos were no match for them. But 'Pop' Trescowthick, our *Diamond-T* driver, with the *Rogers* trailer hauling our *Churchill* ARV, treated them with disdain. In fact Pop treated all road users in a cavalier fashion! Small and wrinkled, with a walnut complexion, he wore Army-issue steel-rimmed specs with lenses like bull's-eye lanterns; we all swore that he couldn't see beyond the end of the *Diamond-T's* bonnet - mind you not many people could! In large cabs, he was also dimensionally as well as visually challenged; we actually fitted wooden blocks onto the pedals of 'his' 6x4 *Scammell*, and at low speeds he had to stand up in order to turn the steering wheel! More of Pop anon.

317 Tank Transporter Unit was beginning to make frequent visits to us, bringing in 'A' vehicle casualties from various training areas and from Munster, where most of 20 Armd Brigade armoured regiments lived. Mostly *Centurion* battle tanks, there was also an eclectic mix of SPs (M7 *Sexton* with 25-pounder gun), *Valentine* and *Churchill* bridge layers, M10 anti-tank guns fitted with 17 pounders (maybe 20 pounders later?) and a *Centaur* bulldozer that turned up from time to time. However, 80% of our jobs were *Centurions*, and the 'A' vehicle platoon soon developed into a nucleus of 3- or 4-man teams, the rest of the fitters doing other repairs, inspections, and so on. Naturally they intermittently changed around a bit, so that everyone became conversant with all our equipment types, including armoured cars and half-tracks.

The civilian 'A'-vehicle fitters also worked on our teams in the early days - to such good effect that

G R took some of the best with us on '*Spearhead 1*' that (1952) autumn. I doubt if CREME or any other Divisional or Brigade heard about that! Suffice it to say that we changed more *Cent* engines on that exercise than 10 or 4 Armd Wksps put together (we believed), and also held the unofficial record time for such an engine change. We believed that also, but how could we possibly have known? What was indisputable was that Hans, Fritz, et al, had a jolly good holiday (just like the Russian front but without the danger - well Ardennes maybe?), spending their leisure time in various gasthofs in the lower Rhine villages, bringing back chickens, eggs, ham and so on; sleeping in or under our trucks, drinking in our Sgts' Mess bar, and finding time to work at a fiendish rate as well. What men! I haven't thought about it before, but I wonder what arrangements were made between G R, Herr Weber, and the German Employment Agency, not forgetting the trade unions? Probably none; life was freer in the 50s.

Lots of training

The summer of 1952 was a busy time for all, for apart from workshop duties, the readiness of 6 Armd Div to be on full war footing within twelve hours from first alert was paramount. So it was unit training in the locality, Brigade training further afield, leading to our first full Divisional and Corps exercise in the autumn - '*Spearhead 1*'. 6 Armd Div's part in this took place in the lower Rhine, around Xanton and Goch, with movement towards Bremen. This was a major exercise over German villages, land and farmsteads, and it must have cost the German and British governments a fortune in reparations; every farmer and burgermeister must have rubbed their hands with glee when they saw the amount of damage we caused!

I remember going up an axis route a couple of hours after two (or maybe three) *Centurion*-equipped regiments had passed; the cobbled streets through the village had had a few gentle curves, bounded by hedges, fences and gardens. No longer! The whole village was covered in dust; the cobbled stones had been ripped up by the tank tracks, each passing tank causing more damage and deeper ruts in the road's foundations; and at the same time straightening the curves bit by bit. When I arrived on my *Matchless* I could see a dead-straight path through the village, two vast ruts going through gardens, fences and anything else in the way, right from village entry to village exit. There was no evident change to the houses that I could see, but the interiors must have been shaken up a bit!

Spearhead 1 was a massive exercise, deploying the whole of the tactical force of BAOR. It was tiring, demanding, interesting and, above all, great fun! *Spearhead II* the next year was also good, set in the north of Germany around Bremen; Saxony, I suppose, is the State. Again, this took place in villages and farms. Luckily for us, G R was a village man, whereas some COs were woodsmen, pushing luckless units up in soggy German forests. Major G R always used the village if there was one in his allocated area. Usually the Officers' Mess was in the up-market gasthaus yard, the Sgts' Mess within a few yards of the wirtschafft (pub), and the men, by platoons, in the warmest barns and biggest farms. In one location, G R did us proud in putting the whole workshop in a schnapps distillery-cum-farm somewhere near Bremen. AQMS Faulkner made friends with the old grandfather who ran it and often went back to see him on his odd days off. That is, until his wife arrived from the UK!

It is difficult - nay, impossible - at this distance in time, to sort out in my rag-bag of memories which anecdote relates to which exercise; they all become a blur of forests, country roads, villages, farms and factories; move in, dig trenches - fill in trenches, move out again. Tiring, especially for me, as by the time I had rounded up all the stragglers, it was time again to recce the next route - better than digging trenches though! A quick aside: people today talk about the unreliability and lack of comfort of old motorcycles when compared with their modern counterparts. Better road holding and suspension modern bikes may have, but I defy anyone to ride a modern machine for more than two hours without a long rest to relieve aches and pains; on the *Matchless* we could ride for as long as there was fuel in the tank, and with no discomfort. Mind you, November to March was a funny time for schemes, thank goodness we didn't do too many of those - but motorcycling did become a bit of a chore in those winter months.

Winter 1952/53 was very cold, even by German standards. My Army motorcycling gear was sea-boot stockings, DR boots and breeches; a thick 'woollie-pullie', BD top; a DR helmet (the old cork type, not steel), Mk 8 goggles, scarf and two thin pairs of gloves (warmer than one thick pair and a better feel). Over all this, if it rained, I wore my civvy *Belstaff* trials coat, a really long affair like those cowboy dust coats, and absolutely rainproof. They can still be obtained today. If it was dry, again over all my gear, I wore a tank suit, courtesy of 6 RTR QM and dear old Trevor O'Callaghan, now with the LAD. This was a one-piece bit of kit, with zippers from ankle to shoulder on both sides, and a flap which hung down at the back and was brought forward between the legs and then also

zipped up to the neck. (Or something like that anyway!) The outer layer was made up of a cotton fabric material, similar to a light-weight tent; it was lined with good old khaki worsted battledress material. It was bulky, not very warm and certainly not rainproof, but was reasonably windproof. However at -14 degrees C or less, plus the wind-chill factor when travelling at 40 mph plus, no fabric issued by the British Army in those days would keep the cold out for long. With all this clobber, plus a *Sten* gun and/or pistol, no wonder all the locals stared when I stomped into a gasthaus for a much-needed warm! Not for long though - if one could put up with Teutonic jests and advice on how to survive on the Russian front, they'd usually provide schnapps or a brandy or two during the thawing process! With all this clothing, most of the sub-zero air could be kept out, except for a narrow strip of exposed forehead, about half an inch, and just where the sinel cavities are. The pain as one thawed out was unbelievable. It must have been during our first Christmas, on reflection, as I remember going to the MO on Christmas Eve '*in extremis*'. He gave me codeine and ephedrine, and together with *Cointreau*, brandy and *Isenleck* (our local brew), the pain subsided somewhat. Fifty-six years on, cold winds will still affect the sinuses, but at least modern motorcycle helmets keep the head warm.

Wives and families

On the domestic front, the wives of the temporary living-in members began to arrive; quarters were at first in requisitioned German houses and flats, very nice, but as purpose-built quarters (not so nice) became available, the families moved somewhat reluctantly into them. Consequently, the living-in strength of the Sgts' Mess was drastically reduced, and the evenings became quieter, as the level of social drinking dropped. On the other hand, weekends were busier, as the newly arrived wives were fully intent on (a) accompanying their husbands to the Mess to see what they'd been getting up to in their absence; (b) improving the 'social' life as they knew it - dances, tombola, and drinking inordinate amounts of gin and orange; and (c) checking out the activities of the single Mess members. A slight change of lifestyle then, but not all bad. Some of the wives were motherly towards us, some felt that they had to save us from the frauleins of Hamm, whilst a small minority felt that the single members (about twelve of us all told) constituted a major stumbling block in their determination to turn the Mess into a wives' club!

Brad became a reformed character when his wife, Dorothy, arrived. Of course, he popped in for the odd drink or two, but no more late nights at the *Kanone*. He had taken the wise precaution of

telling all his miner mates - of whom I wrote earlier - that he could seldom, if ever, visit the *Kanone* again - and certainly never between the hours of 02.00 and 04.00, because his wife was arriving and he would be returning to the bosom of his family. This was accepted with sorrow and resignation by his chums, and all was sweetness and light in the Bradley home; until after about 14 days, Dorothy was awakened by an unholy commotion beneath her bedroom at about 3 am. Thinking that WWII had started, she leapt out of bed, opened the window and looked down into the street. There, under the lamppost (where else?) were about twenty very intoxicated miners, chanting in unison, "*Ve vant Herr Bradley, ve vant Herr Bradley!*" It was a very, very long time before the sweetness returned to Brad's life!

By now, I was twenty-five years of age but still socially dysfunctional; easily embarrassed, I wasn't comfortable with the environs of domesticity. Well-meaning friends would invite me to their homes for supper or Sunday lunch, and it was extremely difficult to admire babies, bond with small children or make conversation with the older ones. Somehow, I also found it impossible to decline an invitation. I just could not say 'No', even if I didn't really want to go, or had a good excuse not to. Perhaps it was because I was taught by my parents to believe that 'a refusal often offends'. This state of affairs came to a head that first Christmas. I was invited to Christmas dinner by both Brad and our ECE ASM, Pete Davis, our 1 Platoon Commander. How on earth did I come to accept both? The terrible day dawned and I was in agonies of apprehension. What to do? Go sick? Desert? Just not turn up? In the end, I made probably the worst decision of all - I went to both! First to Pete and Lily Davis. I knew they'd eat before Brad, as Pete wouldn't be delayed at the Mess bar. I gobbled down my food, left asap and I'm sure very rudely; rushed round to Brad's house where they'd been waiting for me - the reception was as cool as the turkey! So - I had possibly the worst day of my life and spoiled the day of two good friends. Naturally, I never told either of them what I'd done, but obviously they knew within 24 hours or so when they met at work. Being good guys, they never mentioned it to me at all, nor did their wives, ever. To this day, I don't know whether they thought I was just a greedy pig or a hopeless buffoon!

The Black Shadow

In spite of all the social problems, however, life was extremely good. Work was great and sport (Rugby REME BAOR and Armd Div) was thriving; but above all was the total enjoyment of my real hobby, motorcycling. From the first days in Hamm, pinned to the wall over my bed was an

engineering drawing of a motorcycle I'd fantasised about, but thought I could never own - a Series III *Vincent Black Shadow* - the 'fastest production in the world' as the advert said. Price - £408 - a year's disposable income. Suddenly came a 'bolt from the blue' - there was a way! There was a little money in the POSB (Post Office Savings Book) from the sale of the AC and the *Ariel* scramblers; the *Velocette* KTT could be sold, and the rest on HP. Problem - no HP was available for single soldiers overseas for things like motorcycles; how could the vendor snatch it back if payments failed? Solution - good old father! Fired with enthusiasm, I rang mother and explained the situation. If Dad could take out the HP agreement and take on the monthly payments, I'd send him, in turn, the necessary money orders. After the panic caused by the telephone call - I'd never, ever, rung home before - they thought I had been injured or something! After Mum's blandishments, the old boy came up trumps and agreed to go along with the whole thing, albeit reluctantly. He knew me only too well!

The machine was duly ordered from *Conway Motors* at Shepherds Bush and I went home on leave to collect it, and to reassure Dad that all would be well. On arrival at *Conway's*, this seemingly huge black brute was wheeled out; totally black, apart from cadmium-plated bolts and bits and chromium-plated exhaust pipes - it was beautiful. "*Have you ridden one before?*" asked the mechanic. "*No*", was my reply. Then came one of those 'Humphs'. After showing me round the bike, it was time to go. It should be explained that the gear ratios gave 60 mph in 1st, 90mph in 2nd, 110 mph in 3rd and over 125mph in 4th, the top gear. Not bad for the early fifties, but commonplace now. Anyway, with just a few rpm, I very gently let in the feather-light but fierce clutch, and wham! It was off down the road at what seemed frightening speed, in a series of swoops and jerks as I adjusted to the ultra-sensitive controls. At least that's how they seemed to me, after having to 'wring the neck' of Army (and civilian) machines to get anywhere at all. With a huge dual-seat and softish rear suspension, it was like being on a rocket-fired mattress, compared with the old *Matchless* waiting for me back in Hamm. A beautiful ride up the A1 to Market Deeping (yet another new home!) and I was beginning to understand what I'd really got. Even father was suitably impressed with what was really his new bike - financially anyway.

