

ISSUE 9

SPRING - SUMMER 1996

O B A N



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

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Committee meetings are held 3-4 times per year. Any member wishing to put forward a motion or item to the Committee for consideration may do so by writing directly to the Honorary Secretary. Additionally, an ad hoc administration committee is convened, usually under the Chairmanship of the College Adjutant and attended by all interested parties, to deal with the details of the reunion weekend.

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Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter

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From the Editor

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Acknowledgements. Many thanks to those who have wished me well with the editorship and thank you to all contributors to Issue 9.

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Issue 9. We have had a sizeable amount of letters, some in response to others and some on new subjects - not to mention some interesting articles on a wide range of subjects. These continue to make interesting reading and provoke replies. Please continue to write. If you think about it, the OBAN is fast becoming an historical reference source for those far off days. In years to come, I believe the information supplied by the contributors, especially the memories, will be important.

As you will have seen from the last issue we are not infallible - the reference to H Simpson in the Regimental Sergeant Majors list in OBAN 8 on page 5, was wrongly dated, it should have read Jan 63 - Apr 66. Our thanks to those of you who spotted it. I apologise in advance for any errors or omissions in this issue.

Also, having spoken to ex-RSM D McMahon - he took over from H Simpson when the School was still the 'Army Apprentices School' - he tells me that he was involved in the changeover of the badge from the Army Apprentices School type to the REME badge.

You will also notice an article entitled, 'Trials of a Radar Mech'. I only mention this because I would like to run a series of such anecdotes from all the other trades - come on, be brave!

Last date for Issue 10 contributions:
30 August 1996.

Enjoy your summer!

Brian Hornsey (54A)

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Lt Col Bob Mount REME

A great deal has happened in Princess Marina College since the last issue of OBAN, starting with a very busy Autumn. The term began with the arrival of 95C, the first 2-term intake, which, with a start strength of 165 apprentices, produced one of the largest Junior Companies in the history of the College. With 95B of A Company, they were the first apprentices to occupy Rowcroft Barracks since 1981, when the College moved across to Hazebrouck.

Thus, the College was split, with "Big H" holding the fort in Hazebrouck until such time that the old apprenticeship courses were completed. Until the footbridge was in, this meant a long trek backwards and forwards each day by the majority of apprentices, making life difficult for them and those trying to maintain the College training schedules! Although much work to resite the College had been successfully carried out, still more needed to be done during the coming term to complete the job.

Lieutenant General Sam Cowan CBE, Inspector General Training visited the College in September, the first of many VIPs to visit the College during the term. As he is the General responsible for all soldier training matters and was to play a central role in deciding the future of the College, it was important that the visit went well - thankfully, it did! His 3 stars, by the way, counted towards the annual total of 33 stars for 1996 VIP visitors to Princess Marina College. The footbridge was due to be completed and in use by the end of September, but, due to difficulties with sub-contractors, this had to be delayed until the following month.

In October, there was a change of Commandants and we said a sad goodbye to Colonel Mike Dorward, who moved to SEAE. As part of the farewell ceremonies, the partially completed footbridge was put to good use as a climbing/abseiling platform, enabling Colonel Mike to show off his well renowned EL skills, as he crossed over from Rowcroft to Hazebrouck, to take command of SEAE. Seeing him depart left me full of mixed feelings - sad to see him go, but also delighted and anxious about taking command of the College, albeit for a short period. Two weeks later, the bridge opened for business!

The big event of the term fell in November, when the College hosted the Royal Naval apprentices from HMS Sultan in Portsmouth. I was delighted with the outstanding performance of the College apprentices in that they fulfilled both of my requirements - to host our

guests in style and to STUFF the RN apprentices! This was the first victory by the College since 1987 and I was delighted that it happened during my short reign as Commandant. December saw more VIP visitors, including Major General Corp, DGES(A) and his opposite number from the German Army, Brigadier Bernd, who kindly opened the new entrance to the College Headquarters. The main event in December, as always, was the Passing Out Parade and Major General Sharman, also an ex-REME officer took the parade, which was excellent and marked a number of historic milestones. It was

- ✧ the first parade by apprentices in Rowcroft Barracks for 17 years,
- ✧ the first time Junior Company had been on parade with seniors,
- ✧ the first time a female AT Sgt was on parade and with,
- ✧ the first Lieutenant Colonel Commandant and,
- ✧ the first REME RSM present,
- ✧ the first female member of the Band on Parade and, sadly, the last time for the AT Band to play at the Passing Out Parade.

The New Year began with the opening of Princess Marina Hall, a superb new building that houses Mil Ed Wing, a magnificent library and a Hi Tech lecture theatre. The building was officially opened by General Corps on Friday 2 February, following a short service and a blessing by the Padre. Princess Marina Hall provides the College in Rowcroft Barracks with a prestigious training facility that will be invaluable during the coming years.

1996 will bring more changes for the College and new challenges for us all. I depart the College at half term and move to the School of Equipment Support (Army). The College will start to grow in size in September when 100 Royal Signals apprentices arrive, thus beginning the foundation of the single Apprentice training unit in the Army.

Ultimately, all RE, R Signals, RLC and REME apprentices will be training in Rowcroft Barracks, Arborfield. I look forward to seeing the new unit continuing the long, successful history of Arborfield Apprentices. After a total of 3 years with the College, first as Deputy Commandant and laterly as Commandant, it is now my time to Pass Out and, I am delighted to say, join you all as an Old Boy of the College. I look forward to returning to the College for the annual reunions of the AOA.

**From the Honorary Secretary
Larry Le Var (47A)
C Company - *The Champion Company*.**

Time passes by so rapidly - it seems incredible that when you read these notes more than six months will have passed since our last reunion. During this period Colonel Mike Dorward has departed, going to the School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering as Commandant; Lt Col Bob Mount has had a spell as Commandant and then moved on to the staff of the School of Equipment Support (Army). The new Commanding Officer is Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Moore who came from Headquarters REME Training Group.

During the short time that Mike Dorward was at Rowcroft Barracks he laid good plans for the future. Equally, Bob Mount kept the good work going and achieved a lot during his short time as Commandant; we wish him well in his new job. I know that Nigel Moore is totally committed to his new appointment and will be leading the College most effectively during periods of further change. We warmly welcome him as the new CO.

What change you may ask? Well you will most likely have read elsewhere in OBAN that the College is to become the Army Apprentice College, taking in apprentices from the Royal Signals, Royal Engineers and the Royal Logistic Corps. Up to date news on these changes will be circulated at the next reunion.

Now for the other news!

On the 22nd January 1996 I was delighted to be visited by Ken and Sylvia Schofield. Due to illness Ken could not make it to the last reunion, so I gave him an open invitation to visit Arborfield when fit enough. Both Ken and Sylvia had an enjoyable day, visiting the Memorial Garden and the new education building, followed by lunch with RSM Roy Mathews in the Rowcroft Sergeants Mess. I know that we all admire Ken for his great courage in battling with, and overcoming serious illness.

Recently I had a letter from Gerry Preston of Gawler, South Australia. He attended the 1994 reunion and is planning to come to the 1996 Reunion. There is a good Ben Cook story in the letter which is reproduced in the *Your Letters* section.

Before I sign off, just to remind you that we will be launching a REME Museum Appeal Fund, and I will be asking for your support.

See you in October.

**From the Membership Secretary
John Northam (47A)**

Members are again asked to consider placing an advertisement in their local paper highlighting the existence of the AOBA and inviting any detached ex-apprentices to contact me for more information.

Since the AGM last October we have enrolled 18 new members bringing our active (address) list to 600. However, the number not paying the £5 administration subscription continues to rise with, at the time of writing (end of February), only 360 (60%) having paid for this year. The remainder will again receive, in lieu of OBAN, a gentle reminder that subs are overdue. So, if you know someone who says he has not received his OBAN, the chances are he is one of the forgetful 40%.

On a lighter note, I was pleased to be able once again to exchange fraternal greetings on your behalf with the British Services Ex-Boys Association (BSXBA) in New Zealand on the occasion of their 2nd AGM on 7 October 1995. They thoughtfully time their reunion weekends to coincide with ours! Although they have approximately 30 members and are open to ex-boys of all three Services, *twelve* are ex-Arborfield apprentices.

As you read this, June and I will probably be in limbo having finally (at the second attempt) moved out of Fleet and will be looking for somewhere in Devon to call 'home'. So, until we are settled once again, please continue to address all mail for the Membership Secretary to my current address (the Royal Mail's Redirection Service will do the rest) until further notice.

However, no telephone calls should be made to my Fleet number after 17 May 1996. After this time, for any urgent membership matters, please telephone Brian Hornsey on 01256 816188 and he will relay your queries to me and I will return your call in due course. In the meantime please be patient with any inconvenience our move may bring.

Hope to see you all in October.

Army about-turn on New recruits

(as reported in the national press)

Junior leaders courses are to be re-instated, apprentices colleges revitalised and vocational training offered to recruits as part of an overhaul of Army recruiting to solve the manpower shortage.

Measures being considered include a £100 bonus or a weekend's leave for every friend that soldiers persuade to join up.

The proposals are an admission of failure for the Ministry of Defence's recruiting policy in the 1990s leading to today's shortfall of 2,000 front line troops.

The 1992 closure of the junior leaders scheme, which offered talented infantry recruits, aged 16 to 18, "fast-track" training to become non-commissioned officers, will be reversed. Within the Army, it was regarded as a highly efficient method of attracting the right sort of recruit.

It was scrapped as part of the post-Cold War reforms of the early 1990s that have seen the armed forces levels fall from 312,000 in 1989 to 233,000.

The Army is also considering the use of National Vocational Qualifications as a way of proving an individual's worth to future employers.

A plan to close High Street recruitment offices and move their role to Job-Centres may also be scrapped.

Manpower levels have fallen so low that some units have taken over recruiting themselves. One battalion spent part of its regimental funds on a recruitment drive. It proved successful and the unit was able to provide an entire Company for another understrength unit.

Farewell Ceremony for Colonel Mike Dorward

(as reported in The Craftsman)

The end of an era was marked at Princess Marina College on Thursday 12 October. Col Mike Dorward completed his tour as Commandant from where he started as a young apprentice in 1960.

The occasion was marked with a short ceremony when the new Commandant Lt Col Bob Mount formally received the Golden Key, (confirmed on a 1033!)

Col Dorward's enthusiasm for adventurous training was the theme, and in his canoe he went, guided by his young officers.

He was led by the College Pipes And Drums and flanked on the 'banks' by the permanent staff and apprentices. Where was he going? - the Garrison Swimming Pool? - But NO!

The route continued to the unfinished footbridge linking Rowcroft and Hazebrouck Barracks. Under the eagle eye of Master at Arms, Capt Tony Higham, the Colonel's climbing prowess was witnessed by the College.

Once firmly on the platform he was met by his RSM, WO1 R Mathews, and together with the RSM of his next command, WO1 Skalley, sealed the event with a glass of champagne, (much to the amusement of passing motorists).

The abseil into SEAE territory was something less than glamorous, but achieved in typical spirit.

The College wish Col Mike the very best in his new appointment and is grateful for the large part he played in ensuring the future of the Apprenticeship.

REME HOTEL, HAUS URBAN, Wertach

Anyone visiting Germany in the near future?

Just a reminder that this Hotel exists, situated on a hillside above the town of Wertach. The town centre is only 3 minutes walk away, where one can experience the delights and atmosphere of life in a small town in Bavaria. It is open to *all serving and retired* members of the Corps and their families, with equal opportunity offered to all ranks.

Facilities include, washbasins in all rooms, showers on all floors (with facilities for the disabled on the ground floor), TV/video/games room, resident's only bar, family sauna, clothes washing & drying facilities, a large garden with play area and car parking. Bed & breakfast, evening meals and packed lunches are also available.

Booking enquiries to SO3 ES (Trg), ES Branch, HQ 1(UK) Armd Div, BFPO 15, Tel No (05221) 995447 or 82033. When dialling from the UK, dial 0049, then omit the first zero in the area code.

Please note that all correspondence concerning the REME Hotel should be sent through the British Postal System and *not* through the official military facility. First or second class stamps from the UK and within Germany, at the current postal rates for private mail, apply.

PRINCESS MARINA COLLEGE Opening of Princess Marina Hall

By Major John F Lloyd QLR
(Adjutant PMColl)

The second of February 1996 saw the formal opening of Princess Marina Hall by the Director General Equipment Support (Army), Major General P J Corps.

The Hall is the first new build in Rowcroft Barracks since the completion of what was the Depot REME. It heralds the completion of major work necessary to accommodate the revised 8 month course before apprentices move on to their adult trade training.

The Opening Party was 'piped aboard' on its approach by the College Pipe-Major, SSgt M J Elder BW.

Following the blessing by the College Padre, the Reverend Paul Thompson, DGES(A) formally opened the Hall.