That leave came to an end and it was off to Harwich on the *Vincent*; the bike to be booked for Hamburg and me back to Hamm, via the Hook, on the leave train. I don't know why I didn't ride it back to Germany using a normal cross-channel

ferry; but anyway two or three days after my return I scrounged a lift with an OFP truck that was going to Hamburg for stores, and made my way to the docks. There I found the *Vincent* waiting for me, supremely alone in a vast warehouse and gleaming proudly, with not a single scratch - even the tools and tyre-pump hadn't been stolen. The purpose of the preceding rigmarole is to set (after describing possibly the worst day of my life) the background for probably the best. From Hamburg to Hamm, via the 'military' route through Soltau, Celle, Hanover and Bielefeld was about 250 miles. It is probably 50 miles less now with the 'new' network of autobahns; then, there was only one - from Hanover to the Ruhr, passing about five miles from Hamm. It was still pretty much bomb-damaged, with huge uneven layers of quickly-laid concrete here and there. Not as bad as the Hamburg-Hanover road though, with huge pot-holes and uneven or missing cobblestones in urban areas.

Be that as it may, it was out of the Hamburg docks on a beautiful day; gingerly through the town, then at last an open road to Soltau (cobblestones), more open road through Celle to Hanover. The ride was rough, with the rear suspension often bottoming out with a crash, but the power and speed of the machine was awesome when compared with any other ridden by me. Then on to the autobahn and, on a glorious October day in 1952, my close relationship with the *Vincent* marque really began. It was about 120 miles from Hanover to Hamm, and it was possible to really get the feel of the machine; acceleration, braking, cruising speed (about 80 mph was what the machine liked, at this speed the twist grip was just barely off the idling stop), and then as near to maximum as was sensible on an unfamiliar and

uneven concrete road; over 110 mph, and still plenty of throttle left, but not a lot of bottle! Well, first run and all that. It was exhilarating, exciting and, at the end of the autobahn section at the Hamm exit, unnerving. We all know that after a long spell at high speed, judgement of low speed fails. What seems like 40mph is nearer 60mph - and so it turned out to be! All was OK on the first bit of the exit, a straight downhill piece; then - oh dear - a long, long sweeping left hand curve back under the autobahn to join the Soest - Hamm road - about 200 degrees more or less and getting tighter all the time! The *Vincent* was over as far as it would go without losing it, everything was shut except my eyes, brakes were feathered, but we were rapidly running out of road even though it was well-banked. At the last moment, the road straightened and I joined the Hamm road like a cork out of a bottle! However, it didn't spoil the best day of my life!

Back to the real world, then, but with wide horizons for leisure time from now on. A day trip to the Rhine Valley was a piece of cake - or rather a litre or so of *Rheinwein*! Drinking and riding went hand-in-hand in the fifties, but careful riding was the order of the day when inebriated. Adrenaline requirements were saved for a good low-traffic motorcycling roads and/or the rugby field when sober and clear-headed!

Mike Larby 42C

The final part of Mike's epic story will appear in the next OBAN. Ed

A Grand Day Out. [or] Friends in high places

It was the first time I could "walk out" . I think it was after Sunday church parade on my 6th week at Aborfield (may have been a bit longer?)

Anyway, my sister Rose was married to Vic Atkinson, then a WO1 in the R.E.M.E. stationed in Oxford. [Lots more about them in later articles]

The arrangement was that Vic and Rose would pick me up outside the guardroom at about 10.30am after church parade. In the event it was nearly 11.00 by the time I had passed dress inspection by the "Jobs-worth" R.P. and me in my best "Bulled" B.D.'s.

It came as a bit of a surprise to find Vic driving an ancient Vauxhall Cresta [if my memory serves me right] - but it turns out his own car was off the road, so he had resorted to a hire car ["Really cheap deal, Mike but a good motor"].

Off we headed down to Leigh Park, [ten miles north of Portsmouth], the Shepherd's ancestral home on the [then] largest council estate in Europe. Big proud hugs from Dad, tears from Mum [so where's the laundry?], and down to the 'Greyhound' for a beer or three, before Mum's traditional Sunday Roast. O.K. so I was only 15 and a bit, but in those days anyone in uniform serving Queen and Country must be of legal age, or it might be that the Landlord turned a blind eye as, after all, I was only drinking mild.

I was probably on my third pint when it happened!! It was my shout. Vic accompanied me to the bar to help carry the drinks back to the table, when he noticed that I had loosened my tie. "Do your tie up soldier, your improperly dressed", he said, sotto voce. "Sod off Vic, I'm off duty", I said. "Soldier

you're in uniform, do your tie up!!" "B@*&£\$k's" I replied. Next thing I know, he has me stood to attention, calling him sir, and threatening to put me on a charge!!!! Rose went ballistic!!!! Mum and Dad were totally confused, the Landlord was ready to call the police - ... and I was sh*&£\$@g a brick. I did my tie up!!

Lunch and tea over, at 8pm we set off for Arborfield to get me back for 10.30pm. All went well until we got just outside of Bordon. Suddenly the motor started to cough, then came to a sudden halt. Fortunately we were only 100yds from a pub. Vic went in, and, 10 minutes later, came out with an address just round the corner of a guy [ex REME] who had a lock-up fully kitted out as a workshop where Vic could have a go at fixing our motor.

Despite the fact that he was in his best suit, he was soon sans jacket and tie and under the back of the motor. "Rose I need you bra". It turned out that the diaphragm had gone on the electric fuel pump, and Rose's bra [extra wide.... she was 5ft and weighed in at 20 stone], strap material made a fair substitute [my first ever lesson in the art of R.E.M.E. bodging].

By the time we got back on the road, and arrived back at Arborfield, it was now pushing midnight, and I was giving birth in terror.

"Just march in, state your name, rank, and number, and I'll follow you in", said Vic. [perhaps I should mention that Vic was about 6ft 2" and weighed in at a fit 18 Stone]. Just my luck, it was R.P. Corporal "I'll make your life a misery". "ATS Shepherd, 413", I managed to stammer, as I entered the guardroom. There then followed a full 3 minutes of non-stop expletives relating to the dire consequences of me turning up, apparently, reported A.W.O.L., at which point Vic strode into the Guardroom. "And who the hell are you!!!!" [he actually used a more Anglo Saxon word beginning with F], said Cpl-not-very-nice. Casually tossing his I.D. card onto the desk, "WO1 Atkinson R.E.M.E.", said Vic, and there's a Sir attached to that Corporal... while your standing to attention." "I,I,I,I, think I need to get hold of the Duty Officer" stammered the Corporal" who appeared to use the word "Sir" at least 40 times in every breath. Ten minutes later the Duty Officer, a chinless one pip

wonder Rupert turned up. "Whaat seems to be the problem", he squeaked. Vic then re-iterated his status and said "My brother-in law has had a bit of a traumatic day and is now quite tired." He then explained what happened. "I trust there won't be a problem Sir, but if there is, I will be quite happy to discuss this matter with your Commandant, with whom, I believe, I served with at Bordon some years ago.

It was about 1.30am when I walked into the spider. All the lights went on. Everyone expected to find that I was on, at the very least, Company Commander's 'orders' the next morning "You're in deep sh£&^%@t", they chanted gleefully. "Me, I've got friends in high places. No worries" I never heard another word!!!!

N.B I would very much like to hear from anyone who might have served or known Vic and Rose [who are sadly no longer with us]. Unfortunately, I don't have his service number, however, the following is a list of his postings starting from 1958 [roughly on a 2 year rotation - so you will have to work it out for yourselves]:

B.A.O.R. - Duisberg; Cowly, Oxford; Aldershot/Bordon; Cyprus; Hong Kong; Summertown, Oxford [Whilst here Vic did an unaccompanied tour of duty in Thailand building an airstrip for the U.S.A where he invented a machine for cleaning the runway for which he got an article in "Soldier" magazine]; Hanover [Inf workshops, Celle??]; Edinburgh.

Please don't worry if you're experience of serving with Vic is, perhaps, not what you think I might not want to hear, I'm quite happy to hear it, 'warts and all'.

Mike (Drag arse) Shepherd 65C

NEXT TIME: BRECON: THE LAND OF RAIN, SHEEP SHOOTING, DRIED FRUITAND BRETT!!!

AOBA Benevolence Fund.

Please remember that the **Arborfield Old Boys' Association** maintains a **Benevolence Fund**, for the benefit of any Old Boy who may be a member of the association or not. If you know of anyone who is having problems, and you believe a contribution from the fund can be of any help or assistance, please contact the Honorary Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

The Army Apprentice National Memorial (AANM)

Trustees AGM, Annual Memorial Service and Social Evening

The next AGM of the AANM Trust is to be held at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA), Alrewas, Staffordshire at 1000 Hours on Saturday 10 May 2014. Ex-Apprentices are cordially invited to attend. The following day, Sunday 11 May 2014, a memorial service is to be held at 1100 hours on the AANM site within the NMA. Ex-Apprentices are cordially invited to attend.

It will be a Drum-Head service, with our Patron Major- General G.B. Berragan CB and Founding Trustees present, and for the first time, it is hoped to have the standards of the four sponsoring associations of Arborfield, Carlisle, Chepstow and Harrogate on parade.

A social evening is to be held at the Menzies Mickleover Court Hotel, Mickleover, Near Derby, on Saturday 10 May in the form of dinner in Premier 2 Suite 1930 Hours for 2000 Hours. Ex-Apprentices are cordially invited to join the Trustees at this event.

Accommodation has been offered by the hotel as follows:

Dinner, bed&breakfast, £130:00p per double/twin occupancy room.

Dinner, bed & breakfast £94:00p per single occupancy room

Dinner only £26:00p per person

The room rate will also apply on the Friday night should anybody wish to do so.

25 Rooms will be held until 10th March 2014. Bookings after this date will be subject to availability within the hotel.

To book a room contact the reservations manger, Kath Cheetham on 01332 521234 quoting "Army Apprentice National Reunion"

To book in just for a meal contact Events Manager, Sam Vanter on 01332 521642 quoting "Army Apprentice National Reunion". Please note payment is taken when booking for meal only.

The Editor must apologise to Gordon Bonner and the AANM Committee for the late entry of this article. I had to make some very late changes to the last issue of the OBAN, and did not realise the significance of these dates, relevant to the OBAN release date. Please endeavour to attend despite my error. There is also an urgent requirement for Trustees to serve on the AANM Committee. Ed

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 Laurie Blakley, and he will have items available at the reunions.

Ties



Available in original Company Colours
£8 + £1:50 P&P

Also available are a small amount of Blazer Badges @ £10.60 + £1:50 P&P,
Mugs with the AOB badge @ £5.88 + £1:50 P&P
Please contact Laurie for overseas postage costs, and any other enquiries.

Lapel Badges



Very attractive Lapel Badge in Black and Gold
Approximately 25 x 20 mm. £3.50 +
£1:50 P&P

Rhymes of our Tymes

Boys School.

"Boys School". What do you recall of the place?
Where time seemed to move at a lowly snails pace,
Just counting the days till you went off on leave,
To freedom; for some just a temporary reprieve
From the gypping and bullying, too scared to rebel
At that Lancejack who daily was giving you hell.

And the jankers and rodeo which you had incurred
For some minor infringement, considered absurd
By your average civilian with plain common sense,
But which plagued you and made your daily existence
A struggle to keep your morale more or less
Above misery, hunger and sheer helplessness.

Those endless room jobs, the repetitive chores
Of dusting the lampshades, or bumping the floors
With that to-and-fro motion which could drive you insane,
Yet you knew in the morning, you'd do it again
And again and again, until shining and gleaming,
While all that you had was backache, muscles screaming.

But that was just while you were back in your room,
Once out on the square then, the unnerving boom
And ear-splitting scream of some banshees from hell
Had you doubling around until you couldn't tell
Whether coming or going and surely you'd give
Anything for civilian life that you had lived.

And down in the workshops things weren't any better,
All that filing and sawing of metal to get a
Flat surface to scribe on and then make a hole
Which you filed out again, your ultimate goal
Was to fit yet another piece matching the figure
Of what you'd removed, as your blisters grew bigger.

Those three years passed slowly. No. Time didn't fly,
Interminable days dragged as they passed us by,
It seemed we were stuck in a time warp, stagnating,
Existing on six bob a week and debating
As to whether we'd spend it on Zebo or polish
Important decisions which gave us no solace.

At last the day came that we'd yearned for so long,
And the times we'd rehearsed this parade were now done,
We slow marched and wheeled to the tune "Auld Lang Syne",
Making silent self promise that this was the last time
That we'd ever march on that square ever again,
Remembering the blisters, the noise and the rain.
Now, fast-forward five decades, and thoughts idly turn
To those days of your youth. Curiosity burns
In your mind, and you wonder just what happened to
All those roommates who shared your life and you knew
Much better than anyone, even their Mothers,
For you shared a life so much closer than brothers.

And then you remember the great times you had,
All that joking and laughter, and feeling quite sad
That you had lost touch with the spirit you shared

And those friends who had meant so much to you and fared
Along with you, your life with its highs and its lows,
Looking out at you still from those faded photos.

You think of how great those old Christmases were
When the senior ranks, officers all gathered there
To serve up the best meal of the year without doubt,
Roast turkey or chicken, spuds and Brussels sprouts
Followed by mince pies and then Christmas pud,
And felt at that moment that life was so good.

And mornings when gathered to go off on leave,
With pockets crammed full of the money retrieved
From our credits, so flush with the cash that we'd earned,
Those fivers we had that now literally burned
The holes in our pockets, just waiting to spend
As we headed for home to our family and friends.

Yet when you arrived and met up with your mates,
They somehow seemed changed, it was just that innate
Feeling that something was missing you felt,
A sense that what you had, had faded to melt
Into past times now gone from recall, now estranged,
When in truth, they'd not altered, it was you who had changed.

Then it dawned on you slowly that life as you knew it
Was gone, and your new life as you traversed through it
Would hold far more interest than you had foreseen,
When you walked through those gates at the age of fifteen.
For as you learned, gaining experience then,
You had changed, unaware, turned from youths into men.

So look at it once again as the time passes,
And probably you'll feel the need to wear glasses,
While some may have lens with a quite rosy hue,
Others will never feel, as many do,
That our time spent at "Boys School" was not dissipated,
And our formative years there were not ever wasted.

TeeCee

Water Babies. (Parts 3 & 4) By the late West Robertson 50B

Around the middle of 1955, 10 Inf Wksp moved from Korea to Malaya. This was largely a 'paper move' since, initially, no personnel actually arrived. The unit was located in an old pineapple processing plant at Ulu Pandan, some six or so miles north of Johore Bahru in South Malaya, and strength was created by transfers from existing units within the Command and 'postings in' from the UK. It must be supposed that, when asked to release men to this new establishment, a parent unit could hardly be expected to send their best, which may account for myself and one other from 40 Base in Singapore, being the first to arrive! There was no accommodation within the workshop compound so, until this could be created, we were billeted with the workers from 221 Base Ordnance Depot at Majedee Barracks, just a couple of miles from the dubious lights and life of Johore Bahru. Strength gradually increased, CSM Walters arrived, also from 40 Base, and a more regimental regime evolved, which included muster parades. On one such parade, I was informed that I had been selected as an 'engine driver' and should await the results of a forthcoming event. And that event forth came! Sixteen men were dragged from their benches to form a detachment. A cook, complaining bitterly, was evicted from the Ordnance kitchen to join us. We were told to collect our kit, draw weapons and ammunition, then to regroup outside the billets. Calling my unhappy men to attention at the approach of the CSM, we anxiously awaited details about just what was expected from us. On my right wrist, a leather strap carried the two brass chevrons of a sub-Corporal. But, not yet twenty years old, I almost wished they were not there!

"The 120 men who run the water works, which supplies Singapore with the majority of its water, have decided to go on strike", began our briefing. *"It does not appear that the strike will be settled quickly, so you will be required to run the water works, while the opposing sides argue. Any questions?"* I can only blame my youth for failing to equate my sixteen men with the 120 we were to replace, or perhaps I was more concerned with the thought of the engine I was supposed to drive! It now appeared that I was about to take command of a body of men, and to take them deep within a jungle reputedly teeming with bandits, or CTs (communist terrorists) - or whatever else you'd like to call them! As if by some mysterious cue, a truck then appeared, closely followed by a *Ferret* scout car as escort. Kit and bodies piled aboard, magazines were filled (but not fitted to our weapons) and the journey began. First down the tarmac road towards Kota Tinggi, then off onto a laterite track, which passed first through a rubber plantation and then into all-encompassing jungle,

until we eventually reached the waterworks. Two men waited to greet us; one was the British manager, the other his Eurasian second-in-command. All others had elected to leave that remote and rather dangerous place, especially now that the Brits had arrived!

There was little about the place that would encourage tourists. Jungle had been cleared from a ten-acre site, close by the banks of a river, while a chain-link fence enclosed the property. One huge building, consisting of corrugated sheets strapped to a metal frame, stood alongside a dozen concrete water filter beds. A number of smaller buildings were visible and included the superior bungalows of our two hosts. Another concrete structure marked the end of the filter beds, then gently entered the bowels of the earth, not to reappear until seen on the causeway linking Singapore with Malaya.

Was there a touch of embarrassment about the manager, as he led us to the huge building and explained that this was the only accommodation he could offer? Perhaps! Three large diesel-driven generators took up most of the space, but there was room for us to spread ourselves and our kit on the floor inside the door. There were no beds and we hadn't brought any bedding, so it looked likely that we would suffer more gravel rash than bedsores. The cook, still sulking, selected a corner, then piled his boxes of compo into a defensive barrier, in anticipation that his offerings might cause offence. Leaving the men to settle in, I withdrew to go into conference with the manager, this being the sort of thing I had seen commanders do - but all the while, dreading the appearance of the engine I might have to drive!

Two glasses, already brim full with whisky, awaited our attention. A couple of drops of water were added to each from a personal osmosis system, which struck me as odd, coming as it did from a man who was supposed to supply millions of others with good water, and our duties were roughly outlined. The main body of men would be required to clean filter beds and to strip, clean, re-assemble and adjust each of the three massive diesel/electric generators in turn, one of which was already almost stripped. It was the work on these generators which gave rise to my title of 'engine driver', a subterfuge to confuse any CT spy who might have got an inkling as to what was going on. The ruse must have worked to a certain extent, because they had picked me, an Instrument Mech., to fill the post. Who says *"You can't fool all of the people all of the time?"*

Getting down to work

Breakfast that first morning couldn't have been too bad, for I can remember no great outburst of protest, or having to search for the battered body of the cook! The workers were already organised into two teams of eight, and had decided on who would work where. The manager appeared, to give instructions to the engine builders, his 2 I/C to issue long-handled rakes and give guidance on how to clean a filter bed. Wandering into the office that was to be my domain, a console winked sexually at me, its red light demanding attention. Finding a switch marked 'Off/On', flicking it produced a squawk in a distorted language I could not comprehend. I left to get the rake instructor! There followed a short, sharp two-minute briefing on how to operate the communication console and how to test the water output. Then, after a few details about 'this and that', the assistant manager left to join his striking workforce, leaving myself in charge of the safety of an awful lot of drinking water! It also caused a bit of concern regarding the manning of this particular position, since it was supposed to be a twenty-four hour, seven-day requirement - no mention of this in the briefing! Here perhaps, I should detail just what was required from my minuscule command. The three engines were deployed in rotation. One generated electrical power, to supply the pumps that both drew water from the river and sent it onward to Singapore, plus, of course, all internal station electrical components. The second was on immediate stand-by should any problem arise, while the third was being stripped and overhauled. On completion of servicing and after testing, the machine went to standby and the first engine was prepared for overhaul - a never-ending cycle. The filter beds received water from the river and were deep gravel lined. Beds were inter-connected so that water could flow through the gravel lining to be filtered in a second and subsequent bed. It was possible to isolate a bed, so that dirty water could be flushed back to the river. From the dozen or so beds, four were allocated for cleaning at any one time. The cleaning process involved standing waist-deep in water and raking the gravel until the water ran clear. Four men would take two days, and often more, to clean a bed. Considering that the locals put up to fifteen men to a bed, that's good going.

The tasks were physically demanding, filter cleaning in particular, where the sun beat strongly down, burning naked backs, while the constant immersion in water caused the skin to go wrinkly from the waist down. The persistent manipulation of rakes was achingly monotonous and boring, while all of the time was a consciousness that a shot could come from the surrounding jungle. Within a few days it became obvious that working an eight-hour shift each day could not meet the

demands of output, so hours were doubled, teams alternating with duties. In all of my subsequent career, I never felt so bad as when I had to work these men so hard, but I could get no additional men. Even when I had to return men who were too sick to continue, replacements were given with reluctance. Only on my return to camp did I find the reason, but that is not for me to talk about here.

There was a multitude of niggling little jobs arising daily, each demanding time for which I had none to spare, including security. Whenever possible, I would walk the perimeter fence, my SMG readily visible, and hope that nothing untoward would arise since, by now, my walk was becoming more 'zombie like'. A figure crouched, partially hidden by the base of a tree, then I located a second then a third. Weapons held low, they seemed menacing but not immediately threatening. The lethargy was gone. I was a couple of yards from the fence and forty from the nearest cover. If I ran, and they fired, the others would be warned; if I stayed, we could all be in trouble! Then a voice called in English, "*Who the hell are you?*" Formalities over, the British Officer, on patrol with a platoon of Gurkha soldiers, expressed amazement and concern that he had not been informed about our detachment. He then assured me that there were no reports of CT activity in our area, but would keep a vigilant eye and ear open, just in case. It was some time later that I realised that no-one in authority had thought it might be nice to have someone watch our backs! Ah well, there were only 120 unhappy workers, their family and friends, probably no more than a thousand people who could have spread the word that there were easy pickings not too far from home.

So the days continued. When possible, we slept on sheets of cardboard salvaged from the compo boxes, so tired that the roar of the engine alongside became a lullaby. We ate our tinned rations three times a day, with little energy left to complain. But there was a spirit about these youngsters that rose above the tribulations we were facing; a spirit that nourished such a feeling of pride within me, I just knew we would succeed. By the end of the second week it became necessary to back-load three or four of my men, with ulcerated legs, cracked, burned and bleeding backs and skin infections from the oil on the engines. Before the month had passed, more were to go and those who remained were in a sorry state, with replacements soon matching the originals. On the twenty-ninth day, I was informed that the strike was over and that we could return to camp the next day. It would be nice to say that the month had been recognized for what it was. A monumental task, undertaken by young men who suffered, if not in silence, with a will not to be beaten. We maintained the water output and ensured that power was available when

required, and we did it without proclamation or hope of reward. Whether or not the civil authorities acknowledged our efforts to the military, I do not know - but the military certainly made no comment! The area was cleaned up, a fire made of the cardboard mattresses, and we formed up into an almost military looking squad, readily visible to the returning workers who watched us with some dismay, possibly touched with admiration. A truck and escort from the 11th Hussars arrived to transport us home, and we left with little regret.

The aftermath

The truck bumped and rattled along the laterite track but, after the water works, nobody seemed to care. Then we pulled in to Majedee Barracks and the men were offloaded. Using the authority I had held for the duration of the detachment, I stood the men down until the Monday morning, it now being about mid-day Friday. I stayed with the truck and requested the driver to take me to the workshop, so that I could report the task completed and the men returned to barracks, arriving there just after lunch break. I met the CSM halfway across the workshop compound and duly reported my presence, only to be interrupted by a voice calling loudly from the office veranda, demanding to know just who I was, and what was my business. Looking up towards the voice, there stood a Major, stocky, with a black and heavy moustache bristling upon his upper lip. I was not to know that he was the OC, recently arrived from Korea, one of the few who did. On being informed of who I was and why I was there, he demanded to know where the rest of my men were. I was to see that pudgy face go red on many future occasions, but was not prepared for the rage he flew into when he was informed that I had so blatantly awarded some men free time. Among the spittle and decipherable words emitting from that angry mouth, I gleaned enough to know that he was not happy and furthermore, gave orders to get my men back to work immediately. I returned to the barracks.