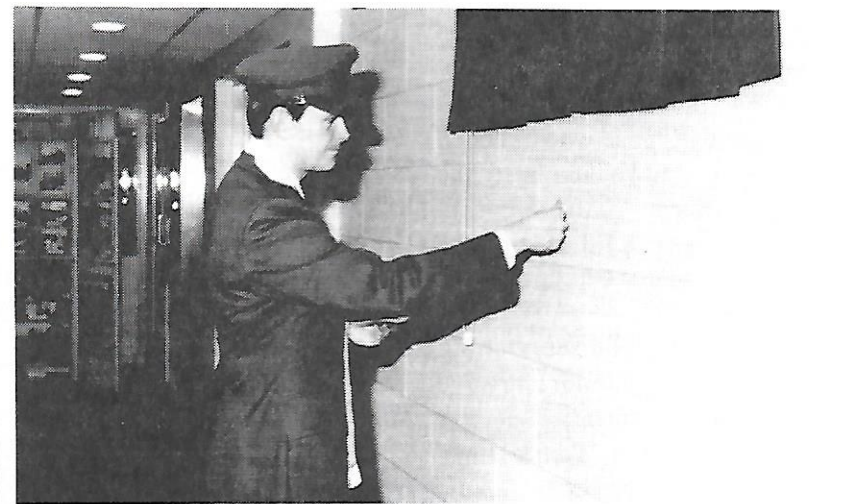
The Hall comprises the Military Education Wing with its offices and six classrooms; an extensive library complex including IT systems and areas for private study; and a state of the art lecture theatre with seating for 170 apprentices.

The General proved to be an attentive student when being briefed on the hi-tech operations by the Quartermaster, Major A W Cullen.

The ceremony was followed by drinks in the Sergeants' Mess and concluded with a formal luncheon in the Hazebrouck Officers' Mess.



Princess Marina Hall (as viewed from roof of College HQ)



The Padre gives the blessing



DGES(A) & Commandant view the plans & progress of the build

ARMAMENT ARTIFICER TRAINING IN THE EARLY 1950s

By Tom Pearce (Feb44)
- 11 Armt Art (Guns) & 21 Armt
Art (Radar)

Looking at the score card in the 'Tiffy Stakes', Page 21 OBAN 8, I suspect that most if not all of those listed took the shorter wartime type courses which I believe were of some 6 months duration. These courses lead to some very young WOs 1 in due course. There was some specialisation, in that these shorter Guns courses were either on Field or Anti Aircraft (Ack Ack) gun equipments but not both.

Maybe some of those who attended this type of course and also the Leading Artisan Staff Sergeant (LASS) courses can fill us in on the details.

For post war tiffy courses, starting in about 1948 a minimum entry age of 21 years was specified. It was necessary to pass a 'Prelim'. My own Prelim took place in Singapore, where a week was devoted to technical testing and a week to military aspects. The latter was under the supervision of RSM Martin Harvey. For those in the Middle East similar selection arrangements were undertaken at Tel El Kebir in Egypt. UK Prelims, of course, took place at REME Training Centres.

Guns, Vehicles, Radar & Control Equipment courses lasted 18 months, more or less. Instrument courses were, I believe, shorter, say 14 to 15 months. This of course gave some advantages in the seniority stakes. Tels courses? I don't know. It is also worthy of note that at one time, on successful completion, seniority was back dated to the beginning of the course, with back pay.

When this practice ceased I cannot say, but it was before I could benefit from it!

All courses included a total of 6 weeks military training at 3 (Tels) Trg Bn Bailleul Camp Arborfield, under the guidance of CSM Harry Muckett and his merry men, some of whom were ex-apprentices who had gone native by converting to Regimental Duties (RD). They were, of course, as one would expect, good at their job! Initially this part of the course consisted of two '3 week thin slices' at the beginning and end of the course, but it was later changed to 'one 6 week thick slice' at the start.

"Around me in a half circle,
MOVE"!

is a phrase which may stir a few memories of drill instruction practice on the square, as well as swotting from the then newly published best selling book 'Drill All Arms 1951.'

There was a high throughput of Artificer courses in the early to mid 50s. A Vehicle tiffy course started every 3 working weeks and a Guns course every 3 months. Some 220 newly qualified Artificers were admitted to the seniority role in 1953.

The first 13 week module of technical training for Guns and Vehicle courses took place in B Coy 4 (Armt) Trg Bn at Martinique Barracks.

It started with Maths, Mechanics and Technical Drawing and included our introduction to 3rd angle projection. It covered most skills of hand (tin bashing, blacksmithing, welding etc.) as well as Machine Shop Practice. It concluded with a one week 'Bar' exam. I still remember some of the very useful items that had to be committed to memory

for 'the bar', such as the melting points of tin and lead as well as the 4 golden rules of electric welding. At this point in the course quite a number of students were eliminated and others bowed out throughout the course at their own request.

The lost costs of training arising from such rejection did not seem to be a factor in those days. There was little use of back squadding. My own course, No 11 Armt Art (Guns) started with 13 students and only 5 completed the course and one of those was back squadded.

We did, however, gain 2 forward squadded students from another course.

There followed a wide range of equipment training at 4 (Armt) Trg Bn Guadaloupe Barracks and/or at 6 (Veh) Trg Bn in the buildings formerly occupied by 3 Central Workshops REME (now occupied by SEME.)

Radar & Electronic Control (EC) courses took place at 5 (Radar) Trg Bn Hazebroucke Barracks Arborfield.

These courses followed their own type of common syllabus; Maths, Physics, Electrical Engineering and Electronics, before passing on to more specific theoretical and practical equipment training. I have no knowledge of Tels courses, but I'm sure that someone will fill the gap.

Most of us came to Artificer courses at Bordon from a number of years in responsible jobs. Inevitably, being lumped together as platoons of student Sergeants was something of a comedown. Substantive Artisan SSgts and WOs retained their rank whilst under training.

4 Bn ran a separate WOs & sergeants mess for students at Louiseberg South Barracks. Accommodation for those living in was in barrack rooms. Dining and bar provision in a former cookhouse was somewhat basic.

6 Bn had a combined staff and students mess at Canada Hutments where the facilities were of a slightly higher standard, but accommodation for students throughout the course was in barrack rooms.

Work apart, there was something of a happy go lucky atmosphere. A large proportion of the tiffy students were ex-Arborfield apprentices and hence the courses were rather like a prolonged Old Boys Reunion.

A large proportion of students rode motor cycles. Many were courting (to use an old fashioned phrase). In consequence, many (myself included) took the trip to the altar during this period.

At this time we were also being issued for the first time with No 1 Dress, which was very convenient for the aforementioned weddings.

By the standards of the 1990s, very little alcohol was consumed (organised social functions apart). We didn't really have the money! Many went for tea, a wad and a natter to the Brownlow Hall, a Church of England canteen, where weekly dances were also held.

Music for the dances was provided by the 'Martiniques' dance band, whose members were drawn from within the Garrison. There were two cinemas also to complete the entertainment scene.

It was also the time for the implementation of 'Phase II' of the formation of the Corps. Tradesmen from 'other arms', such as the RAC, RA, RASC etc., were being transferred into REME and many were taking tiffy courses. Some of these men were ex-Arborfield apprentices who had been allocated to Corps other than REME on leaving the AAS.

It was never too clear how Royal Signals technicians escaped transfer to REME under Phase II. However, any 'other arms' Sergeants and above who had more than 10 years service were accepted into the Corps as Artificers without further training.

In the early to mid 50s odd numbered Guns courses were filled by REME students and even numbered ones by students who had been transferred from 'other arms'. All those from other Corps were entered on a separate 'other arms' roll.

There was also some direct entrant students. No 11 Armt Art (Guns) included an ex Ordnance Artificer Royal Navy and an ex Armourer Royal Air Force as direct entrants.

Civilians with the appropriate background were also eligible. Indeed, as far as I am aware there is still provision for direct entrants to tiffy courses to this day, should anyone wish to apply.

It may also be worthy of mention that circa 1953/1954, Leading Artisan Sergeant (LAS) courses of some 6 months duration were introduced for National Servicemen. Candidates were normally of graduate or HND/HNC level and were of a high intellectual standard. It would be interesting if some recent graduates of the tiffy training system could comment on the similarities and the differences between then and now.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the help with comments on errors and omissions and additional material provided by Bryan Adams (Oct42) and Peter Darton (Oct 43) both of 11 Armt Art Guns).

ARMY GOES EASY ON RECRUITS

(As reported in the national press)

The Army's traditionally rigorous basic training has been watered down because today's young men and women are not as tough as their predecessors, one of its most senior officers said yesterday.

The 'sink or swim' attitude of forcing all recruits to meet tough fitness standards straight away has been dropped, a senior officer told the Commons defence committee.

Instead, modern recruits are brought gradually on to a regime of physical exercise. Initially they are allowed to use training shoes and are given boots only when they are judged to be ready for them.

We are recruiting a generation of young people who seem to need more time to develop the resilience and toughness we require of them. If you try to push it too quickly they seem to break more quickly than previous generations.

These comments come after a report in the national press about the declining physical standards of recruits, including news that the Army's traditional recruit fitness test is being replaced.

Frontline units are short of more than 2,500 men following poor Ministry of Defence management of changes in manning after the end of the Cold War.

We have to take into account of that in our approach to training to give recruits as gentle an introduction to the Army as we can.

The MoD has initiated several emergency policies to try to correct the shortfall in infantry, cavalry and frontline armoured units.

Any one care to comment?

PERSONALITY SLOT

by Steve Johnson (46A)

This year the major group is 46A.

There have been many 50th anniversaries lately like VE and VJ day, to name but two, but there was something special about our arrival in 1946. Coming from the Dukies, where on Sunday church parade I used to wear dad's Scots Guards badge, only to find RSM McNally, Scots Guards, in charge at Arborfield - that made me give him a wide berth in case dad had locked him up as a young recruit. I did get to do a bit of gardening for him later as part of 7 days jankers for smoking during a film in the gym, but that's life.

I really enjoyed my time in the Corps of Drums, especially as we were the last on the square for church parade and then, after playing the school up to the gym for church, we disappeared to the band room while the rest were in church.

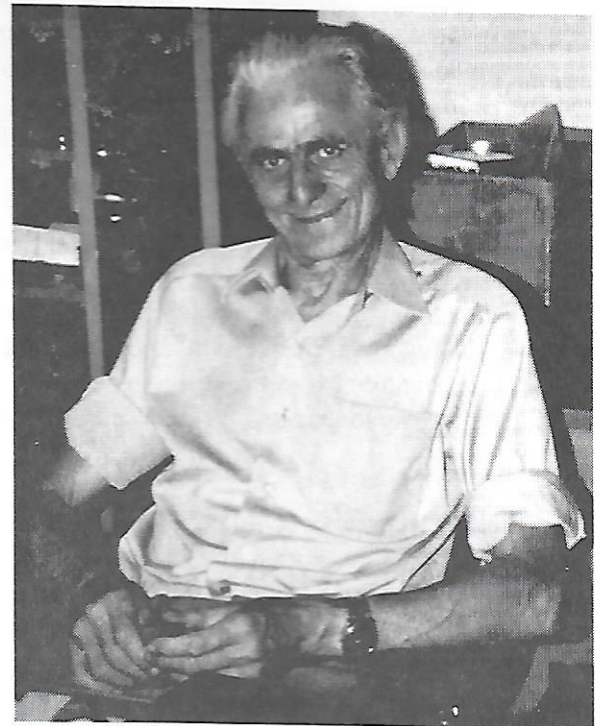


Cpl Johnson - Duke of Yorks Royal Military School
1945.....

In February 1949 I left D Company and after a short stay at 6 Command Workshops Colchester I moved to 27 Command Workshops at Watchfield.

Then on to Warminster to wait for my draft to Tripoli, Libya. During this time they caught us for lots of fatigues so I hid in Alf Parker's armoury which was very comfortable.

1 Command Workshop Tripoli was housed in the old Italian barracks of Giali annex, across the way from where Gadaffi now lives. Our workshops were in the old Italian works of Alfa Romeo and Lancia. After



.....and the Steve Johnson of today!

growing 10 inches in my 3 years, I next served a short spell with 4 Training Battalion at Bordon who were training very hard in preparation to line the route for the Coronation in 1953.

I then spent 30 days on *HMT Empire Orwell* which, after being escorted through the Formosa Straights because of the trouble between China and Formosa, dropped me off at Pusan. The *E Sang* saw me onto Kure in Japan, about 12 miles from Hiroshima, which was a little worse for wear.

After a period of R & R in Tokyo, *HMT Empire Fowey* took me to the Middle East (where one hopes for Kenya or Cyprus but gets Tel-el-Kabir).

I moved back to Tripoli in October 1955, after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, leaving Tripoli the week before we went into Suez. During my short stay in Egypt I was able to climb mount Sinai from where we got the 10 Commandments and saw St Catherine's Monastery, which is believed to be the site of the burning bush.