Sometimes, when the brain is tired, odd thoughts arrive, even rational ones can appear unjust, but sometimes there can be no doubt. My first stop was at the Medical Centre, where I demanded that the MO immediately accompany me to check on that body of men that I had previously so maltreated. He was not happy at my demeanour, but as a practising physician, possibly realised that something had occurred that required his attention, so agreed. Each man was examined in turn, all were bedded down until the following Monday and a few were required to report then for further treatment. Satisfied that there was nothing else I could do for my men, I then decided to do something to protect myself. Making my way to the Guardroom, I requested from the Regimental Police an *Army Form 252*, which is of course, a charge sheet, and charged myself with '*Failure to comply with a direct order*', then placed myself in close

arrest. There was a bit of a to-do with the RPs, as to whether or not I could do this, but I pushed past them, found a cell, and went to sleep on the most comfortable bed I had had for a month.

Technically, I was now the property of the Ordnance Corps, since I was in their jail. But not only did they not know what to do, they didn't want me either. A quick phone-call to the Adjutant brought him running; he glanced at my recumbent body and called the MO. The doctor must have explained my circumstances to the Adjutant. After assuring him that I was only asleep, not dead, he managed to wake me, slapped some cream on my more obvious hurting bits, then bedded me down for three days. I made my way to my bunk and fell into the deep sleep of the righteous. The Adjutant took the easy way out by dismissing all charges. Came Sunday morning and bustling activity along the corridor outside my bunk woke me. I rose to find out what was happening and found that all hands were required to work, but not normal duties. The OC demanded that signs must be produced for all sections and offices within the workshop compound, and that a large sign should be constructed and erected outside the main gate, so that the world at large could know who was operating within. Fearful that my recovering detachment might be included, I rose and successfully fought my corner, but offered my own battered body to an unsympathetic CSM. (In fact there was no great will to work by him, or any other, that Sunday morning.)

So the day passed. We were trucked the four miles to the workshop. Signs were made and painted, then screwed to all appropriate doors and openings, some less appropriate than others. And when the final screw was tightened, I used my last few remaining drops of paint to award the only tree within the compound its REME colours! Picking a position from which I could see, but hopefully not be seen, as did about everyone else that Monday morning, I watched the car arrive. There was a pause as the sign outside the gate was studied, then into the compound and the OC dismounted. Casually he looked around until his gaze fell upon the 'REME' tree. His moustache bristled with enough energy to lift his cap, his face turned puce and, when able, he screamed a single word. **"ROBERTSON!"**

Emerging from my refuge, my mind working furiously as it searched for a plausible lie, I watched that terrible figure stride towards me. "*Sir?*" I replied, denial about to drop like honey from my tongue, sure that I could evade detection. And I might have done if, at that moment, my semi-tame monitor lizard, all seven feet of him, had not decided to come to my defence, waddling from my erstwhile hiding-place like the prehistoric monster he so closely resembled, and proudly wearing matching colours! So began our love/hate relationship - except that there was no love - which lasted for about the next two years!

An Arabian nightmare Pt4 by the late West Robertson 50B

The truck trundled on. We were supposed to turn from our present course along the coast at the junction of an oil-pipe, a place that had a local name but which, among other things, I have now long forgotten. Even if we found the junction, and whether or not it was before or after we stumbled across an encampment of genuine Bedouins, now escapes me. These wild, wandering Arabs, black tents strewn haphazardly some thirty yards from the shore, were apparently enjoying some sort of celebration. Between thirty and forty men, brandishing an array of weapons, were firing at a couple of planks stuck in the sand on the foreshore. There were men lying, men kneeling, men sitting and men standing as they shot, but whichever position adopted, it made little difference to the accuracy. The safest place to be would have been sitting on a target!

Now serving as 'Instrument Inspector, Middle East Land Forces', with Technical Services, Aden, my beat was far-ranging, and included 'Courtesy Inspections' of friendly forces, amongst whom the Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS) were numbered. It had been the practice during previous visits, for the Weapons and Vehicle inspectors to tour the TOS camps, or 'Forts' as they like to call them, while the Inst and Tels inspection was carried out in Sharjah, the equipment being brought in. Pete Barlow, the Tels man, and myself saw days of boredom ahead, so borrowing a three-ton truck, we decided to test our desert navigation skills - we would also tour the Forts. So it was that we were searching for the junction and found the Arab shenanigans.

We must have found the junction, or been somewhere close, for the Fort eventually appeared and we checked what little kit they had before we went to sleep that night. Trusting an arm pointing in the general direction of our next port of call, we were on our way quite early next morning. By now we had learned to turn the steering-wheel before changing down a gear, in case we were pushing sand, and adjusted to the lack of indicators or any assistance in route finding. By about mid-morning, we spotted some tracks that appeared to heading in our required general direction, but they soon became lost in the soft and blowing sand, so I chose to take a higher route across a solid looking dune.

Carried on the wind, calling voices drifted towards us and there, some one hundred yards ahead and about twenty below, stood two stone pillars forming a gateway. A small stone house seemed an integral part of the right-hand pillar and further ahead, a wooden shack completed the apparent

habitation. A few trees and palms created a picturesque and peaceful setting, peaceful except for the three wildly gesticulating and shouting men, one of whom had possession of a rifle and was pointing it in our direction! Recalling the 'accuracy' of yesterday's men, and thinking that he might have been intending to hit some wandering camel or such-like, which was out of my line of vision and so put us in jeopardy, I turned down the hill. We drove through the gateway, much to the satisfaction of the men guarding this crossing - but just what it represented, I had no idea. Glad of an excuse to leave the cab for a minute or two, we went walkabout and discovered that the larger hut was a place of refreshment, offering succour to weary travellers. Reaching for a large black succulent date, I was somewhat alarmed to have it suddenly turn into a multitude of black flies, which dispersed at the approach of my hand, to reveal the most miserable tiny brown specimen of a date that I have ever seen. There was no way however, that we could refuse the small glasses of sweet black coffee without causing offence, remembering in time to expect the bottom inch to be sludge. Sitting within this building were three more Arab men and they wore, or partially at least, the dress of the TOS.

The three were in fact Scouts, returning from leave, and by good fortune they were heading for the Fort we were hoping to find. Just how long they had spent at that lonely post waiting for a lift, or how long they were prepared to wait, certainly brought our own ideas of 'travelling time' into perspective. Two had a smattering of English, while the third was quite fluent. Claiming to be suitably refreshed, we climbed again into the cab and, with our three passengers now aboard, continued on our way. Pete was driving now and soon the way became firm, with scant scrub dotted about. Some type of small antelope, bounding like a *Disney* character, sought distance and refuge as we passed, and in that same distance, a gnarled but sturdy tree stood proud within the miserable shrubbery. We were in the Wadi Shameena.

The apparition

Parked in the shade of the tree, the aroma of a more familiar coffee teasing our nostrils and taste buds, with a tin of 'compo' fruit cake arranged in neat slices across a pristine plate, we rested. Nothing moved, not a breeze stirred the branches above us, nor a bird chirped its melody. Hardly a fly sought to join our repast and no wisp of cloud dared to challenge the supremacy of that burning sun. Then, from nowhere, an apparition in rags appeared, his shrill voice slashing through

the tranquillity like a chainsaw in a forest. The sun had baked and dried him, turning his flesh into tanned leather, and what few teeth he retained were at risk, as a staccato of words shot from a quivering mouth in a never-ending stream. The offer of coffee and cake seemed to temporarily placate him, for he reverted to almost normal conversation in Arabic, although it involved much swinging of arms, with the Scouts.

Sitting with Pete, somewhat away from our chattering Arab companions, we listened, much as an opera-goer does, admiring the melody but completely lost as to what is going on. But it became obvious that we were being included in whatever was being discussed. More often, that wildly gesturing arm would be flung in our direction, there was a touch of lechery in that three-toothed grin and the TOS were having trouble refraining from laughter. Reaching into my pocket for a packet of cigarettes, I hardly had time to extract one before an outstretched, claw-like hand was thrust before me. Lighting his before my own, I hoped he would go away, but having taken just a couple of puffs as if to test the quality, he seemed satisfied and doused it, secreting the remains somewhere within the rags hanging loosely about his person. Again that wizened hand was thrust at me, demanding more, so knowing that there were only four or five left in the packet, I tossed it to him.

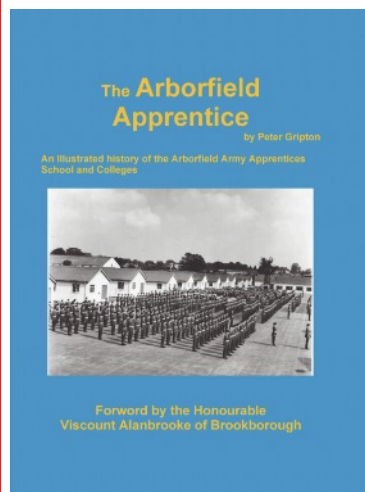
Rejoining his TOS allies, the contents of the packet were examined and an almighty alternation erupted. Fists like pickled walnuts were waved, in as close to a threatening attitude as he could muster. Words that, had they been in English, would have had Anglo-Saxon origins, shot towards me with deadly intent. I had had enough. *"Tell that old devil that if he carries on like that much longer, I will take back the cigarettes I have given him"*. Silence! Consternation! Resignation! A

muted, almost whispered conversation and then, as mysteriously as he had arrived, so our visitor disappeared.

There was no great rush to depart, the Fort we were assured, was only a couple of hours drive from here, so we relaxed with another brew and to finish my smoke, but there was something amusing our TOS companions which they seemed loath to share. When I enquired as to why the old man got so angry, they just laughed, but when I persisted, suggesting they might like to walk the rest of the way, an explanation was eventually revealed. The old man had a daughter and it was time for her to be married off. He was offering so many goats and so many chickens, a suitable tent to be erected under this very tree, and sundry other goods. The TOS had suggested that I might be willing and when the cigarettes were offered, the deal was made. The anger was at the quantity - he considered his daughter worth more than the packet had contained, but when he saw I would not increase my offer, he accepted, and even now, was on his way to collect the girl and would return shortly!

Had two American *Skyhawks* appeared in the sky, we could not have made a more hasty departure from that tranquil spot in the Wadi Shameena. Inspection completed, we returned to Aden and when the bullets and grenades became too thick to bear, we went home. My thoughts oft return to that dried up Wadi, seeing my flocks too numerous to count. They linger on a dusky maiden, who scans that dusty horizon for a husband she never knew; or they see the laughing children tend the flocks and wonder if a touch of Highland brogue tinged that Arabic wail! Should you pass that way, feel free to sup from my generous cup, roast a fatted kid, and rest below those spreading branches of a tree of life that never was, but please, do not disclose my whereabouts!

Arborfield Old Boys' Association Web Shop



Edition Two of The Arborfield Apprentice by Peter Gripton. Includes the 'Final Chapter' written by Peter after the college closure. It is a MUST for all Arborfield Apprentices whether they joined in 1939 or any time up to it's closure in 2004.

Available from the Webshop, £30.00 plus postage and packing .

Or

Lulu buy now image html code
<http://www.lulu.com/commerce/index.php?fBuyContent=13935110> ×img
http://static.lulu.com/images/services/buy_now_buttons/en/book_blue.gif?20131122144021
border="0" alt="Support

A Sombre Reunion by Robert Bradley 42A

*...there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England
(Rupert Brooke)*

We are constantly being reminded of the Holocaust, there's even an international memorial day, but little if anything about atrocities perpetuated by the Jews.

True, the victims who may have been involved were less in number than those killed in the Holocaust but, as it says in the Bible, 'not a sparrow falls without God knowing it.' I have good reason to remember one who was murdered by Jews – memories that were vividly recalled when I visited Israel in November 1994.