I was quite at home in 11 Vehicle Depot Ludgershall, as all the tanks were painted Sand Yellow, but in April 1958 I flew out to Hawai, being met by gorgeous girls with garlands of flowers for us which went well with our olive green (OG) uniforms.

There is always a great sense of humour in the services. Going through the Bay of Biscay we always had kippers for breakfast, so before a hydrogen bomb test on Christmas Island in April 1958 what better than a film showing what happens when there is a radiation leak. The April H-bomb was followed in August by two A-bombs, similar to the one dropped on Hiroshima, and then followed another two H-bombs in September. Many of the lads have suffered the effects of sitting out in the open without protective clothing, but after the tests were completed the island was great, being half a degree above the Equator in the Central Pacific with lots of lagoons.

After spending New Years leave in Hawai I flew back to the UK in April 1959 and spent a couple of years at Larkhill for the Corporal missile firing programme and also found time to get married.

The next two years found me at 6 Training Bn Base at Yeovil, before joining 653 Sqn AAC at Falaise Camp at Aden.

Despite the terrorist threat at the time I felt really safe in my Quarter at little Aden with an Arab canteen by my house, until they lobbed a couple of grenades over the second one on the night before the handover of my Quarter - so lots of apologies for the broken windows!

My two years being up, I went to the LAD of 2 Field Regiment RA in Munster until our Brigade returned to the UK, to cut costs, in January 1968.

In July 1970, prior to going onto the long service list in that November, I went on board HMS Eagle, the 45,000 ton aircraft carrier, to do close air support. The world cruise that followed took me to Gibraltar, Malta, Cape Town, Singapore, Sydney, Hong Kong, Durban and back to Portsmouth.

In July 1972 I became the Estate Warden for British Forces Antwerp. My job was to check over houses and get them decorated and repaired for soldiers to take them over and when they leave, the same again. Any problems during their stay I sorted and in my spare time built and ran the Alice Springs Scout/Guide camp site at Grobbendork. I met the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo.

In January 1984 I returned to Bordon to complete my Army service on 6 May 1885.

In April 1985 I joined the Civil Service (MoD Dept) and after a short stay with SWS at Aldershot, once more moved to Arborfield, this time as a civilian Estate Warden.

In 1992 I carried the Legion standard for Bordon at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

During my service, I have received the:

Merit Badge for 25 years service to the Poppy Appeal,

Chief Scouts Commendation and Scouts Medal of Merit,

UN Medal for Korea,

General Service Medal Radfan and South Arabia,

LSGC for 18 years service,

Meritorious Service Medal and Clasp to LSGC for a further 18 years service.

On the 29 February 1996 I finally retire after 50 years unbroken service with the MoD.

I like to think that's kinda special!

REMINISCENCES

By Walter Jobber (Oct 43)

My reminiscences refer to only one man. Why this one man should seem to stay in the memories of so many I do not know, maybe it was because he was so bound up in the formative years of the Army Technical School and continued to make his presence felt long after it was established. A number of 'scenes' present themselves, picture them if you will.....

Scene 1

Ben giving Gilbert the 'orse all the NAAFI slab whilst on a days agriculture training.

The agricultural party of my intake digging out the banking from the edges of the static water tank, draining and dismantling same to extricate the 'orse which had managed to stumble into said tank - or was he enticed?? Nobody would own up to such an heinous crime. After all, we liked Gilbert, except when he was fed with our NAAFI break or we were hitched to the plough to give him a rest.

Being hitched to the plough was a regular occurrence, normally when Ben thought the 'orse was 'tired'. The agricultural party of my intake did spend an extraordinary amount of time between the shafts on one occasion though. This came about because Ben caught us throwing potatoes at Gilbert.

We thought the 'potato' incident was justified because the 'orse had previously consumed our 1000 Hrs NAAFI break. Ben allowed it was justified punishment because, as he put it, we were sabotaging the war effort, but more to the point if our aiming had been of greater accuracy we could have caused injury to his beloved Gilbert.

Scene 2

Ben inspecting the agricultural party to ensure our turnout was up to standard, even though we had been marched

straight from the morning parade where our turnout had already been thoroughly inspected and checked, and of course, Ben himself being immaculately turned out in his standard uniform - no hat, no jacket, collarless shirt, belt and braces for all to see and standing there in a pair of GUMBOOTS!

Scene 3

Ben returning from a night in the Senior Ranks Mess, after trying to drink the place dry, to his place of residence aboard his trusty bicycle. No lights, even in peace time, and his erstwhile antagonist, Sgt Hodgekiss attempting to waylay him. On one occasion he was too successful, causing Ben and his trusty steed to part company, resulting in Ben being 'on parade' for a while with his leg in plaster. Then of course, were the days when his stentorian tones would ring out over the barracks,

"Sergeant Hodgekiss!"

This of course, was the signal for said Sgt to arrive at Ben's location, (where-ever it happened to be), as fast as he could, only to be greeted with a polite (for Ben) enquiry as to what the time was. Like as not Ben would bring his own timepiece out of his pocket and inform Sgt Hodgekiss that he was fast or slow, depending on how Ben decided. At the time we young soldiers thought it was hilarious, though in hindsight it was probably a put up job between them to afford us a certain amount of fun.

Scene 4

His ultimate threat of 'putting you inside' which did happen on occasions. Who will ever forget the look on Prof Norman's face as he carried out Ben's command of

"Report to the guardroom and put yourself inside!"

Of course, there were others of us, knowing that Ben released all his victims when he passed through the gates on his way home, were more inclined to take advantage of his kind

offer - especially when it was a raw, cold and blustery day in the open, whilst in the guardroom all one had to do was to ensure that the fire was giving out as much warmth as it was safe to allow.

Scene 5

Then there were Ben's days out. His contacts within the area were too numerous to count. I myself was volunteered to act, along with others of my intake, as beaters for a pheasant shoot. Being a 'townie' I, and I am sure, others of the same ilk had no idea what was expected of us. Still, we were instructed by some civilians what to do and I myself had a pleasant time beating the s**t out of the grass and the undergrowth.

Then, wonder of wonders, the boss civilian lined us all up at the end of the day and presented each of us with FIVE SHILLINGS. This was wealth indeed! Consider, at that time our service pay was one shilling and two pence a day, of which we were allowed to draw on pay parade the princely sum of three shillings. No wonder there was always a surfeit of volunteers for one of his Saturday excursions.

In conclusion...

On leaving boys service, although I returned to Arborfield I did not go back to the School. Therefore, my final exit through the gates meant that I had no more encounters with Ben - though from what I have read in OBAN it seems that he carried on in his own inimitable way after I left in October 1946.

THE 'TRIALS' OF A RADAR MECH.

by Brian Hornsey (54A)

On 31 January 1957, myself and several other 'bombheads' passed out from Arborfield as the first apprentice trained radar mechanics.

As far as I can remember, after having built our 'superhet' radio receiver kits in 5 division, under the very able supervision of civilian instructor Bill Riddiford (of 'Riddiford's Radio Reference' fame), volunteers were requested to come forward from our intake of tele mechs, to convert to be trained as radar mechs during the last 6 months of our apprenticeship.

Twelve of us were selected and found ourselves under the care of another, but new, civilian instructor Bob Coe. We learned how to swing the hefty starting handle of a huge 3-cylinder Lister die-

sel generator which was to power the School's only Radar Set - a 3Mk7 Fire Control Radar. We all passed our Class III trade test and were posted on to 5 Battalion (as was) to go straight on to a Class II course - the photograph shows our group of innocent eager lads, all with great expectations.

The course entailed re-learning about the 3Mk7 and also the obsolescent 4Mk6 search radar. By now, one would think that the Army, having invested quite a lot of time and money in training me on these two equipments, would actually post me to a unit equipped with these radars. *Not so!*

I was posted to a Locating Battery at Delmenhorst in Germany and was expected to maintain three 4Mk7 radars of which I had absolutely no knowledge. In fact I spent most of my time converting Matador trucks to using winker indicators. Apparently, we were short of electricians.

In the summer the Battery migrated to Todendorf, a small village on the Baltic coast near Kiel for firing practice with its L70 LAA guns. My job was to ensure that the single 4Mk7 radar, which was used to track the shipping circumnavigating our arc of fire, so ensuring that none strayed under the target area, remained serviceable - otherwise all firing ceased!

One day it broke down - wouldn't transmit. Using my total lack of knowledge to the full I had every panel and every unit out of that radar, but to no avail - I couldn't find the fault. The result was that the offending radar was transported some 300 miles back to Delmenhorst and a replacement brought out - another 300 miles, so that firing could continue.

It wasn't until some 6 months later, when I returned to take a Class 1 trade course on the 4Mk7 radar at 5 Battalion, that I realized that, had the Army thought to train me on the correct equipment in the first place, I would have



Standing: J. Smith 016, Goetze, H. Trill, 'Ginger' Kincaid, Penny, Roy Langford
Seated: 'Scotty' Holmes 032, 'Lemmy' Holmes 023, Caldwell, B. Hornsey, 'Eddy' Edwards

The First Ex-AAS Radar Mechs at 5 Battalion - 1957

diagnosed that fault quickly and correctly. It was simply a blown 2.5 mm fuse in the 'Sync Unit' which eventually triggered the Magnetron valve in the radar's transmitter.

This would appear to be the pattern of my REME service. Of course, now having been fully trained on the 4Mk7 radar and a first class tradesman to boot, I was eager and ready to show my new ability back at the Battery. *Not so!*

"Corporal Hornsey, how would you like to go to Australia?" - this from the CO of our Field Workshop.

After due processing at the REME Depot and a period of embarkation leave, I flew out courtesy of the RAF to Adelaide to join 8 JSTU (Joint Services Trials Unit) which was split between its base at RAAF Elizabeth and the firing range at Woomera - the trials were for the then new Thunderbird missile, code name *Red Shoes*.

I was to join the unit halfway through the trials to take over the testing of the electronic proximity fuses. These were designed to detonate the warhead at a certain distance from the target. Everyone else had been pre-trained by the civilian manufacturing company. *Not me!*

I just did not understand what I was supposed to be doing and being SECRET, no one thought it necessary for me to know! The last 5 missiles of the trials were to be fitted with live warheads in place of the telemetry monitoring units used up until then. I was given a little wooden box with a meter and a switch on it - it was called, 'a Fuse Test Set.'

"Just plug it into the connecting cables to test that there is no arming voltage present before connecting up to the warhead - if there is DON'T PLUG THEM IN" - this from the RAF Flight Lieutenant in charge of fuses.

Having previously been scorned for taking a misreading, I remember mak-

ing the test and there was a voltage present, but I was unsure if it was the arming one - and no way was I going to show my ignorance again - so I prayed hard, shut my eyes and rammed the cable connector into the warhead! Nothing happened, but ah the follies of youth!

I survived the remainder of the trials (some 10 months) only to be posted to the Base Workshop at Old Dalby where I kicked my heels until,

"Corporal Hornsey, how would you like to join the RAF?"

I was sent to join RAF Henlow, the idea being to build six sets of radar jamming equipment from scratch, one of which was destined for the School of Artillery at Larkhill for trials. I spent a pleasant summer at Henlow, being the only 'brown job' on the Station and on completion of the build, was posted with the equipment to a Locating Battery at Larkhill.

Here we were to fit my units along with various other bits of supporting equipment into a Humber 1-ton truck and were to drive all over Salisbury Plain trying to jam the Battery's Green Archer mortar-locating radars. This trial lasted on and off for about 18 months. I cannot remember being aware of the results and wonder if this equipment ever came into service in any form - anyone out there know?

Now that I was pretty conversant with this new equipment, I was transferred to the School of Artillery and was to be given the job of maintaining the School's electronic surveying equipment ('Tellurometers' as they were called).

As was the now normal way of things, I had absolutely no knowledge of this equipment - just stick your screwdriver in and twiddle a few pots and hope that everything is OK!

Luckily, the Chief Engineer of the civilian UK Company was a regular visitor and so was a useful source of assistance. In fact, it was he who offered me a job

as a service engineer when I left the Army in 1964.

The CO of the School of Artillery Workshops thought it would be a good idea if the REME detachment went on a summer camp under canvas at Weymouth during September.

"Sergeant Hornsey, you're a trained radar mechanic, I want you to be responsible for setting up the camp lighting system. String the lights up through all the accommodation tents, the cookhouse and the officer's quarters before nightfall."

I did this and never having had to do it before made a mistake. We started up the Meadows diesel generator and for about an hour it was just like a carnival. The Camp looked so pretty with all my lights blazing away very brightly. Then, one by one, the light bulbs started blowing and each time one was replaced, some time later it would blow again.

"Must be a faulty batch of bulbs, Sir."

"Well done Sergeant, keep up the good work!"

When we eventually struck camp, I realized I had plugged the cable into the 415 voltage output of the generator in mistake for the 230 voltage. I never did admit it until now.

As I look at my 'Certificate of Service' - Army Form B108 - I wonder what possessed the CO when he wrote the following testimonial,

'Sgt Hornsey has done work of great value to the Army and is a credit to his Corps. He has shown an extremely high standard of ability at his trade, and is most reliable, thorough and industrious. He has a pleasant, cheerful and confident manner and shows a mature and responsible outlook. Had he chosen to remain in the Army, he would have been assured of advancement.'

Little did *He* know!

THE JUMBLED JOTTINGS OF A 'THIRTYNINER'

By Fred Ford (39A)

First of all a tribute to the outgoing editor of OBAN, John Northam, who with the help of his wife, June, took the old format of our Newsletter by the scruff of the neck and transformed it into a very interesting and informative style of magazine.

John must have worked very hard on this project during the winter of 1991/1992 resulting in Issue No 1 which we were all delighted to receive in the spring of 1992. Well done and a big thank you to John coupled with very best wishes to Brian Hornsey, the incoming editor.

I found Issue 8 very interesting, particularly 'My First Day' by John Maddox (44B) and young McNally's account of the Reunion 95. Wish I'd known earlier that Ben Cook's widow was still going strong and I will most certainly visit her during the next reunion weekend.

Thinking about young Mac being an apprentice with dad as the RSM, I would imagine it would be rather more difficult for him than the other lads. One big advantage, though Mac, not much chance of you being homesick! I know that at the age of 14 in the May 1939, many of us frequently sobbed under the blankets at night with homesickness but, of course, we eventually got over it.

Many Old Boys will remember CSM Nick Ozanne of A Company. Well, he is still going strong well into his 80s and we exchange Christmas cards and reminiscences annually. This time Nick told me of an occasion when Ben Cook caught a boy smoking and ordered him to find 100 match sticks, scrub 'em and tie them in bundles of 10 and put them on his desk.

Nick went on to say that one day he was in the Orderly Room when a culprit came in with his 100.

Ben pointed to a fire bucket full of water and said,

"Now sink 'em!"

Must have been in the afternoon as Ben was rather fond of a drop of the amber nectar at lunch times. Nick lives in Guernsey and I will provide his address if any one wishes to get in touch. I understand he was awarded the MBE for services to the Cadet Force.

Difficult to imagine apprentice training without a gymnasium on the site, but that's how it was in 1939 and when the foundations were laid some time after our arrival we looked forward to the grand opening with eager anticipation. It really was a multi-functional building with a stage, cinema projection room and screen as well as the usual body testing tackle for the gymnasts among us.

The cinema shows provided much needed escapism at the time and the first film I remember being shown was 'The Great Waltz' (B/W) with the wonderful Strauss music. Then later on we had 'Alf's Button Afloat' with the Crazy Gang followed in due course by most of the films featuring Deanna Durbin who is still my favourite singer.

I think most of the lads were secretly in love with Deanna, with the exception of expert tap dancer Sgt Arthur Leatherland of the Sherwood Foresters, whose bunk in one of the C Company spiders was literally plastered with pictures of Alice Faye.

Another memory of functions which took place at the time concerns our introduction to the infra-red beam which seemed rather miraculous and impossible. Can't remember his name, but I think he was a retired major, a very large and learned gentleman, who with the aid of an immense model railway

layout demonstrated that he could stop and reverse the trains using the magical invisible ray. Seemed magic at the time but now 50 plus years on we all have this principle incorporated in our alarm systems.

Getting away from Arborfield (which we all endeavoured to do) I expect many ex-boys from the era of World War II will remember the Mobilisation and Holding Centre REME at the fair city of Nottingham. A posting to the Mob Centre could only mean that you were on your way to a theatre of war but, for myself, I really enjoyed my stay during late 1943/early 1944. Most of the suburbs of Nottingham had a Drill Hall at such places as Bulwell, Hucknall, Carlton, Arnold and Beeston, resulting in the fair city literally swarming with REME bods, training and getting ready for something known at the time as 'the second front.' We were all billeted in disused churches and other requisitioned premises but all this seemed perfectly normal in those austere days when we seemed to do more infantry training than the infantry - could have been useful in Normandy, though, when our foothold was precarious during the first 18 days. The people of Nottingham were very kind to us and I recall some very enjoyable evenings of 'wine, women and song' in the Kiara Club at Carlton. Having just completed a year in a bleak, desolate valley (the Workshop at Caldale) near Scapa Flow, Nottingham was Utopia.

Coming back to Arborfield (which most of us tried not to do) the daunting thoughts of an 18 month Artificer's course was a real turn off and when the alternative appointment of Leading Artisan Staff Sergeant became a very agreeable option many ex-boys, including myself, decided to follow this career path since the status was the same as for Artificers. All well and good until the mid 1950s when the LASS qualification was discontinued at a time when there were sufficient Artificers trained to fill vacancies.

The other drawback was, of course, promotion. Whilst I was serving at 4 Command Workshop at York, my CO, the late Lt Col Hebblethwaite tried everything he knew to have me promoted to WOII, but without success. Such was the lot of this particular 'Lassie' and by this time I was much too long in the tooth to contemplate the 'Tiffies' course.

In the event, I finished my 20 years service carrying out Quartermaster duties which I thoroughly enjoyed, but not realising at the time that this phase would generate sufficient interest in the supplies function to make me study for and obtain a professional qualification by way of Corporate Membership of the Institute of Purchasing and Supply (now the Chartered Institute of Purchasing Managers) which opened the door to a very successful second career in civilian life.

Concerning the 1995 Reunion, I must say it took quite a time for me to recognise the various features from the old Rowcroft camp.

The double-deck red buses (Reading to Camberley) no longer run past the old gates and I found it ironical that the Memorial Garden stands on the site of the old guard room where I did 7 days detention under the notorious Provost Sgt 'Grockle' Hotchkiss, for my third smoking offence.

Thinking back, I could never understand the mentality of this man who, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons would creep around the ablutions in gym shoes looking for tell-tale smoke above the door tops of the WCs. Ah well, it takes all sorts.

The Memorial Garden is a wonderful idea and will be beautiful when the various plants and shrubs are fully grown. Must say, the small hairs on the back of my neck stood up as we marched through the old gates after so many years - certainly a very memorable occasion.

Some time ago, at a local REME Association meeting, I had the pleasure of meeting Trevor Guest (60A) and introducing him to the AOBA and last October we travelled down to Arborfield for his first Reunion. It was a particularly moving occasion when, after many years, Trevor was reunited with one of his old room mates, none other than the now Col Mike Dorward.

I know the meeting was enjoyed by both gentlemen and Trevor tells me that, although he is not wishing his life away, he just can't wait for the next Reunion. Actually, Trevor was not a long term Army career man, but now runs his own very successful printing business here in Doncaster and I hope he will not mind me saying that he is held in very high esteem by many ex-service and charitable organisations for whom he does a great deal of unpaid work, both printing and otherwise. More power to your elbow, Trev!

I notice that the Duchess of York has resolved the problem of her alleged £3 million debit balance by prudent use of her childrens' books on 'Budgie the Helicopter' and since I can't seem to win anything on the National Lottery, I must conclude these jottings for now to commence my own new project - childrens' books on Horace the Hovercraft'!

Wish me luck!

INCIDENT REPORT

by
Lord Alanbrooke

*As published in
The Arborfield Apprentice
Spring 1996*

I have the honour thus to write, last night, on guard, I saw a light, I was outside the brand new MEW, the light inside was ghostly blue.

I did not like the look of it, one teeny-weeny little bit! I found the door was open wide, and, cold with fear, I went inside.

The door slammed shut behind my back,
my radio hit the wall a smack,
Now trapped and incommunicado,
I wished I had a loaded Spandau!

But, being skilled at unarmed combat,
I braced myself to fight a wombat,
but nothing stirred, no voice is heard,
no! but wait a bit, there's something weird.

The library door is swinging wide,
I cannot quite now see inside,
I lean toward the source of light,
and shudder at the spooky sight.

The vaulted pride of glazed roof,
has vanished and by God, by struth,
I see a ghostly barrack room,
complete with prehistoric gloom!

Four baleful bulbs illuminate,
some inmates in a gruesome state.
Each soldier thinking it a farce,
actually cleaning bits of brass!

The need for this eludes me quite,
all my best brass is nice 'stay-bright',
but they must do this 'ere the sun,
has its Australian journey done.

Not only that but they appear,
to have to wear all sorts of gear.
You'd probably think that I was fibbing,
if it looked like bits of webbing.

Yet draped around the sombre room,
drying in the fetid gloom,
were braces, gaiters, packs and pouches,
painted green with 'blanco' washes.

And then a smell assailed my nose,
of scorched trousers, I suppose,
and burning Kiwi, boots and sweat,
and sixteen pairs of unwashed feet!

I backed out slowly to the night,
but on my way I got a sight,
of a picture on the wall,
which to me explained it all.

The brand new MEW is built just where
the huts of old D Coy appear,
the library thus bestrides the site,
where grisly sight may you be fright.

The moral, then, is clear to us,
when out on guard don't make a fuss.
Just walk right past the brand new MEW,
for fear these spirits you may view!

*(Lord Alanbrooke was formerly
Captain the Hon V Brooke RA, 2 IC of
D Company during 1969 to 1972 - this
being during the period that D
Company occupied the spider at the
bottom of the square - Ed.)*

'Dick Whittington' Up-to-Date

Army Apprentices School Pantomime

(As reported in a local newspaper during 1949, and sent to us from Australia by Michael Addison (48B))

Gay, colourful and tuneful described the pantomime 'Dick Whittington and his Cat', which was presented at The Army Apprentices School, Arborfield, on Saturday last, and again on Monday. The production was a remarkable success and was given by the boys together with members of the staff, and the latter's wives and families. The script and lyrics were written at Arborfield and everyone is to be congratulated on the 'best ever' pantomime, particularly the producer, Captain Roy A Dacre.

The familiar old story had a topical slant, for it showed Dick leaving his village to join the Army Apprentices School at 'Arborstow'. Three years later he becomes a Boy Sergeant and enters REME. Of course, he is shipwrecked with his cat on a South Sea island, and here the original story is resumed - the cat killing off all the rats and saving the islanders from starvation. Dick names the island 'Arborstow', marries the lovely girlfriend Doris, and lives happily ever after.

Rita Wearn as the principle boy was outstanding, and Jean Marshall made an attractive principle girl, Doris. Lieutenant Tony Chamberlain did well in his role as the cat, while WOII Charles Spaighton caused endless amusement as the dame (Mrs Whittington). Sgt Peter Boulton as 'Tommy', the Recruiting Sergeant and Apprentice LCpl David Phillips as Mr Kidney, another of Dame Whittington's 'boy-friends', also provided plenty of comedy.



'The Second Chorus' - SSgt 'Jigger' Lee (third from left)

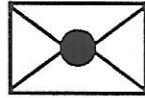


More of the Cast (from left to right): WOII Spaighton (as The Dame), Rita Wearn (as Principle Boy), Jean Marshall (as Principle Girl), A/LCpl Phillips (as Mr Kidney), M Addison (as The Law), and Lieutenant Chamberlain (as The Cat)

The production was well dressed, the scenery and lighting were effective and the standard of chorus work was high. The first chorus of child dancers was delightful, and the second chorus (members of the Ser-

geants Mess) in a mock ballet 'brought the house down' with their frolics. The orchestra, which added to the enjoyment, was conducted by Bandmaster George R Freeth.

YOUR LETTERS



✉ *Alastair (Geordie) Hall (39A) writes*

With memories still fresh of the 1995 Reunion what better time to recall my memories of yesterday and make a contribution to our Newsletter. Like a few others it was my first trip back after nigh on 52 years - a long long time to look back AND remember old faces and places.

However, once I had got my bearings right and seen the old gates it was easy to visualise the old camp with its spider blocks, cookhouse and Company offices. If there was one building that I would like to see still standing it would have to be the Gym. So much went on there, the old black & white films - always packed out - my boxing match with Champ Chamberlain, the Marciano of Arborfield - it was a feat to last 3 rounds; what stamina that lad had!

Then there was the bird man with his warbles. I can still have a duet with a thrush even now and did Sir Malcolm Campbell come and relate to us of his world speed attempts?

What about the dancing lessons with that rather large, dark but very patient lady. What a laugh they were - talk about two left feet, though they were a good basic training for conquests to come.

One thing I found out the hard way, it was much better to go to church than volunteer to eye that mountain of spuds.

It was good to feel that the old camaraderie was still there and that the unique bond between us had survived. It takes some explaining and I for one cannot - perhaps some others can explain it all?

Hoping against hope, I was expecting to hear of close pals from my squad, but no luck. I am sure there are others hoping the same as me. Thanks to N Poulton 43 - I gleaned that his namesake E Poulton, my pal, now lives in the West Brom area. Perhaps the Newsletter could help by publishing a

'Do you remember' or 'Have you met' list. I for one would not mind paying a small fee for this.