The purpose of my visit was to gather information for a report on the country's printing and packaging industries. To that end I had the support of local agents who took me to see their principals' equipment in production at their customers' plants as well as a public relations agency which worked for the UK company who had commissioned the survey.

On the first day, Peter Nelke took me to two packaging companies in the vicinity of Haifa and Acre. In foul weather, blustery rain showers, we drove up the motorway from Tel Aviv. En route we passed road signs to Nathaniya. "That's where a friend of mine was murdered," I remarked. Peter was quiet for a moment and then asked:

"Was he one of the Sergeants in the orchard?"

"Why yes," I replied. "How did you know?"

"It's not forgotten," he said quietly.

That was strange because Peter was a German national. He ran his company with his Israeli wife but, because he did not have a resident's permit, had to leave the country after three months and return to Germany for four weeks before being allowed back into Israel.

The rest of the week I worked my way successfully through the programme thanks to the helpers. After work on Friday, having a drink in the bar of my hotel with the couple who had been escorting me around that day, I was asked:

"What are your plans for the Sabbath? Will you go sightseeing in Jerusalem?"

Replying, I explained that I was not an avid tourist as far as sightseeing was concerned. When visiting a country my interests in order of precedence were the people – their lifestyle, religions, etc – the land's history, especially where the British or our family had been involved, and then, if time remained, the sights. But on the morrow I hoped to visit a friend.

"You have a friend here?" they exclaimed with some surprise. "Where is he?"

"In Ramla."

"But that's an Arab town," they cried in bewilderment.

To relieve their anxiety I explained:

"In the cemetery. He was murdered in 1947."

They told me that Ramla was a small town some 20 km south-east of the hotel and advised me to go to the information desk for instructions as how to travel there. That I did.

Greeting the young lady at the desk, I asked how I could get to Ramla. Her instant reaction was: "But that's an Arab town!"

Reassuringly I told her of my mission.

She became very solicitous: "You take a bus at the stop in front of the hotel to the bus station in Tel Aviv. There you take the bus to Ramla. God Speed!"

Next morning I left my room and took the lift down to the lobby – ensuring that it was not the Sabbath one because that stopped at all floors so that Orthodox Jews observing the Sabbath did not have to press a button, thereby breaking the 'no work on the Sabbath' edict.

The scene outside the hotel was bleak: no traffic at all, only rubbish whirling around in the chilling wind blasting in from the Mediterranean Sea on the other side of the road. No bus came, maybe they didn't run often on the Sabbath. When a taxi hove in sight, I flagged it down and requested the driver to take me to the bus station. "Where are you going from there?" he enquired. "Ramla". He looked rather surprised but, regaining his composure, he volunteered to take me there. Having agreed the fare, we got underway. Since the Dan Panorama Hotel is on the southern outskirts of Tel Aviv, we were soon in Jaffa. Winding our way up through the narrow streets of the ancient town we eventually joined the main road.

Up to then the driver, a thick-set, swarthy, middle-aged man with five-o'clock shadow, had concentrated silently at the wheel. Once clear of the town, he turned his head and asked: "Ramla is an Arab town. Why do you want to go there?" Once again I explained that a friend from my youthful days had been murdered in 1947 and was buried in Ramla cemetery. After a while, when that had sunk in, he swivelled his body to look directly at me and said: "You very good man. You remember your friend." Pause. "You go to heaven." Since he'd had his eyes off the road for some time, I could have gone there and then but fortunately there was not a single vehicle coming our way.

He was silent for the rest of the drive along the road through the desolate arid landscape until we entered Ramla, a ramshackle, unkempt and unattractive town. Drawing up in an open dusty square which was obviously the market place, he asked whether I had directions to the cemetery. I had obtained those beforehand from the Common-

wealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and knew that we had first to head for the jail. As he did not know where that was, I suggested that he should go and ask the driver of one of the taxis parked at the edge of the square. Gingerly leaving the safe haven of his cab, that he did.

As it happened, the jail, a fortress-like building, was in the vicinity. Having driven the length of its overbearing massive wall, we turned left on to a dirt-track and made our way through a dilapidated industrial estate into open country. Ahead of us, down in a hollow, nestled an oasis of greenery framed by tall cypress trees – the cemetery. Coming to a halt near the entrance gate, the driver expressed the hope that I would find my friend.

Entering the enclosure, I was struck by the size of the cemetery; containing around 6000 burials, it is in fact the largest of the CWGC cemeteries in Israel and Gaza and, like all the CWGC cemeteries I've visited in different countries, is impeccably maintained. In need of guidance, I followed the 'office' signs to a wooden hut in the far corner to my left. Inside, the lady behind the counter, an archetype Yiddisher momma, returned my greeting perfunctorily

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"Could you please direct me to the grave of Sergeant Clifford Martin which I believe is number 9.J.20".

"Come with me."

Stepping outside she pointed her hand diagonally across to the distant far corner of the grounds. As I set off, she shouted to an old man working at a grave in that direction. "The gardener will take you to the plot," she called to me more kindly.

Catching up with the gardener, I gave him the plot number and we walked together in silence except for the squelching sound from our footsteps. The grass we walked on was most unusual in that it had upright blade-like leaves; the ground beneath was soft and wet giving the effect of walking on a sponge. Breaking the silence he asked:

"Why do you visit that grave?"

"He was a friend from my army days."

"He was one of the two killed at Nathaniya, wasn't he?"

"That's right."

Stopping at a grave the old man said in a hushed tone: "Here's your friend."

I scanned the inscription on the headstone. A cold shiver ran down my spine at the sight of the number: as with all our intake at the Army Technical School, Arborfield, it began with 2547 but eerily it was only 30 higher than mine. It recalled the old soldiers' philosophical attitude to sudden death:

"When your number's up..."

"If it's got your number on"



Then, through the mists of time, images of Cliff emerged. I first met him in the isolation ward of the School's hospital when I succumbed to the outbreak of mumps which was inexorably creeping through the ranks and joined him and half a dozen other boys in the ward. On admission we were confined to bed for a few days before being allowed to get up and undertake light duties such as making beds, polishing the metal work on fittings and dusting all surfaces. That progressed to heavier work such as cleaning windows, scrubbing bedside lockers, sweeping and polishing the floor. Military hospitals were maintained in pristine condition: the stern Matron saw to that. On her rounds her fingers were continuously sweeping on and under all surfaces for traces of dust.

Keeping otherwise hyper-active young boys penned in was a recipe for certain trouble; all that pent-up energy had to be released somehow. Hence there was a great deal of wild-play and noisy disorderly conduct; pillow-fights, jousting with broom handles, skating on the shining linoleum floors, etc. The floor polish came in large tins some 30cm in diameter and 20cm high. When polishing the floor, one dipped one's fingers in the tin, scooped out a handful of polish and slapped it on the floor. Inevitably somebody hurled his handful at his neighbour. Not surprisingly, such action, along with the other fool-play, resulted in accidents: broken lamp shades and windows were added to other breakages such as cups, plates and thermometers. All were carefully noted by the orderlies and charged to the culprits under barrack damages.

Like me Cliff was a wild colonial boy – he had been raised in Egypt, I in India – and as such was often the ringleader in those nefarious activities. Tending to be reckless and impetuous, he was always game for a lark, readily accepting any challenge regardless of the consequences. Later, when discharged from the hospital, he and I would break out of camp in the evening by going under the perimeter fence to keep a date with girls. Inevitably we were caught on our return and sentenced to be confined to barracks for our misdeeds. Even then he was cheerful company, enjoying the opportunity to flirt with the ATS and NAAFI girls when we were on fatigues in the cookhouse or canteen.

Cliff liked to gamble, too, be it on a game of dominoes or a horse race like the Oaks which we listened to on the radio. I won 2d from him on the race, not much by today's standards but welcome when your pay is just a shilling a day. To break the monotony, we organised a daily sweepstake on the number of flies we killed, 20 on average. Each occupant of the ward paid ½ d and so the winner pocketed 4d. But the most rewarding gamble for me was betting on the after-dinner pudding. Cliff hated the sago which was frequently on the menu and so daily I bet him a ½ d that it wouldn't be sago; if that was the case I won the money, otherwise I got his portion of sago!

Recalling that Cliff had trained to be a REME vehicle mechanic at the School, apart from the shock of reading of his death in the newspaper, I wondered why he had changed to the Intelligence Corp. Later it occurred to me that, having spent his boyhood with the family in Egypt, he spoke Arabic and was familiar with the locals' way of life. Considering the acute shortage of Arabic linguists in the British Forces in Palestine, the authorities had probably advertised the vacancies. Cliff had no doubt been attracted by the prospect of serving in a region with fond associations as well as much higher pay on being immediately promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

The British in Palestine were saddled with an invidious and unenviable task. Following the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire after the First World War, in 1922 Britain received a mandate from the League of Nations – which incorporated the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to the effect that 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' – to administer the area. In pursuance of the Balfour Declaration, some 300,000 Jewish immigrants were settled in the country by 1939. However, the influx of Jewish settlers on the land which had been theirs since the year 636 gave rise to much discontent amongst the Arabs which culminated in rebellions in 1929 and 1936 – 38. The Second World War brought a temporary halt to the unrest. After the war, with hordes of displaced persons in Europe clamouring to enter Palestine, when the British regulated Jewish immigration in order to protect the interests

of the Arabs, a minority of the Jewish population resorted to violence; quoting the scriptures, they asserted that the land was theirs having been given to them by God: the justification employed by so many aggressors over the ages.

Late in 1945 a Jewish underground army, the Haganah, initiated a terror campaign, involving attacks on the security forces and sabotage of the infrastructure, with the intention of forcing the creation of a Jewish state. The worst atrocity in that campaign, and the one which has gone down in history, was perpetuated not by the Haganah, who demurred at the project, but by the Irgun extremist splinter group under the leadership of Menachem Begin. In July 1946 members of the group bombed the magnificent King David Hotel which housed the British administrative offices in Palestine: one wing of the building was destroyed killing 91 of the British, Jewish and Arab personnel, dozens more were wounded.

The Irgun practised hostage taking. In July 1947 they kidnapped two British Sergeants, Clifford Martin and Mervyn Paice, as they were leaving a café in Nathaniya and threatened to kill them if three Irgun members condemned to death for their part in an attack on Acre gaol were not reprieved. The sergeants were confined for a fortnight under atrocious conditions in an underground cell and then strangled when the three terrorists were executed. Their bodies were hanged from trees in a grove near Nathaniya and the ground around mined. When the bodies were located, army engineers cleared a path to the trees but, as one of the corpses was cut down and hit the ground, a booby trap exploded injuring an officer standing nearby. People far and wide were horrified by the brutal murders which were vehemently condemned by virtually every official Jewish organisation in Palestine and the U.K.

Standing by Cliff's grave in the cemetery, I mourned over the tragic death and recalled the circumstances, caused no doubt by his own amicable but impetuous nature. The two young men, both 20 years of age, had acted naively in walking alone and unarmed, late at night, in Nathaniya, a recognised Irgun stronghold. True they had Jewish friends, and were in fact accompanied by one for their drinking session, but they were easily recognised in the white shirts and khaki shorts worn by British troops off duty. With hindsight one could observe that they should have been more circumspect but, at that time, British soldiers were not accustomed to that form of guerrilla warfare.

* * *

It was time to go. Uttering Field Marshall Lord Gort's words to his troops when leaving Palestine at the end of his tenure of the High Commissioner's office: 'Fare thee well! And if for ever, still for ever, fare thee well', I took my leave.

Making my way to the exit of the cemetery, I was joined by the gardener. Looking straight at me

he enquired:

"You paid your respects to your friend?"

"Yes. Thank you for your help."

With down-cast eyes, he astonished me by adding:

"A lot of people come to find those two graves – many of them are Jews."

"That's good to hear," I murmured and bade him *Shalom* (peace) as I left.

Seeing me approaching, the taxi driver sprang out and opened the passenger's door.

"Did you find your friend?" he enquired eagerly.

"Yes, the people were very helpful."

We travelled in silence while he threaded his way through the industrial estate then turning to look at me he exclaimed: "You very good man. You don't forget your friend. You go to heaven."