Honestly, I had a smashing weekend, with special thanks to Wally Footner and Arthur Sainsbury, also the lads of 39 B & E Coys. Have I laid the ghost of Arborfield, I came, I saw - including those lovely sports fields.

One cannot plan too far in advance at 70 plus years, so I would not bet on being with you all next year. Sorry we did not make the church service, but we got lost following the wrong car!

Finally, please my thanks to the Committee for their time spent in planning it all, the bar staff and catering staff and last but by no means least, the young apprentices of today. I was very impressed by them.

PS Get well soon Lofty (Dear). I never met you, but envied you every Sunday!

(I would be happy to include a 'Do you remember' or 'Have you met' list if other members think it a good idea, but free of charge! - Ed)

✉ *Dudley Martin (H38) writes*

May I say my humble thanks to all those who, by their unstinting efforts, gave so many of us such a marvellous Reunion. It was indeed very much appreciated by so many to so few, to use a line from the past. Despite having to locate us all, you managed it and to do that in confined spaces was very well done. By the efforts of all of you who do so much, we all owe you our gratitude. It is amazing that our numbers swell year by year - you may take that as appreciation of the work that goes into what must be the finest reunion in the UK.

Recently I was working in Norfolk and had occasion to go into a local garage for directions. I was greeted with the words, "We don't serve REME in here!" I wear my Corps tie on many occasions for reasons of advertising and the eternal search for more Old Boys, and in this instance it paid off.

So in good military manner I took the man's name and number and have passed his details onto the Membership Secretary. His Army number was 22109336 and his name is D. Ward, he was in vehicles I suspect.

Imagine my surprise at the Reunion during lunch at the Sgts Mess when a couple came into conversation with me and said that they were looking for an old chum called Ward! I asked for more details for it seemed so unlikely that my encounter could have possibly been with this same Mr Ward, but the man enquiring said that he (himself) came from Norwich and he knew that the man he sought lived around that area. It seems that it could very well be the same man. I gave my phone number to the enquiring man's ladyfriend (maybe his wife??) but I cannot confirm either way, not that it should matter, but so far I have not heard from her to pass on Mr Ward's address which I did not have with me at the time. I have a feeling that he said he was from around 45A. I hope through the good offices of the OBAN that they may meet up again and come next year together. I may hear in any case, but I wish that I had taken the enquirer's name at the time, which in any other situation I would have done.

It was very reminiscent of earlier days to march down the road and to pass through those college gates once more and how nice to have the pipers play throughout - it certainly stirs the blood, even mine which has been diluted so much with various drinks over the years. I have asked many others but no one seems to know, so in my ignorance could someone tell me the reasons for, and the background of, the College's Scottish connections. The pipers add a touch of class to our Reunions and to the College in general. Whilst I am not a Scot I have many true and loyal friends from Scotland. I have served with many from that lovely country and whenever I meet a Scot I know that I have met a very intelligent and GENEROUS person. I therefore take great pride in the College link-up, though

of relocation. Perhaps they would not look out of place directly opposite ours and across the road.

The dinner was, as always, tremendous - a far cry from the 'armoured cars', 'lardie cakes' and 'kip-pers & stodgy duff' we had served up at Hilsea in '38 - although it they did us no harm at all. Incidentally, the 'armoured cars' were served up under the guise of meat pasties!

Finally, I was extremely pleased to meet again with Alan 'Paddy' Loftus who taught me so much about the gear changing and air intake controls on the motorcycle and who looked not a day older (a century or so, but not a day!) Please convey my humble thanks to all concerned and I look forward to seeing you all again, whenever that may be.

✍ Bill Tate (44B) writes

With reference to David Cross's letter in OBAN 8 where he mentions the Sanawar School in India. (*Apologies for the misprint in the last issue - Ed.*)

The school we both attended was the Lawrence Royal Military School, SANAWAR. I would like to point out that there is in existence an 'Old Sanawarians' Association. If any other Old Sanawarians would like information about it they are welcome to phone me on 01978 755092 and I will be pleased to give them details.

I now refer to the controversy about the first boy RSM. I am convinced that it was Dave Ratter. Gordon (Bing) Lakes was never a boy RSM.

However, I would like to point out that Bing did go to the RMAS, was commissioned into the RA and won an MC in Korea. I understand that when he left the Army he entered the Prison Service and rose (I think) to head it.

I would not wish my Scottish friends to feel that

I have enclosed a photograph of the first Old Boys meeting on 4 September 1948, with him

 *Walter Jobber (Oct 43) writes*

Attending the 1995 Reunion and dinner, I was disappointed to find that only two others of my intake were present. But then how can I complain? This was my first appearance. Since leaving the service and settling in Waterloooville, I have only seen one other of my intake and that was Bill Dane. Charles 'Baggy' Orchard is still alive and well, living in the Portsmouth area. I must try to get him interested in coming to the next Reunion. It was great conversing with Johnnie Horwood, last seen in Malaya in 1956, funnily enough at a REME reunion dinner, and with Reg (Susie) Benfield who I had not seen since I passed out of the school gates.

Referring to 'The Great Escape' as it has been dubbed, I do not seem to recall having my sentence curtailed. I was awarded, along with a few more in my Company, five days confined to barracks and if my memory serves me right, we 'did' every one of them. Indeed, over the weekend period there were so many of us on parade that the permanent staff were detailed to drill us on the square.

They also thought of other interesting ways of helping us pass the time, such as disposing of the chippings that were left over after the square had been re-surfaced. This entailed taking one small chipping in each hand from two piles outside the cookhouse, doubling to the air-raid shelters at top of the square and throwing the chippings as far as we could in the direction of the perimeter fence - a bit ironic in my case, because the fence happened to be my exit and re-entry point in The Great Escape!

Lastly, I have to say that the OBAN makes good reading and long may it go from strength to strength.

 *Bob Dann (42C) writes*

With reference to the letters regarding 'The Great Escape', various of us from A Company took part, myself and a lad named 'Waters' from Gosport amongst them, went over the back fence near the Sgts Mess and made our various ways. Waters and

myself, with no money, made our way to Black-water railway station by bus (no fares were taken from service personnel in those days) and thence to Portsmouth by train where, fortunately, the ticket collector also seemed to have taken part in his version of The Great Escape. We returned to Wokingham station having 'lost our tickets' and were allowed through.

For those people visiting the Maritime Museum in Portsmouth, we enjoyed two smashing days of celebrating in the pub on the corner opposite the Museum entrance gates.

Being naive on my first (Christmas '42) leave, I was on a bus to Bishops Waltham (my home village) when a lady asked what the A.T.S letters stood for on my uniform and unusual for me, quick as a flash I replied, "the African Tank Service", with which she promptly paid my bus fare on the arrival of the conductor!

Thanks for the OBAN - always a good read.

 *F J 'Lofty' Cotsford (46B) writes from Germany*

Many thanks for OBAN 8 and the attempt to make me feel younger in the 'Apologies' list. Unfortunately though I was 46B, not 64B!

John Maddox's 'My First Day' brought back many memories for me too. CSM Bradbury was still CSM when I arrived and Ben Cook of course who seemed to have more consideration for Gilbert than for us when it came to breaktime. I can also remember pulling the plough because it was too cold or too hot for Gilbert, and 'Bomber' was always getting shouted at. I can also remember being told off by Ben for not calling a group of apprentices to attention as he approached. When I pointed out that I was also an apprentice, he said I was the tallest so should have done it.

Browsing through the letters, the Yogi Bear badge is also familiar to me, I seem to remember that it appeared in the '50s when a competition was launched for a new design.

I seem to remember that O'Callaghan was the first AT RSM because he was our room NCO (A6) for most of my stay - I can remember we all thought of him as thick as the proverbial 'plank'. One night, just after lights-out, he was writing a new room roster and we all had to call out our names in turn, followed by O'Callaghan's reply "Spell it!" When he got to 'Tubby' Smith, who had the left hand corner bed, Tubby said "Smith", and the whole room shouted "S M I T H"! O'Callaghan rushed out of his room, but we were all under the blankets. I seem to recall we called him 'Tosh' when he was out of hearing range.

It seems a terrible shame that the apprenticeship period has been reduced. Looking back I think that I learnt a lot in those three years, in a room with about twenty people in it. I can recall one hot summer weekend whilst on 'jankers' having to attend 'dress calls' every half hour. I just ran into the room and everyone else cleaned the required dress and helped out in every way possible - real comradeship, which can't develop in a short time.

Although it seems to me that there are very few 46Bs in the lists each year, I do recall some names, Frank Hodson, Bob McGrillen and I can remember being with a Gerry Preston, but I can't think where. In this spirit I am enclosing two photos for the 'Where are they now' corner (qv). Both were taken on the roof of A block in the summer of 1947. I see that one lad has a forbidden cigarette - possession of which later set me on my 'janker' trail - they used to take a lot out of our 2/6d a week.

Well, I hope my memories are good enough to warrant publication and that I shall be able to manage another Reunion soon.

(Thanks, lofty, for your letter and photos - they appear in the 'Where are they now' corner, as requested - Ed.)

 Pete 'Scouse' Gripton (56B) writes

It gave me great pleasure once again to attend an Old Boy's Reunion, this one being the 1995 version. After a long absence from the original site of

the School, it is nice to know that we are now back home - well almost! However, many will share my concern over the rather vague future that may be in store for Princess Marina College, I'm sure I speak for all ex-boys in wishing that the present status, at the very least, can be maintained.

Back to the Reunion itself, it was great to meet up again with both Len Keetley and Russell 'Jock' Dodds. Russell has attended before, but I think I'm right in saying that it was Len's first trip back, and he brought with him both a keen sense of humour and two great photographs - which have since helped me trace two other ex-brats, Brian Fortune down at Bristol and Bob Hudson from near Hordsham, West Sussex - not far away from my Hampshire home! I've since been in contact with all four above and hope they are all at next year's Reunion - over to you lads!

Which brings me to the main 'thrust' of this particular letter. Next year (1996) will see the 40th anniversary of the 56B intake and it is my hope that as many as possible of us will get together to enjoy a memorable weekend and perhaps the odd glass of cheer! To all those 56B members who attend on a regular or intermittent basis here's hoping that you will definitely be there in '96 - Dave Howlett, Doc Houghton, Roger Nickson and George Fleetwood leap to mind - and I can promise that I'm trying my damndest to get a few more there too!

I have already mentioned four names above and there is a great probability that also attending will be Jim Scurr, Klaus Pennington, Dave Braithwaite, Alan Hadfield, Norman Dewdney, Brian Mockford, Gerry Hincks, Hank Smith, Alan Dagless, Johnny Teasdale, Derek Newman - to name but a few.

There are a lot of us out there somewhere and I make this plea to any ex-brat, whether or not you are 56B - if you happen to know of ANY ex-56B lads in your area, who don't know about the Association, or have simply never followed it up, please make an effort to pass this letter on so that our 40th anniversary may be a great success - it's a long time to the 50th!!

Before signing off, may I offer many, many thanks to John Northam and his wife, June, in producing previous issues of OBAN and wish Brian Hornsey all the luck in the world in keeping it going. But remember - it's down to ALL OF US to keep in touch, keep writing letters and turn up for reunions - it's not the place - it's the company!

(Thanks for your plea and good wishes, Pete, always gratefully accepted - Ed.)

✍ Paul Wilson (42A) writes

Someone deserves a note, however brief, of thanks for the work that went into making another splendid weekend. More new faces and plenty of the 'regulars'!

Thanks to all concerned with the weekend including most importantly the RSM for the new venue.

Issue No 8 of the OBAN was as usual a great read, it seems to me that it is a pity that this, our only communicator, is only published twice a year! As I have mentioned previously, (OBAN Issue 3, page 16 refers) I found myself with a slack handful of ATs at 14 Command Workshop, Ashford, Kent in March/April 1944 subsequent to the school dispersal. Erbie Depper, CSM KRRC was the 'CHIEF NEBBY' with one or two other staff members whose names now escape me - what's new!

I have an official record that 2,400 Doodle Bugs fell in Kent and a further 200 fell in London during the short months of summer 1944, Ashford being in the direct flight path. This period, I remember, was one of excitement rather than fear but reflections are soon focussed on the 53 young men, almost all REME chaps now lying in Lenham cemetery just up the road from Ashford, who were blown to pieces at Charing Heath on 24 June 1944 by a bomb. This tragic incident is well documented in our Corps history, of course. I confess to travelling the A20 rather than the M20 to and from Maidstone on occasions and to saluting the little white crosses at Lenham cemetery.

All the ATs at Ashford survived the flying bombs as far as I am aware; a couple of lads were commended for their brave response when a bomb fell close by the ATS quarters. I am inclined to think that it was fortunate that they just happened to be in the vicinity at the time!

After various postings to, and transits via, Woolwich, Warminster, Tuxford, Gainsborough, Buntingford, Kentford, Old Dalby, Melton Mowbray, Halifax, Lincoln, Arborfield, Donnington, Nigeria, Bordon, Singapore, with glimpses of Aden, Durban, Gibraltar and Cyprus, to mention most, I returned and resigned from the Service at Ashford Workshop in 1958. I served at Ashford as a civilian on two later occasions in 1970-74 (a period as Workshop Officer) and again in 1983-89, from where I retired altogether.

I now live within spitting distance of the Workshop and am pleased to keep in touch with a few of the staff, occasionally meeting in the Swan at Great Chart and at Christmas lunches or dinners for example, so I am kept fairly well up to date with the Corps and Ashford Workshop developments.

The latest news is that the Workshop is closing down in 1996 (September is mooted) making way for the high speed rail link. The Intelligent Corps, who took over the admin accommodation when REME (military) vacated in 1964-6, are also to be moved to Bedford, so say the local newspapers.

The main reason for this epistle is to let everyone know that it is closing in 1996 and if anyone would like a last look around the Workshop to contact me - direct if they wish - and I could approach the Civilian Workshop Director for his permission for a visit. I suggest that June/July 1996 would be a good time to arrange a visit.

(Paul, as you see we have complied with your request to publish this proposition, so gentlemen the kind offer is there. Paul also asked us to publish the following disclaimer - Ed.)

Contrary to popular legend, I want it categorically recorded that Paul Wilson never suspended anyone at the School from the beams by their thumbs - toes maybe! D Company produced some of the finest gymnasts ever; their claims to fame being the PROLONGED HANDSTAND.

With the aid of a Chair Windsor, a taut lace from the big toe(s) to the beam ensured perfect balance for considerable periods of time, some of the more enthusiastic members of the Company gymnastic team often missed the Saturday night films in persuance of excellence in the art.

It is also recorded that Paul Wilson with two other aspiring team members got seven pen'orth for being late for church parade, as a result of their eagerness for membership of the team by perfecting the PROLONGED HANDSTAND in this way.

It is admitted, however, that some thumbs were tied behind backs, out of necessity; this being the measure required to prevent premature blindness in some of the junior boys!

✍ *Bill Morrell (54B) writes*

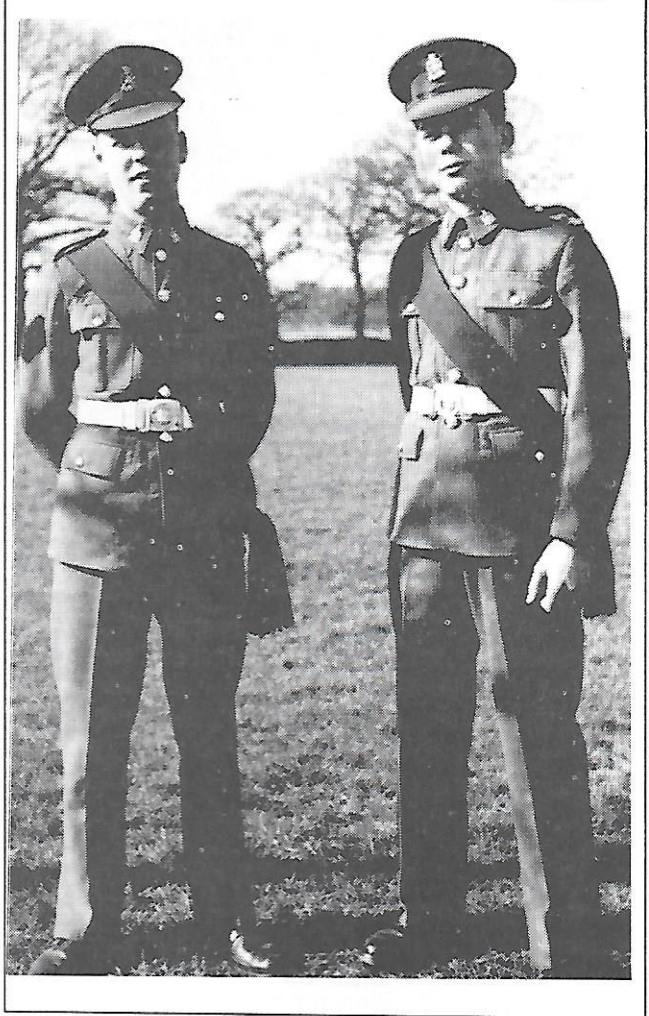
Prompted by the death of a former 54B mate Bob Oliver, I wonder how many of us have survived the ravages of the past 40 years? Enclosed is a photo of Bob (on the left) and myself.

(Bill also enclosed other photos of Champion A Company 6 division, before and after passing out, but these were too numerous to publish here - why not contact Bill if you would like to see them - Ed.)

A few other names that come to mind are, Paddy Webb, Sam Weller, John Shaw and Adrian Cleaton - Ex D Company, Jack Durston - ex- B Company and Geordie Wardle DLI ex-permanent staff, Dave Fisher and wife Chris - who I met in Cyprus, and many more who may have survived the swinging sixties.

It has not been easy for many, I am sure, and to put pen to paper, as suggested, is not their main priority. Maybe a profile of A Company 54B might start something? - and a regular profile each issue naming those serving at the time and where they are now?

(How about starting it off, Bill? - Ed.)



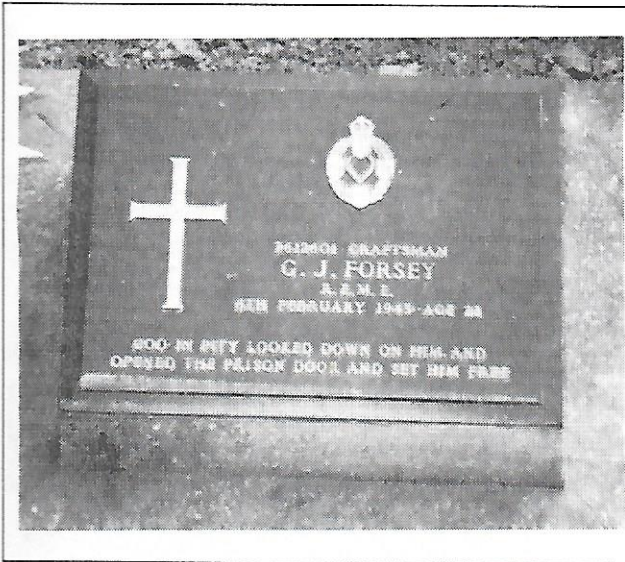
Bob Oliver & Bill Morrell

Finally, here's wishing all ex-boys well - we were all so unloved.

✍ *Dave Levitt (55A) writes*

I enclose a photo I took during November 1995 in Thailand. It was taken at the Kanchanaburi cemetery, close to the old site of the bridge over the river Kwai.

Several thousand POWs from Britain, Australia, Holland and America are buried there and the jungle is the last resting place of unknown thousands more. It is tended by Thai gardeners and the War Graves Commission supervises. Each grave is clearly marked in the style shown. There are several other REME soldiers here but time and poor weather prevented a longer visit.



Craftsman Forsey's Grave at Kanchanaburi Cemetery

My own father was a prisoner here. He survived, but died in 1955 as a result of ill health and the torture to which he was subjected.

Craftsman Forsey, whose grave the photo shows, had a brief career in the Corps. He died far from home, under conditions that are now difficult to imagine. I am sure that he and all those others will never be forgotten. It would be interesting to know if he has any surviving relatives.

(Thank you, Dave, as far as we know he was not an ex-boy - unless anyone knows otherwise? - Ed)

✍ Norman Dalhousie (43A) writes

Please thank all concerned for a splendid reunion weekend - my first. The work that must have gone on behind the scenes was nothing short of tremendous.

My visit entailed a round trip of almost 600 miles, but I can say it was worth every mile. Not to mention 52 years of memories. Good luck to the AOBA for the future.

Whilst watching recent TV pictures of the modern Army flying off to foreign postings in sleek airlines reminded me of the way in which many of us Old Boys had to travel to our overseas postings.

How many of us remember the old MOT troopships? I can recall such names as *Asturias*, *Devonshire*, *Dilwara*, *Dunera*, *Empire Fowey*, *Empire Ken* and *Empire Windrush* (didn't she catch fire in the Med?)

(The Empire Windrush caught fire returning from FARELF on 28 March 1954 and those on board were forced to abandon ship - Ed)

Many times I saw these troopers pass through the Suez Canal going east, while stationed at Kabrit, MELF 15 - remember that 'postcode', anyone?

Insults used to fly from ship to shore, the favourite one from the ship being,

"What do you call this then a Home Posting?"

The usual reply from shore to ship was, in effect,

"Go away and get your knees brown!"

I came home for demob on the *Asturias*, which ended its career in Malta as a stand-in for the *Titanic* in one of the big film epics.

Much, much later my daughter went on an educational school cruise to the Med on the *Dunera*, in far better comfort than we endured, but at least we went on our cruises for free - happy days!!

(Norman, thanks for that bit of nostalgia and thanks also for your encouraging comments about the OBAN - Ed)

✍ Gerry Hincks (56B) writes

To the best of my recollections I have visited Arborfield on only three or four occasions since leaving in 1959 and found the place to be changed out of all recognition.

I do recall seeing the AAS gates standing in total isolation and looking quite forlorn. The photo in the December Craftsman seemed to show that others have recognised this too.

I have many memories of things we managed to do by subterfuge. The illegal motorbikes and cars, narrow trousers and clothes checks when walking out. I remember a 1932 Morris 8 drophead which I bought from a certain Staff Sergeant instructor at the School, whose daughter I used to 'see' (but that's another story) and which I parked down at 'Smokey Joes'.

Many Old Boys of our era will remember a certain hailstorm which almost destroyed Fred Silver's greenhouse. Well, imagine the soft top of my car after that. It looked like a collander. I eventually sold the car to a guy called Stevenson for as much as I'd paid for it (£40.00). He subsequently abandoned it on the grass verge outside the REME Depot back gate.

The next thing is that yours truly had a visit from an irate Staff Sergeant who had in turn been visited by the local Peelers. To the best of my knowledge the said Staff Sergeant is now a civilian instructor at SEME.

I also remember being 'taught' to swim after being thrown off the end of the pier at the lake down 9 Mile Ride during a Wednesday afternoon cross country run.

Life is more hectic now than at any time in the AAS or since, with the exception perhaps of the 'tiffy' course, but I am very much looking forward to the 1996 Reunion especially as it seems that our intake should be well represented.

Derek Williams (45A) writes

With sadness, I am writing to report the recent death of Peter Holme. Peter was in the 45A intake, a Boy Sergeant of B Company and an Armourer. I believe he later became an RSM in the Corps, was commissioned and retired with the rank of Major. He was the Town Clerk of Bude, which I understand was his home town, where he was renowned for his administrative skills. I would also like to say how much I enjoyed the latest edition of OBAN - as someone commented 'it gets better all the time'.

A H Cresswell writes

I have just read Issue 7 of OBAN loaned to me by one of your members, Bert (Val) Valentine. Although I cannot claim to be one of your members I found the reading very interesting.

It would seem that a member, Bryan Adams, is trying to discover who used the School in May 1944 (*see Page 22 of OBAN 6*) and here I have to take issue over details given by Ken Jenner (*see Page 15 of OBAN 7*) regarding 231 Infantry Brigade Workshops REME.

I was in these Workshops and we were, in fact, in the Arborfield School on D Day. I well remember Bob Aisthorpe, one of our turners, on his way to breakfast excitedly telling everyone "It has started"; 'It' being the second front he had been advocating for so long - Bob had heard the news on the radio. Major Job should recall we were in Normandy by the middle of June.

As to Tony Guy's comments re the infantry (*see Page 14 of OBAN 7*), since we were part of Brigade HQ it is possible that units of the Hampshires, Dorsets and Devons were in Arborfield along with us during May.

Maybe Bryan could find the answer in the histories of these three regiments.

My pleasure to have had the opportunity to read the Newsletter.

Harry Hughes (PS) writes

I am writing to say how I thoroughly enjoyed the 1995 Reunion. I thought it was a great success and reflected the utmost credit on all those involved in its organisation.

However, I was very sorry that unavoidably, I had to depart late on Saturday afternoon and consequently missed the Dinner, which I am sure I would have greatly enjoyed and hopefully I will have better luck next year.

✍ *Charles (Chaucer) Harvey (43B) writes*

As the instigator of the discussion as to who was Arborfield's first Boy RSM, I must now admit that enough evidence to the contrary has been submitted to disprove my original belief and assertion that it was 'Tosh' O'Callaghan.

The comments made by various correspondents concerning Field Marshal Montgomery and the passing out parade at which he took the salute finally convinced me that I was wrong and that the first Boy RSM must have been Dave Ratter. I recalled that I was on that same parade as Boy CSM of B Company. I was not however the first Boy CSM of that Company, therefore if O'Callaghan was on that parade as Boy RSM, the natural progression of intakes, *ipso facto* confirms that he could not have been the first. That honour therefore belongs irrefutably to Ratter. Incidentally, the first Boy CSM of B Company was Reg Tye and obviously A Company's must have been O'Callaghan. Can anyone recall the first holders of that rank in the Companies on the other side of the square?