During the journey back to Tel Aviv I pondered over the contrasting impressions. On the one hand a number of people with whom I discussed my proposed visit to Ramla remembered the murder of the two Sergeants in the orchard at Nathnaniya, almost 50 years after the event, and appeared

contrite, as were the visitors to their graves. On the other hand, a small minority of the Jews in Palestine – the Irgun group had only a few hundred members – had blackened the name of Zionism by perpetrating barbarous crimes such as those above and many more.

Back in Tel Aviv, the next day the lady at the hotel's information desk and my helpers seemed greatly pleased to hear that my pilgrimage had been successful and that I found my friend. Drawing on my sparse Hebrew, I thanked them for their help:

Ani modeh lekha, toda raba

(I am grateful to you. Thank you very much.)

This is an extract from Robert Bradley's book 'A Happy Occupation', why I have included it is quite obvious. However there are other references within the book that might be of interest to anyone who served at Greenford during the dispersal and in BAOR. Notably 737 AFV Servicing unit, Hamburg, 22 Heavy Workshops, Hamburg, 1 X-Ray Repair Unit, Hamburg, and The Ordinance Depot in Oldenburg. Ed.

Promotion – and computers (1980 – 2000)

Just after the Christmas recess of 1979/1980, old pal Colin Drasutis, 55B, came to see me. (You may remember that Colin had been at the Liverpool Institute at the same time as me, and then also at the Apprentices' School at Arborfield. His rather strange surname, he told me, was that of a 'lapsed Lithuanian Catholic!') Colin had already left the electrical section on promotion and was now working as a 'course designer' in the SEME HQ building – commonly known to one and all as 'The Kremlin'. During the leave period, an elderly former instructor called Ron Girling had sadly died and someone was now urgently required to fill his post as the School's statistician. This meant looking after student records and other things – I won't bore anyone with the details! It was a bit of a one-off task that Ron had been doing for a number of years, working away much to his own methods, in a room upstairs next to the Technical Library. The trouble was that nobody had a clue as to how he had actually done the job, he'd left no written instructions anywhere – and there was certainly nobody else around to refer to!

Colin informed me that interviews would be taking place in order to fill the vacant position and asked "Was I interested?" The obvious answer, otherwise I wouldn't be telling the story, is that I was! And so, a few days later, the Canadian Major who had conducted the interviews (Gary Bingham)

called me into his office and said that the job was mine if I wanted it. I must admit to a certain amount of trepidation, but once I got stuck into the job, it became very interesting. The main thing too is that I actually wrote down a complete set of instructions on how the job was being done – by me anyway – so that it could later be picked up by any successor with not too many problems. In the event, this actually happened the following year, when I was succeeded as statistician by Eric Wealls – who had actually been my room NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer) at boys' school back in 1957! It can't have done him any harm either, as he eventually gained promotion on the instructional side and moved away to Deepcut (not far from Camberley).

During my tour of duty in the Statistics Room, it became evident that the chance of promotion would eventually come up, to replace a guy called Jack Wickham, who was then the Supervisor, Internal Validation. But the job was going to change with his successor, as the School was soon going to purchase a computer system to assist with the training system. (Colin Drasutis and Gary Bingham were actually involved in the project to purchase the computer.) So what 'they' needed was a 'young upstart' (my term!) who was willing to not only take the promotion, but also to get trained up on computers! Just a couple of months

later, I therefore attended my first computer course at Blandford. It was all about the basics of computing, but far removed from where computer technology is today, and took place at the 'DADPTC' (Defence Automatic Data Processing Training Centre) – known locally as 'Dad's Army'! It was good to be housed in one's own private room at the Officers' Mess, where at least we received good treatment and plenty of good food.

That course was only three weeks long, but it was really hard work and seemed a hell of a lot longer! Most of the other members of the course were already part of the computing world, mainly from a programming background, so the terminology was at least familiar to them. Some were civilians, while others were military guys from the Army, RAF and Royal Navy – it was pretty high-powered! I was accompanied on the course by an older chap named John Thayer, who worked next door to me, in the SEME Examination Centre. He'd already served a full 22 years in the Army before becoming a civilian instructor, and must have been around the age of sixty I guess, maybe nearer sixty-five. At the time of the course, we didn't even have a computer at Bordon, so we'd never handled a keyboard before either, which didn't make life any easier!

With flow-charts, top-down systems design and basic programming techniques, I'm afraid it all went right over John's head, he was completely flummoxed. He lived down in Barnfield Road, Liss and, during the two weekends of the course, when we were allowed to come home, I went around to his place to try and help him with the coursework that we'd been set. He was almost in tears, saying that he should never have been persuaded to attend the course, it was well beyond his capacity. Luckily, once we both got back to SEME, he never really had to put any of it into practice and gratefully retired when his time came up!

In February 1981, a promotion board was finally set up for the previously mentioned Internal Validation vacancy. There were quite a few volunteers from within SEME and other external candidates too. I was one of the protagonists and managed to pass the board with flying colours. Over the years that followed, many of those other guys who attended that promotion board told me how grateful they were that they hadn't passed! When they saw the amount of work that was involved, they were pleased that they remained in the mainstream instructional side of life. One of those guys was Bob McLeod, who retired early in 2006. I went to his 'retirement party' at *The Cricketers* in Kingsley – and he was still thanking me, even then, twenty-five years later, for getting that job!

The Computer-less Manager!

And so I was now a fully-fledged Supervising Instructor – but with no instructors to supervise – as well as being the Computer Manager, with no sign of a computer to manage! However, this didn't prevent the School from sending me on another course at Blandford, this time for a whole six weeks! This one was termed 'Basic Systems Design and Analysis' and proved a real brain-wrecker! The day's work would usually end about 4 p.m. and I would gladly put on some sports gear and go for a run all around the camp perimeter, it was just so good to get away from the 'head banging' for a while. Then it would be back to the Mess for tea and cake, but then there would be a session of course-work to do before the evening's late dinner.

I must have gone home every weekend during the course, I remember the trip there and back with great clarity. I was driving my *Ford 'Capri'* (the lean green mean machine!) at the time and it was quite a pleasure taking the route across via Alton, through Winchester city centre and the Salisbury ring-road, then down through pleasant countryside to Blandford. That trip would be on the Sunday evening, with fairly light traffic, so I was able to get my foot down and make it in good time. At the end of it all, I was delighted to receive a certificate of competency from the National Computer Centre. So I must have learned something, despite all the headaches!

In October of 1981 I was again back at Blandford for another three-week course, this time on Project Management. It was far in excess of what I actually needed at that stage, but at least offered a good grounding for the future. Most of the other 'students' were high-ranking officers from all three services and the food was excellent! We even had lobster thermidor one evening in the Mess – the one and only time I have partaken of that particular dish! Most of the course consisted of presentations by visiting experts in their field and it was all very interesting, to say the least. We also had a couple of 'visits' out, one was to the *Westland* helicopter head-quarters, I think at Yeovil, where we looked at 'computer aided design'; I think the other place was at Street, but I can't recall what we did there!

Back at Bordon, during the early period of my job 'in computing', I shared an office with some soldiers who were part of the External Validation team. They were all Warrant Officers, mature guys, and it was a good time, very friendly all round. One of the ASMs was a guy called Barrie King – who I didn't find out was an ex-apprentice until an old boys' reunion many years later! Nick Scantlebury is another I remember, because he

bought the *Vauxhall 'Viva'* from me.

Early in the following year (1982), surprise, surprise, the computer hardware actually began to arrive at SEME! It was manufactured by an American company, *Data General (DG)*, and their software people were responsible for taking an existing package used at Princess Marina College, Arborfield and, with my 'assistance', change it to suit Bordon's particular requirements. The hardware itself presented initial problems and it was ages before the CCTA (Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency), a Treasury-sponsored organisation, agreed that it was 'up to the job'. I then had to go off on DG courses in order to learn how to handle the specific computer system installed at Bordon. If I remember correctly, these courses took place at the DG Training Centre in Harrow, North London. Then it was time to sit down with the DG programmer, a young lady by the name of Diane Lightfoot, while we thrashed out the necessary software changes. All very time consuming, but it eventually paid off and we got most of what we wanted.

As things developed over the next few years, the 'SPEC' system at SEME (Student Performance Evaluation by Computer) became the benchmark for similar systems throughout the Army educa-

tional system. (The SPEC system was covered in an article I wrote for *OBAN* issue 41.) I feel that I played quite a big part in setting up a system that eventually stood the test of time. By the time that I retired in 2000, SPEC and its successor 'SPEX' had been running for almost twenty years and doing a very good job of maintaining the School's internal validation system. It was to be replaced by a new networked system (TAFMIS) just around the time I was 'out of the door' and, on subsequent visits to SEME as a 'retiree', the moan was that the staff would all like to see SPEX back up and running!

(Having, during the above course of events, changed my career role from Instructional Officer to Executive Officer, this now entitled me to retire at the age of sixty, rather than bashing on until sixty-five. So 2000 brought about my 'official' retirement – although events afterwards brought about an extension to my actual working life! I may get around to writing about it at some time so, for anyone who hasn't yet nodded off, watch this space!)

Peter Gripton 56B

Pembroke Military Cemetery..Malta.

During the last week of August and first week of September this year (2013), my partner and I visited the Island of Malta, staying in a Guest House in the town of Naxxar, in the centre of the Island.

The main purpose of the trip, as well as taking the advantage to get some sun was to visit a brother who has been resident in Senglea for many years, and who had recently had a stroke.

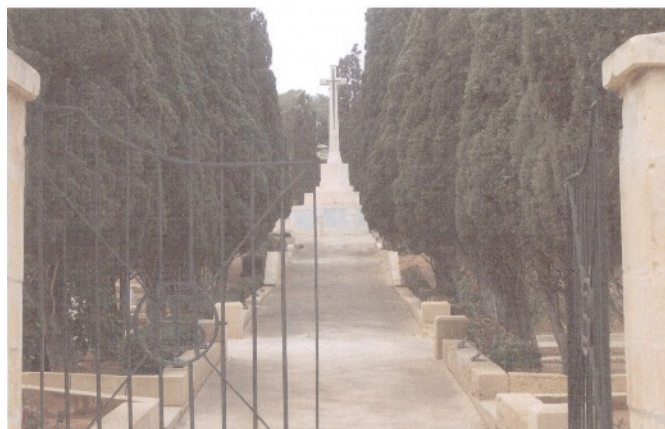
Having visited most of the tourist spots in previous visits to the Island, this time I was determined that we check out the Commonwealth War Graves site at Pembroke, as I was aware that three members of our Corps were buried there, and wished to pay my respects.

For all those Corps members past and present who are thinking of taking a holiday on the Island a visit to the Pembroke Military Cemetery is well worth a couple of hours away from the bar and sun lounger, although it may not be the first choice location for the wife or girlfriend!!

As well as 322 identified service graves and three only known to God, there are also some 270 graves of serving family members or dependants.

The Cemetery is located on the North East coast road that runs from Msida up through St Andrews and onto St Pauls Bay.

The site is between the two former British Army Barracks of St Andrews and St Patricks, and is approximately 3kms from St Julians Bay and 8kms from St Pauls Bay.



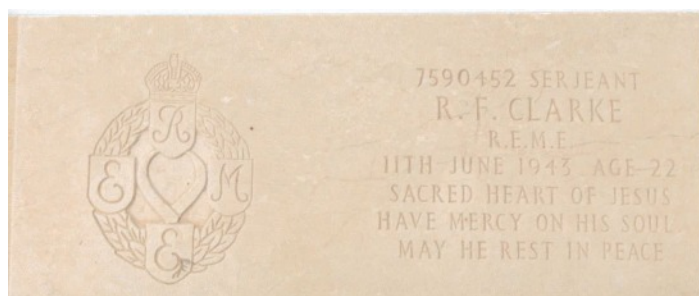
If you choose to use public service buses, as we did, you will see the top of the Cross of Sacrifice from the road, which has a bus stop adjacent to it. If like us, you missed that stop and proceed to the next one in Pembroke, you will be confronted with an uphill slog of about a mile, which is not for the faint hearted or for the fairer sex wearing sandals...it is amazing how soon their delicate feet can get blisters (but that is another story).