✍ *John Sullivan (Oct 39) writes*

Many thanks to all concerned with the organisation of the last reunion including John Northam who has given outstanding services over the years.

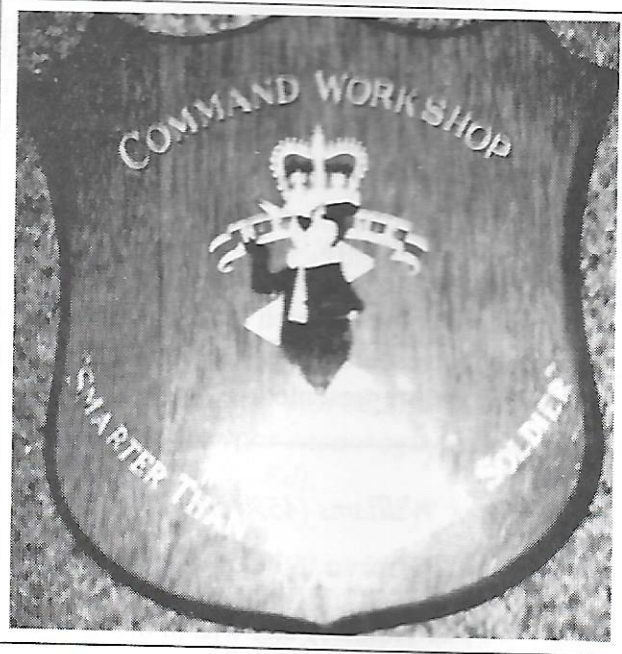
To Fred Stockey (Oct 39), I would like to say - I remember the name, Fred, but can't put a face to the name. Hope to put that straight at the 1996 do. I think you've forgotten CSM Currie (skull and cross-bones) when you mentioned the permanent staff. Two more were Sergeants Oldfield and Gittens. Our hut was ruled over by Boy LCpl John Harman. I wonder what happened to him.

Last Item - this is a typical example of 'Esprit de Corps'. In the letter from David Cross in OBAN 8, I noted a mention of Bill Tate from Wrexham. I obtained his phone number and asked him, if it wasn't too far from him, could he pay a visit to Oswestry Hospital where Ron Le Rendu (Oct39) was undergoing a quite serious operation.

Bill immediately agreed and made a surprise visit, lent him a book and left Ron much cheered. Bill also very kindly sent me a copy of the aerial photograph of the old camp. Ron is back home now and recovering. Thanks very much, Bill.

✍ *Frank T Hodson (46B) writes*

I refer to the comment from Eric Cook in OBAN 8, regarding the Yogi Bear cap badge. I was on duty in Hong Kong, checking-in Craftsmen and looking at ID cards, when one soldier had cut out the REME badge from The Craftsman magazine. The bear had been cut out from an advert saying that Yogi would soon be in the Express. These were both in the wallet of the ID card and the bear had slipped over the horse. I borrowed the card, as I thought it looked great, and asked a Chinese painter in Command Workshops to hand paint the 'Yogi badge' on to a wooden shield in either 1959 or 1960.



From then on, each time my family and I moved into a new married quarter, Yogi was unpacked first and always hung above the fireplace.

(From what you say, Frank, it would appear that you were the originator of this badge, but how did Eric Cook's Dyeline print come about? - Ed)

✍ *Bryan Adams (Oct39) writes*

In OBAN 8 you ask for any comment on the first female apprentices.

Whilst AT Nadine Mackenzie is to be justly congratulated on her success, my own reaction is one of sadness that young girls are now required to compete in the macho world of young male soldiers in order to satisfy the current demands for political correctness.

At the reunion, I caught sight of one or two girls marching in predominantly male squads and 'manfully' striding out to match the pace. I could not help reflect on the ridiculous pictures we see of female soldiers with rifle and bayonet or of female officers with drawn swords.

All of us will recall with unspoken admiration the complementary service provided to the Army by the ATS and WRAC.

They did not pretend to be look-alike men in order to carry out all the tasks appropriate to their physical limitations. With their own organisation and promotion structure, were not the females of yesteryear in a superior position to the girls in the modern uni-sex army?

I'm sure that in due course the ladies will see the disadvantages to them of the new integrated service. There is no need to detail other unfortunate consequences of the policy which are common reading in the daily press.

Finally, remembering our sometimes less than civilised youth, I cannot think of knowledgeable people who would place their young daughter in such a close knit environment as the integrated army. I am glad that in my apprentice day girls were recognizably girls and pleased to be so.

The competition then was not about being the best soldier!

(Thank you for your response, Bryan, I think a lot of us would echo your comments - Ed).

✍ *Tom Pearce (Feb44) writes*

In addition to my article, elsewhere in this issue of OBAN I would like to offer a number of anecdotes from the same era.

An unusual feature of the Dental Centre at Bordon in the 1950s was the fact that there were two dental chairs back to back in the same room. This gave the two dental officers the chance to chat to one another whilst they were working.

On one occasion I was in the chair and my dentist was having considerable difficulty in extracting one of my teeth.

At this point the surgeon at the other end of the room said,

"How do I go about making an appointment for a patient to see the dental consultant at Cambridge Hospital?"

My man said,

"I don't know but if I don't get this ruddy tooth out soon, I will need to find out myself."

My Gun tiffy course included some 4 weeks on Engineer Equipment (C Vehicles). We were turned loose to drive these items. One of our number (not me) managed to de-rail a railway truck with a D4 bulldozer! However, with typical REME aplomb, he managed to push it back on again with the same dozer blade without a word to any member of staff.

In Companies at the Training Centre, the relationship between Artificer students and Company regimental staff was not as cordial as it might have been.

A lot of Saturday mornings were spent preparing for the GOC's Admin Inspection. This involved parading in battle order, with web equipment blanched khaki No 3, brasses polished front and back, small pack blocked out with cardboard, and mess tins gleaming (a battle hazard if ever there was one).

Parades were often subject to what one might call 'Sergeant Major add-on times'. Armistice Day parade - initially Company parade, inspection and wait, march and wait, then service and reversal of parades - 3 hours for a 20 minute service and all in the rain!

At afternoon muster parade one day with about 75 student tiffys present our CSM, 'Ivor' Clewes, B Coy 4 Bn, gave a fine display of positive thinking. He said,

"The Blood Transfusion Unit is visiting the Battalion today and they have had a very poor response. Now, if any one of you has not got the guts to give blood, you can fall out on the right."

One or two fell out but the remainder, myself included, made their way to the gym to give blood. A letter was received from the Blood Transfusion Unit in due course congratulating the battalion on a record turnout.

At Bailleul there used to be a gap in the hedge and a small wooden footbridge which enabled you to cross a ditch and take a short cut to the sports field on the other side of the road.

The last three weeks of my Guns course in September 1954 were spent in the regimental training section at Bailleul. Having been married during the August recess, I was living in rooms in Wokingham and cycled to work every day. One day, I was summoned to report to CSM Muckett. It seemed that I had been seen 'breaking into camp', in that I had ridden my bicycle across the wooden footbridge when entering camp in the morning, instead of using the main gate. I suppose it could have been worse, I might have been castigated for 'being idle whilst riding a bike', namely, 'freewheeling' on the main camp road.

The Corps at this time must have been at its record peace time strength. For the annual Corps rifle meeting, the Bisley ranges were occupied for a week and the Century range with its 100 firing

in full use. Happy Days!

✍ *Michael Addison (48B) writes from Australia*

Having been a member of the AOBA for a year or so, I thought it was time I attempted to make a contribution to OBAN.

Firstly, I must say how much I enjoy the excellent content of the Newsletter, reading and re-reading it and boring any member of the family I can corner with my reminiscences. It's amazing how many memories surface.

I have yet to read any contributions from 48B characters or from 48A for that matter, and nobody from 48B apparently attended the last reunion. Surely I can't be the only survivor!

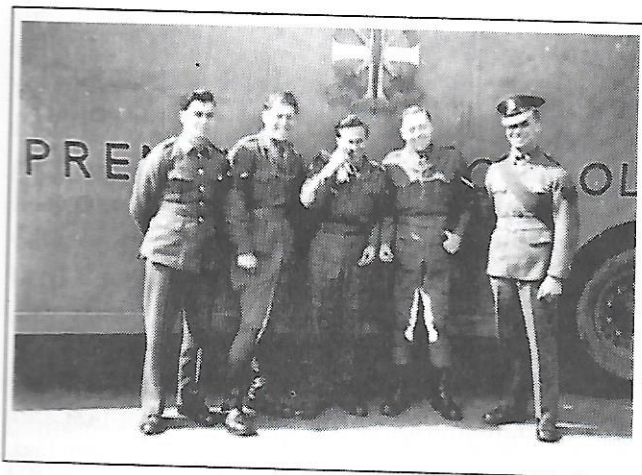
I can remember those first few weeks in HQ Company, Major Charrington was OC. We were a mixed bunch as we assembled on the square to be introduced to our drill instructor, Sergeant Buckley, Grenadier Guards. Full credit to him in that he had most of us marching in step in quite a short time.

It was a different matter when it came to teaching us how to salute, though. Sgt Buckley had sustained a war wound on his right hand or arm, and as a consequence was permitted to salute with his left arm. You can imagine the confusion amongst his squad of raw recruits - it took many frustrating hours for him to convince us that we did not share that privilege! I guess he must have had the same problem with every one of his squads and I have often thought about whether or not he found a solution to it.

I wonder how many would remember the inter-Company one act plays and the Pantomime of 1949 - my introduction to amateur dramatics - what an experience! Strangely though, I can't recall any further plays or pantos after that.

(Michael also enclosed a newspaper cutting of the time, reporting this Pantomime. This is reproduced elsewhere in this issue of OBAN - Ed)

In May 1951 I was lucky to be chosen, along with Sam Weller of D Company to go on a recruiting tour around the South East - the photo shows from left to right: Sam Weller, CMP motor-cycle escorts, an RASC driver and myself.



We travelled with a 60 foot 'Queen Mary' trailer very well laid out with various displays. It was an interesting and enjoyable episode with big crowds gathering wherever we stopped. I have no idea what effect it had on recruiting, but I hope it was a positive one.

I have read with interest from those claiming to be the youngest tiffy. I think I might have the dubious distinction of being the oldest tiffy. I completed my course on 18 December 1968, just nine days after my thirty-sixth birthday.

I did have a six month delay before before starting my course due to the fact I had only just taken up a new posting when I was selected by the selection board. That did not really worry me unduly though, as my posting was to Fontainebleau in France. I guess it was much the same over the preceding years.

I always had such good postings. I mean, who would want to leave Singapore or Penang sooner than one had to for an 18 month stint in Bordon? Perhaps I was a bit short sighted but I have few regrets and have only happy memories of my 25 years of Army life.

The twenty-odd years since then I have spent here in Australia, which to my mind has to be one of the best spots in the world. So, all in all I can say it has been a fortunate life for me.

As an appropriate finale, I hope to be able to attend a reunion, even though I guess October would not be the best month of the year to visit the UK!

(We now have an Oldest Tiffy ! - see table. I agree, Australia is one of the best spots in the world, Michael. I spent a year at Adelaide and Woomera and when on leave, managed to hitch-hike some 4,200 miles up the East Coast. I have always promised myself a return visit sometime - Ed.)

✍ Pete Spargo (39A) writes

With reference to the 'Tiffy Stakes', you have a runner up. I originally thought I had moved fast, but am amazed to find ex-apprentices had made it at 20. I am applying for the fourth position!

In August 1942 I was stationed contentedly at 11 AA Workshops, Wolverhampton, (where I discovered ATS girls), when the OC Workshops sent me to Croydon to sit the Artificer Prelim.

The final interview was with a Major to assess my 'character suitability'. We had been informed that the minimum age for Artificer was 21 years, so I needed to avoid the question of age. The interview went thus:

"How old are you, Corporal Spargo ?"

"My birthday is the sixth of September, Sir."

"Answer the question, Spargo."

"I am 21 in September, Sir."

"Which year, Spargo?"

"1943, Sir."

"If my Maths are correct you are therefore 19 at present - OUT!"

I finally made Artificer Gun (AA) on 10 November 1943, so I can claim 21 years, 2 months, 4 days.

P.S. A social footnote. We used to 'study' in the 'Greyhound' Croydon and I was bought a pint by comedian Max Miller, who embarrassed us by saying, "These young men, fighting for King and Countryetc." None of us had been anywhere!

(The 'Tiffy Stakes' table continues to grow - wasn't promotion fast in those days - Ed.)

The league table so far stands as below - any more runners out there?