The official cemetery address is Triq Sir Adrian Dingli, Pembroke.

Since the British Army left the area in the late 1970's, the barracks and general area were allowed to deteriorate, until recent years with the bonanza of EEC money flooding into the Island, Pembroke has seen a building boom with many new builds and the old barracks being turned into Schools etc, making the Pembroke area into effectively a new town.

The three graves I was looking for were the following;-...

7590452 Sgt Ronald Frederick Clarke, who was only 22 when killed on the 11th of June 1943...his next of kin were listed as his mother Daisy M Clarke and stepfather Alfred E Chester, resident in Nelson, Glamorganshire.



7627750 Craftsman G H Chapman, who was aged 23 and killed on the 10th of August 1943, he was the son of Alfred George and Elizabeth Chapman of Hanwell, Middlesex.



Thirdly there was 7630986 Craftsman George William West, who lost his life on the 11th of August 1943. Sadly there was no age given and no next of kin details are in the register.



Due to the nature of the ground it was not possible to dig individual graves as we know them, so only shallow holes could be dug with two, three and even four bodies laid to rest under each engraved flat stone.

Maurice 'Mo' Hope

©Arborfield Old Boys Association. All Rights Reserved.
Printed in Great Britain by Hampshire Press Ltd.
Southampton SO14 0SQ

Distributed by Trojan Mailing Ltd
Southampton SO14 1HU

Letter to the Editor. From Eggy Egleton 52B

Reference Johnny Johnson's article in OBAN issue 55. In Tidworth the married quarters were in two blocks of 24 per barracks. I had 23 Bhurtpore in 1961. The barracks were Aliwal, Assage, Bhurtpore, Candahar, Deli & Lucknow. There was also a Military Hospital where I'd had my appendix's

out. The units stationed there were the Dragoon Guards, Hussars, Guards, Infantry & Gurkhas. In 1992 I visited Tidworth as a guest when 2 Tank Regiments amalgamated. Most of the quarters were still there but there was only one way into the Garrison.

E-mail to the Editor From Peter Gripton 56B

What a coincidence!

I was happy enough to see that Ray (Editor Ray Stevens) had included an article of mine in the latest *OBAN* (Issue 57), one that recalled my memories of my early years as a civilian instructor at SEME Bordon. I'd only just come out of REME at the age of 27, becoming probably the youngest ever instructor at the school. That was back in 1967 and the vast majority of the incumbent instructors were ex-servicemen of one background or another, many of them ex-matelots still finding their land legs! Quite a few of my new colleagues lived down in places such as Portsmouth and Gosport, not surprising considering their Naval backgrounds. Car sharing was almost inevitable as they travelled the twenty or so miles between the seaside and Bordon. And you could always bet on the banter each morning, between

those who lived on the coast and those who lived closer to work – the sun always shone brighter on the southern side of Butser Hill!

One of those inveterate travelers was one Harry Blakley, who always seemed to have been 'around the block a few times' in terms of experience. I can still recall him mentioning his son Laurie with pride, as Laurie had opted to join the Army as an Arborfield Apprentice. I think Harry left SEME for a while, possibly to teach at one of the Naval schools, but that he 'returned to the fold' prior to my final days at Bordon back in the nineties. So it was nice to have my memory pleasantly jogged by the photograph on the back cover of *OBAN* 57, of a 'young lad' who looked the spittin' image of his Dad! Welcome to the Treasurer's job Laurie Blakley of 61B!

Letter to the Editor. From Charlie Ashdown 42A

I was reading the article by Peter Gripton (56B) in the Jan 2014 Issue 57 (page 10) of the *OBAN*, when I came upon some mention of ASM Joe Price at FVRDE Chertsey, and subsequently an instructor at Bordon. It would seem most likely that this Joe Price was the one I knew, as he most certainly would be an Arm Art Ece, as the dialogue showed. I should say that on my A.A. Ece course (No6) at 5 Trg Bn REME from May 1950 to Dec 1951, Joe was a Sergeant, and a great asset to our joint endeavours during the course.

It is pertinent that mention be made of Joe's war service. He was a glider pilot Staff Sergeant in the Glider Pilot Regiment, and it is extremely

noteworthy that he flew in the missions of the invasion of Sicily (1943), the 'D' Day invasion of Normandy (1944), the Arnhem landing (1944), and the crossing of the Rhine (1945). Joe spoke very little of these events, but did reveal that he came through un-scathed (which is remarkable in itself), and in Sicily had to land his glider in the sea, due to 'pilot error'.

On our course he was most helpful on practical equipment operation of the Centurion stabilizer, the No. 10 and 11 electronic predictors (computers), and the 90 mm and 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns. We all worked on electronic theory portions as a group.

No6 Armt Art ECE Course at 5 Trg Bn REME from May 1950 to Dec 1951.

1 2 3 4 5 6



1, Sgt A Osborne.

2, Ssgt A Perry.

3, Sgt E Burke.

4, Ssgt G Broome.

5, Sgt J Jennings.

6 Sgt D Dodds.

7, TBI *

8, Sgt C Ashdown.

9, Sgt J Price.

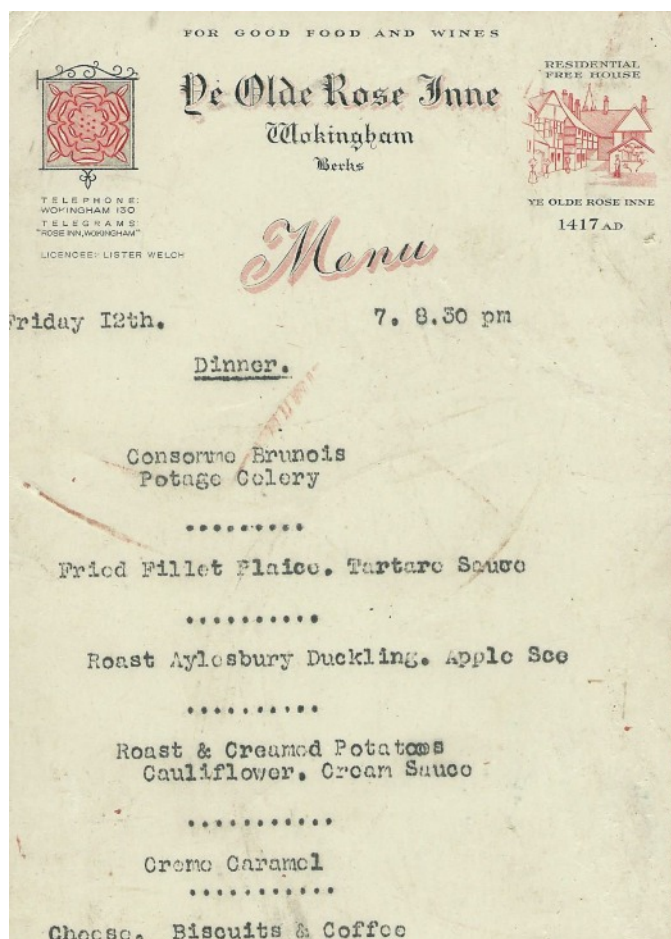
10, Ssgt TBI *

11, Sgt J Johnson.

* Memory problems preclude identification.

To my knowledge only Geoff Broome and I were Ex Arborfield Old Boys.

7 8 11 9 10



On the right is a copy of the menu of our Farewell Dinner, held at 'Ye Olde Rose Inne', Wokingham. Does anyone know if this establishment still exists?

In conclusion it is timely to remember and celebrate the ever-decreasing cohort of the 'Great Generation' of which Joe Price was a distinguished member.

Charlie Ashdown 42A

Ed, Charlie very kindly send me his original photographs from America, so that I could copy them for this article. Many thanks.

In Memoriam

Pat Roberts 64B/C

Pat enlisted in REME and joined intake 64B at Arborfield to train as a Tels Tech. Quickly gaining a reputation as a handy sportsman, he excelled on the Rugby pitch and represented the School and then College as a fearsome Forward. He was a talented boxer who also became a stalwart of the D Coy team but declined to box for the School/College due to his first team Rugby commitments.

Devotion to studies was not one of Pat's talents, neither was the world of radios and their repair so he 'elected' to swap to VM and join 64C instead. Throughout the remaining 8 terms I came to know Pat well, always game for a laugh he was a magnet for fun, laughter and the occasional spot of trouble due to his boisterous ways.

Pat volunteered for Commando training as a first posting, at the time I thought him completely mad until he told me he had added my name to the list, pointing out that anything was better than a posting to Germany!

We reported to The Royal Citadel, Plymouth to join 29 Cdo Light Regt RA on 15 Sep 1967 for Commando initiation training. Arduous though it was, Pat still found time to enjoy life and, in the process, to completely upset the training staff. No mean feat which earned him the dubious honour of carrying a heavy artillery shell everywhere, more often than any previous trainee such that he nicknamed the shell Albert. I recall he treated Albert for several 'nights out' in Plymouth for being such a good mate!

Earning the Green Beret, both Pat and I were posted to join 95 Cdo Lt Regt RA in Singapore, enjoying the fruits of the East and jungle training. Pat was in his element and his Rugby talent, soon spotted, earned him a place in the Regt team.

Tours in the Middle East, Mediterranean, Ireland and finally Arbroath concluded Pat's Army career in 1975. His reputation was huge, he left many friends when he opted for civvy street but always kept in touch and attended many reunions.

In 1979 Pat was working in Iran until the revolution, which required a hasty exit, leaving everything he owned behind. The only consolation was an unpaid bar bill! Undeterred, he took up a post in Zambia working as a foreman mechanic

in the Copper mines. This ultimately led to work in Nigeria as an engineer, for which I ribbed him

mercilessly, but such was his character he came out with a high recommendation as a trouble shooter for engineering problems.

Pat, always fun to be around, decided to make it work for him so established his very own Pub in Lagos, 'Pat's Bar'. Gaining a wide reputation within the ex-pat community, it became a regular watering hole for international rugby teams and a stopping off point for visiting RN ships' company. Indeed, Pat's Bar was a recommended safe watering hole for visiting RN Ships which was a measure of the high esteem in which Pat was held.

Latterly, Pat became General Manager at the Elkan Terrace Hotel in Port Harcourt Nigeria.

What of the man himself? Always a charmer, interesting and interested, he enjoyed a huge circle of friends and was a well known figure in Lagos and Port Harcourt. Always welcomed wherever he went, he regularly attended Regimental reunions in Plymouth and maintained links with his wide circle of friends. Within the Commando Gunner/REME world his exploits are legendary. At a recent Army Commando reunion he was remembered, toasted (liberally, and several times over) and would have been proud of the manner for which he was remembered by comrades from the Commando world.

Pat remained in close contact with his former wife Margaret, and his step daughter Elaine, throughout his life and a genuine friendship emerged such that Margaret was Pat's nominated Next of Kin.

Pat died unexpectedly at Lagos airport, waiting for a flight just prior to Christmas.

Peter Moran 64C

I to joined Pat and Pete reporting 29 Cdo Light Regt RA, in Plymouth, and remember Albert well. Unfortunately I was injured on the last day of the Initiation training. Ed

Sidney Moir 'Geordie' Urwin, 56B

When I joined the 'boys' school' back in the summer of 1956, it was quite a surprise to listen to so many different accents from all around the country Irish, Welsh, Scottish and so on. It probably took us all quite a while to develop the interpretational skills necessary to converse with each other! One of the most difficult accents to understand was that of a lad who told us that he came from 'Berkup', none of us had even heard of the place! It eventually turned out that his home was actually Bacup, a small town that lies just inside Lancashire's border with Yorkshire. I always struggled to remember his name, but recently remembered that it was Bob Hanson. However, one name that I certainly do recall is that of Sid Urwin, he of the curly blonde hair and famous 'Geordie' accent. We shared the same barrack room 'F1' for the first six months of service in 'HQ' Company, under the command of our room NCOs, A/Sgt Eddie Fox and A/L/Cpl Jock Massie, before we were all split up into our separate Companies for the rest of our three-year Arborfield experience.

Sid had gone into 'C' Company, where he had become 'big buddies' along with another Geordie, one Charlie (or 'Carlo') Brown, and Ian 'Tex' Bradley. Despite our paths having diverged within the restricted boundaries of boys' school, they were destined to cross again on many occasions around the well-known public houses of Reading, the nearest 'big town' available for Saturday night entertainment. I recall that Carlo was an excellent darts player and one of the favourite dart boards was located in 'The Star', a little pub right next to the bridge across the River Kennet at the bottom of London Street. Here, to accompany the beer and fortify the darts players, on the pub bar would be found a huge jar of pickled eggs! And if you played your cards (or darts?) right, the landlord's wife would rustle up a splendid fried egg banjo! Ah yes, fond memories indeed.

When we all dispersed from the Apprentices' School and went our individual ways in 1959, it is hard to believe that it was to be another forty years before I bumped into that famous threesome again. By that time, I had been involved in contacting as many 56B old boys as possible, to attend a reunion sponsored by another 56B ex-brat, Rodney Smith, who had gone on to 'make his fortune' out in 'Silicon Valley' in California. Eventually, twenty-five of us old boys, mostly accompanied by our ladies, gathered together at Sonning, and amongst those were Sid, Carlo and Tex – it was as though the intervening years had swiftly rolled away and we were all young Army apprentices once again.

I sadly had to report the death of John Houghton just a few short months ago. John had also been

a member of 'C' Company at boys' school. Not long before he died, John had told me that Sid had been recently diagnosed with a brain tumour and that he would be having surgery in respect of that. I did manage to talk with Sid over the phone afterwards, and he was full of hope and optimism. So it was very sad when I heard the news of his passing, there are far too few of us 56B boys around nowadays!

Having been completely 'in the dark' regarding Sid's Army service, I am indebted to one of his old pals, John Rainey of 54A, for filling in some gaps



as follows. From the end of his apprenticeship, Sid was posted to 12 Infantry Workshop at Osnabruck BAOR, where he served between the years 1959 and 1964. He was then attached to 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards, serving with that regiment in Aden, Bahrain and Cyprus. Sid would have left Arborfield as a Vehicle Mechanic, but at

some time became 'specialised' to work on Armoured Vehicles, possibly at the Technical Training School in Duisberg BAOR or on a conversion course at SEME Bordon. Sid was always a keen sportsman, showing some prowess at boxing, football, cricket, basketball and rugby. He was also a lifelong supporter of his beloved Sunderland football club.

Sid reached the end of his 9-years service in Cyprus as a Corporal and left the Army to settle to civilian life. But he kept in contact with old Army pals by attending several annual 'Old Boys' reunions at Arborfield, as well as those get-togethers held by his old 56B intake. He also kept in touch with ex-colleagues from the Inniskillings, both in the UK and Ireland, and attended some annual Remembrance Day services at the Cenotaph in London as one of the Aden Veterans. Living in the town of Houghton-le-Spring, located half-way between Durham and Sunderland, Sid was a devoted family man and a true and loyal friend, who will be sorely missed by so many. He leaves a wife, Veronica, as well as his children and grandchildren.

Pete Gipton, 56B

WO1 (ASM) B L Green

Bernard Green joined the Army as an apprentice electrician at Arborfield as a 14-year old boy soldier in September 1945. He completed a full twenty two year career finishing in the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 having qualified as an equipment control artificer.

He enjoyed his life in the Corps, serving in a variety of units in the UK and Germany including 27 District Workshop and 17/21st Lancers Light Aid Detachment. He was also part of the team that brought into service the Yellow Fever air defence radar control system.

He loved sport and took part in boxing as a young soldier and was a member of the 17/21st Lancers skiing team. However his greatest sporting loves



were rugby and motor cycling, both of which he followed throughout his life. When stationed in Ty Croes, North Wales supporting Yellow Fever in an air defence regiment, he would regularly ride to motor cycle trials events throughout the country on an Army 350cc Matchless. This included driving the long way and back on his bike to Cornwall to take part in the *Lands Ends Trial*.

On leaving the Army, Bernard settled in the Bracknell area where he made many friends and worked for various firms in technical management and authoring roles. He continued his love of motor cycling, joining the Loddon Vale Group with whom he would spend many a happy weekend riding his bike across the countryside. Often this would include being part of a team collecting points from judges at various cross country horse trials that the Group supported at venues such as Tweseldown.

Bernard was a real character in life and will be deeply missed by his family and friends.

Published with kind permission of the Editor of the Craftsman Magazine.

James (Jim) Wheeler 39B

Well dad - here we all are, feeling sad as we say goodbye to you.

I wanted to say a few words, not only for myself, but also mum, Aly, Steve, Shelly and Richie. As a husband, dad and grandad you have loved us with all your heart, and you have worked hard to give us everything. One thing that anyone who knows you would say is that you have made a great success of your life in so many ways.

From humble beginnings in a Salvation Army home in Portsea with your mum, brother Fred and sister Jean, your drive and determination saw you joining the army at 14 to learn a trade and serve across Europe and North Africa. In this you showed your independent spirit, which remained strong throughout your life.

You and mum met in 1954, married in 1956 and enjoyed 60 happy years together. In the early days you worked hard to buy your own home, and secure a good future for your family. You worked for Metal Box for more than 30 years as a Maintenance Engineer, including a stint in Kenya in the 1970's, a wonderful adventure for the whole family. Keenly family oriented, we never doubted we were central to your life.

You enjoyed an active life, continuing many sports well into your 70's and 80's. These included swimming, running, climbing - reaching the top of Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya - sailing, canoeing, cycling, walking, badminton, squash, and last but not least family rounders matches with Bill and Rita and their children - Kevin and Andrew.

Throughout all of this you made many good friends along the way. You have outlived many of them, but we do have 4 old friends here today. Bill and Rita, the next door neighbours in Portchester in the 1950's, and Bob who worked with you at Metal Box, and John from canoeing.

Dad wasn't a total paragon of virtue - he did have some annoying characteristics. He could be stubborn, opinionated at times, and quite outspoken. He had an irreverent sense of humour, which endeared him to his friends whilst at the same time embarrassing mum! He infuriated Aly and I by rarely spending any money on himself. To all of us though, he was extremely generous.

Dad has been ill for the last 6 ½ years, and he found life increasingly difficult. He spent the last month in hospital. We were all able to celebrate Christmas with him at Queen Mary Hospital, and he enjoyed giving and receiving gifts, wearing silly hats, and eating the obligatory turkey dinner. This is a great memory for all of us, because we were together as a family.

So, how will we remember him?

You will all have your favourite memories I'm sure, and here are a few of ours.....

From Me - a memory which always makes me smile and sums my dad up in so many ways. He took up canoeing later in life and was a member of the Portsmouth Canoe Club. He enjoyed spending time on the Solent, but disliked spending time in club meetings, which he attended rarely and unwillingly. It was with disgust that he told us one night when he returned from the Annual General Meeting, that he had been elected Chairman. He soon got his

own back though - his first resolution was that pensioners (of which he was one) should have free lifetime membership.

From Aly and Steve - dad's great sense of fun. There was one famous Christmas when dad wore all of his presents at once - sitting there in various jumpers, swimming goggles, socks etc. Getting warmer and warmer by the minute and then falling asleep. It is believed that a bottle of Baileys played a part in this.

From Shelly and Richie - mum and dad took Shelly and Richie out for the day when they were young children. It was raining hard, and so they decided to picnic in the car. All four sat in the boot of the estate car, and soon the windows steamed up. It was too good an opportunity to miss - dad wrote a rude word on the window, much to their amusement.

From Mum - dad was the most caring person, looking after her from the age of 17, and focusing so much of his effort on her and the family.

And finally, dad was informal in many ways, but also had a sense of occasion, and would be pleased that we all are here today to remember him in this formal setting.

Aly Hampshire Jim Wheeler's daughter.

Three of us represented the AOBA at the funeral, that was really well attended I asked if I could change this obituary as it was written for friends and family to hear. But having heard it at the crematorium and re-read it, I decided not to, as I feel that it shows the true sentiment and feelings exhibited that day Ed

Mike Larby 42C

I first met Mike on my return from the Far East in 1959, when I was posted in as the Permanent Staff Instructor to 162 Inf Wksp in Luton. The workshop was located within the Vauxhall car factory and most of the TA personnel were employed there or in the Bedford truck factory in Dunstable.

The workshop ASM turned out to be a slightly rotund gentleman almost instantly recognisable as a chap who knew what a workshop was all about. Exchanging pleasantries, we soon established we were both 'ex brats' from Arborfield although I was never allowed to forget that I was only a jeep. It turned out that Mike at that time was a salesman for Vauxhall cars, a role that suited him to a 'T'.

With a similar outlook on life we soon became great friends, well cemented at the two week annual camps that was the highlight of the TA training year. We attended camps in North Wales, Okehampton, and Hythe during my tour and I can report that many were the hostelries we reconnoitred, all in the interests of finding suitable recreational facilities for our soldiers.

I recall I used to be invited to attend the Annual Motor Shows that were held in Earls Court, where I would be treated as a potential customer and taken out for liquid lunches. I refrained from purchasing a Vauxhall as they were never as good as my AC. As part of his job he applied and passed the Institute of Advanced Motorists test, sporting the IAM badge on his beat up Dormobile. Whilst the Institute may have passed him, to us he was the worst driver in the unit, often disregarding kerbs as obstacles to test his suspension.

We consider this as part of his Sales job whereby each Salesman was handed a car from the opposition, report on it and check out its limits. Not unusually this resulted in removing mud from the door handles. He did however lend it to me on the Police skid pan that we practiced on as members of the Forces Motoring Club.

During my tour I met my wife who knew Mike when she worked in Vauxhall's Recreation Club where Mike was a leading light in the Rugby Section. He was therefore a guest of honour with Gerda at our wedding in 1961. The unit had laid on a superb reception in the TA Centre and when the wine was flowing freely, Mike decided that I looked far too smart in my blues, so to the horror of my new bride, he and his friends upturned me, stuffing confetti down the legs of my trousers. Try retaining your dignity after that.

All good things come to an end, and I moved on via Kenya, Aden, Iserlohn, Berlin, Tidworth, Chillwell, Woolwich, Andover, and Ballykelly, eventually deciding that the nomadic life was not good for the education of a young family. Taking up a position with a MOD contractor, specialising in the manufacture and fitting out of transportable containers. I liaised with many firms, one of which was Bedford Trucks, which at the time was the

preferred platform for box bodies. Who should I run across there but a chap called Larby who was Head of Sales for Bedford Military vehicles, resulting in more long lunches.

About this time (1980?), the college reunions were getting really underway, and I always looked forward to the Saturday lunchtime sessions when Mike would arrive at the bar, order his pink gin and remind all and sundry that we young soldiers did not know what life was like back in 1943.

One reunion I recall he brought Gerda and dog with him in his caravan, parking on the square in Hazebrouck, attending a dance in the old camp hall.

We kept in touch over the years, although his move into the wilds of Norfolk from Wilstead made it a little more difficult for us, but we called in and were treated to the lavish Larby hospitality when in the area.

The tales from his early days so well portrayed in the OBAN, captures him precisely. There is no doubt that he was a character and a fine example of how one should grab what life has to offer and enjoy it to the full.

George Marshall 46B

Deaths notified since last OBAN.

N/a	Kreiner	D	Fred	62C	22/11/2013
1040	Larby	M R B	Mike	42C	14/12/2013
2265	Roberts	P J	Pat	64C	17/12/2013
N/a	Weyers	D	Davey	73	09/09/2012
1523	Loy	J	John	39B	22/12/2013
1251	Wheeler	J	Jim	39B	03/01/2014
N/a	Starbuck	R	Ray	52A	11/01/2014
1051	O'Dell	P	Patrick	42C	Mar/2013
2582	Bennett	W A	Walter	44A	03/01/2014
2693	Winder	M H	Micheal	45B	03/11/2013
N/a	O'Brien	T	Paddy	42A	
N/a	Lloyd	D A N	David	48A	10/12/2013
N/a	Green	BL	Bernard	45	12/01/2013
720	Urwin	J M	John	56B	29/01/2014
1969	Pye	L	Jess	43A	05/02/2014
1912	Richards	D	David	45A	11/01/2014
N/a	Payne	A J		60C	