The Youngest 'Tiffy Stakes'				
The Runners	Date	Age		
		yrs	mths	dys
Pat Hardy (39B)	25/05/43	20	2	8
Lawrence Nixon (Apr 42)	08/10/47	20	4	5
Eric Cook (Jan 42)	25/02/47	20	6	10
Pete Spargo (39A)	10/11/43	21	2	4
Peter Jones (42A)	28/08/48	21	2	14
Pat Naylor (42A) - LASS	14/12/47	21	3	27
Tony Ireland (46A)	08/08/53	22	4	4
Oldest Tiffy? -				
Michael Addison (48B)	18/12/68	36	0	9

✍ *Brian Conway (Jan 42) writes from Cyprus*

I have been reading and re-reading the eight issues of OBAN, from Issue 1 of Spring 1992 through to Issue 8 of Autumn - Winter 1995, which were lent to me by Paul Wilson (42A) and as a result have applied for membership.

I understand that John Northam (47A) was here in Cyprus from 1957 to 1960, and I would have met him had my expected posting to 8 Infantry Workshop, Nicosia, from Benghazi actually happened. This was at the time when Libya was in the process of running down. Indeed, our MFO boxes had already arrived in Cyprus and I was one of only ten soldiers remaining in Benghazi (although RAF El Adem and Tobruk remained and Tripoli had already closed down).

But then King Feisel of Iraq and his family were assassinated in a coup and within hours Benghazi was swarming with British Troops from Cyprus and Malta, and I remained to establish a Vehicle Repair Facility. So I never did get to Cyprus until my retirement in 1986!

This reminds me to ask whether Bill Tate (44B), who is a regular attendee of reunions and is mentioned in several letters, is the Bill Tate who came to us at 624 Ordnance Depot RAOC LAD (in Benghazi) from Cyprus as a Captain RASC in 1959? If so, he would have been my acting CO Workshop.

I was also a member of the permanent staff at Arborfield, just prior to my going to Benghazi and just after my return to the UK to spend the last seven years of my Army service at the old School.

I regret to say that in my total ten and a half years as a member of the permanent staff at the School, I never realized that there was a thriving AOBA until Paul Wilson told me!

I am now in the process of writing out my 'Personality Slot' together with an article commenting upon some of the letters published in the eight issues of OBAN which I shall shortly be sending off the the Editor for possible publication.

(Thank you, Brian, since receiving your letter, I have received your Personality Slot article and letter, but too late for this issue - Ed.)

✍ *David Ferns (44B) writes*

I have been going to write this letter since the arrival of OBAN 8 and had better get on with it before issue 9 is already on the press.

The Reunion was as good as ever, particularly as it was held on the old site which helped to conjure up many nostalgic memories. No less than seven of our intake were there, a very good representation, I thought, so I greatly look forward to the next one.

Now, a few points from the last, excellent OBAN:

Much has been said about the Toy Soldiers Display and certainly it was presented at an AAS Open Day as in the photograph, but it has not yet been said that it was originally performed at Olympia during the first Royal Tournament after the war. I think that the two intakes of the day actually did it and many were the tales told of glamorous nights out in London on their return. I wonder - but we were green with envy anyway. Shortly before this, Bandmaster Knell had written a School March which incorporated 'The Reds' as the trio section, but D'oyly-Carte, who held the Gilbert & Sullivan copyright, wouldn't allow it to be used at Olympia.

No need to vote on who was the first AT/RSM, it happened in our time and I am sure that he was Dave Ratter.

John Maddox (44B) brought back a few 51+ year old memories. What he says could have been written by me so I will only add the name of Sgt Dransfield, who was the Provost Sergeant who greeted us so kindly!

Now, Tom Pearce (Feb44) and the VE Day debacle. 'They can't do anything, there's too many of us.' How wrong we were! Bill Stern (who subsequently worked his ticket - but that's another story) and I went up to London and had a marvellous two days there, so I didn't get back until early evening on VE Day+1. The reckoning was to come.

Next morning we were marched-in according to the length of AWOL. 3 days, 3 days, 4 days, 4 days, then 7 days and still we hadn't been called and were the first to report to those still waiting outside 'Remanded for the CO.' The next day we did it all over again and I suppose we were lucky to get away with 10 days. It wasn't so hot for the first few days when there were hundreds of boys, but it got easier as we went along.

Tom must have been very lucky, he says that some sentences were remitted. It certainly didn't happen to me or any of the gang I was with. Neither do I remember even hearing of such a situation. Ah well, we always thought it worth it.

Finally, we just missed the Arborfield break up, occasioned by the D-Day activities. However, we heard enough about it when we arrived in September 1944 and the School reformed.

Several references have been made in recent OBANs to a detachment at 'BERRY'. Surely, where the junior intakes went was to 'BURY' in Lancashire?

Allan Tucker (39B) writes

Anyone reading OBAN would be impressed by the number of writers expressing the very real pleasure they derived from reading it; and I feel obliged to follow suite.

The tone and humour of the letters fill me with such a sense of fellowship that I cannot imagine any ex-boy not wishing to be part of it.

I could easily have passed over 'Mac' McNally's report of the Reunion, having been there and done it, but then I would not have been able to thank him for his thoughtfulness in going to see Ben Cook's widow and daughter. His comment brought to mind the last time I saw Ben, in a wheelchair outside the Cambridge Military Hospital.

To add to the fund of stories about your parents, Mac, I was one of your mother's dancing partners, courtesy of your father. At the very first dance in the gym, I was detailed to act as MC. Bandmaster Knell told me what to do, but it was the RSM who told me an MC should start each dance. When I told him I couldn't dance, he had the answer, 'Mrs McNally, take care of this, will you.'

To Fred Stockey (Oct39), the clever Major was Major Davies who was reputed to have been recruited from the BBC. I seem to remember a film we were shown of several inventions of his, including 'voice' control of electrical equipment and another which measured the intensity of thought.

Listening at the AGM to the list of trade and sporting achievements, made me realise just how many activities are on offer and how few there were in my time.

I did say to Viscount Alanbooke that I would write an article on 'Life in the Barrack Room', but like others on the shelf, I have not been able to find the time.

I was interested to read that there are now 455 ex-boys on the mailing list. Is there any way I can be put in contact with any B Company members of 1939 intake? See you all at the next reunion.

(Allan, all members get the OBAN which contains its own 'where are they now' section. Failing that, try Saga Magazine or ask John Northam for a list of current 1939 intake member's addresses - Ed.)

 *Gerry Preston (44A) writes from Australia*

I thought it was time I wrote to you having received the OBAN and AOBA minutes which I found very interesting. I have been a little busy having had 14 major bushfires this year - usually takes a few days to get active again afterwards.

I was sorry to read of the death of Pete Nelson, we were on the same Arm Art course and obtained our Amateur Radio Licences on the same day, both of us very active with G2IHH at Arborfield.

The letter from George Knight (OBAN8, page 28) certainly revived old memories. I had no trouble with the practical mathematics but I never could find an instructor who could explain a usage for Inverse Hyperbolic Logarithms including Major Offord at 3 Bn during the Arm Art course. That is until Gibraltar when a particular problem on a Gun Angle Computer seemed unsolvable when the RA Master Gunner promptly solved it and it dawned on me that he was indeed using IHLs.

It was the maths that got me onto an Arm Art course anyway, being an Instrument Mechanic I could see this trade being phased out so didn't apply. But studying radio mathematics and re-arranging the formulae I devised a better method of audio detection and built a module which I attached to a No 19 set and it worked.

In fact we were using 19 sets to communicate between Shorncliffe and Warcop regularly, (14 Cmd Trg Det) using these devices. Our CO informed the local Brigadier who sent me to Col Barfield at Arborfield who deduced that the system had been patented by PMG several years earlier and never used. However I was posted by War Office to the next Arm Art Tels course.

I must include my own Ben Cook story. One fine evening the terrible four (James, Johnson, Hall and Preston) from B Coy decided to hop across country to the pub at Farley Hill.

Upon arrival we cautiously opened the door and seeing nobody we recognised march up to the bar and ordered four halves please. When a loud voice from behind the door said Give them pints, the smiling barman obliged which depleted our pockets entirely.

It was of course Ben Cook, none of us had ever drunk a WHOLE PINT before and when it was done we were lined up outside and double-marched down the road followed by Ben.

With an unusual amount of beer swilling around inside as we trotted and feeling apprehensive about being locked up for the night we were not very well! But at the Sgts Mess gate Ben halted us then told us to get back in the way we got out and rode off on his bike chuckling. It was a long time before we even tasted beer again.

My first OBA reunion (Oct 94) was so enjoyable thanks to the organisers I am coming again this year as promised. I have already booked the airline seats so keep me a seat at the dinner please. I did send my annual subs to John Northam but forgot the note I had written so if you speak to him please forward my apologies.

DONATIONS

The Association acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

J E Baker	£1.00	J Silby (B38)	£5.00
S Doyle (63A)	£2.00	E J Tanner (42B)	£5.00
D Rayner (45A)	£2.50	A G Winchester (42A)	£5.00
C Ayre (50B)	£5.00	K Worboys (39B)	£5.00
G C Bendall (47B)	£5.00	M W Devey (60B)	£10.00
J B Howes (J38B)	£5.00	G A Harold (46A)	£10.00
M W Hunt (PS 66-96)	£5.00	P Naylor (42A)	£10.00
G F Knox (55B)	£5.00	B S Gilbert (42A)	£15.00
M B Larby (Oct 42)	£5.00	'Anonymous'	£20.00
D H Matyear (49B)	£5.00	R J Durston (54B)	£31.70
S J Roberts (PS 83-85)	£5.00	A F Drake (J38B)	£95.00

REUNION 95 - APOLOGIES

The following member sent his apologies for his non-attendance with special wishes for a successful reunion. This was received by the editor too late for insertion into Issue 8.

James E McDonald (43A)

DEATHS

It is with sadness and deep regret that the Association reports the deaths of the following:

On 6 July 1995 Elsie Elizabeth Worboys, wife of Keith Worboys (39B) - Tel: 01704 28007.

On 30 July 1995 Corporal Nick Guignard (Ex Princess Marina College), aged 23.

During Sept/Oct 1995 Derek 'Pompey' G Coates (54B)

On 15 November 1995 Fred Sadd (PS).

On 18 November 1995 Major Peter Holme (1945 intake).

On 19 December 1995 Tony F Drake (J38B).

On 27 December 1995 Major (Retd) A E (Bert) Golding (1944 intake)

On 21 January 1996 Cpl David J Lewis (86A).

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Frank Hodson and Eddie Edwards (both 46B) are looking for Johnny Gilbert (46B).

David Cross would like to know about Bob Grimby (Apr 42 E Coy).

'Lofty' Cotsford (46B) supplies two photos and would like to hear from any of the innocent young things seen below.

Left to right - Photo 1:

McMahon, 'Ginger' Seal, 'Lofty' Cotsford,
Henry Cotton (seated), Ron Burbidge,
Eddie Sykes, 'Nobby' Rich.



PHOTO 1

Left to right - Photo 2:

'Ginger' Seal, McMahon, 'Titch' Cowdrey,
Bill Sykes, Henry Cotton, 'Nobby' Rich.



PHOTO 2

REME MUSEUM APPEAL

The REME Museum in Arborfield is currently going through a programme of refurbishment and is re-designing the display. We have dismantled the old one, and are now planning the new display. The museum staff see this as a wonderful opportunity to create a new display using fresh material. We will be able to expand on subject areas previously not fully covered due to lack of material or space, such as Apprentice Training, new equipments, Korean War, Aden, Borneo, Kenya, Gulf War, in fact, up to and including Bosnia. As Old Boys of the Arborfield Apprentice School, and during your REME career, I am sure some of you have collected odd bits of kit, photographs, documents, even ephemera like tickets and menus, as memorabilia of your REME years. So, can you help us? If you have some interesting bits and pieces lurking in your loft you would like to go to a good home, now is the time to donate them to the museum. They could be a vital part of the new display in the refurbished museum.

Please remember to bring your memorabilia to the 1996 reunion, or better still, bring it, or post it direct to the museum as soon as possible. Please also, bring your cheque book to the reunion - we need your support for the REME Museum Appeal Fund; after all, it is your museum. Please contact me, *Judy Booth, at the Museum on 01734 763563* if you can help in any way.



ASSOCIATION ITEMS.

The following items may be ordered from the Membership Secretary:

Item 1. Princess Marina College - A Brief History 1939-1992.

This 24-page illustrated A5 booklet is offered FREE to members.

However, to cover P&P please send:

UK and EEC - 40p; Europe (other than EEC) - 65p;

US, CAN, Middle East - £1.55;

AUST, NZ - £1.85p.

Item 2. Association Ties.

These terylene ties have a single motif incorporating the College Gates in gold with scroll and letters AOBA below. They are available in royal blue, maroon and green (note that green ties are only available while stocks last). Please state colour preference when ordering. Price £5.50 each incl P&P, UK only. Please note that postage on overseas orders will increase as appropriate.

**Please make cheques for these items payable to: Central Bank Princess Marina
College (OBA Account).**

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