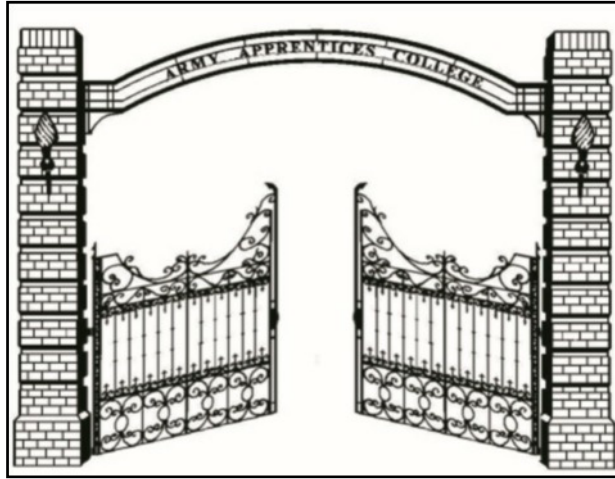


**Dec
2023**



**Issue
86**

Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter



ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION



President

Colonel Jason Phillips ADC

Vice Presidents

All past Commandants

Chairman

Geordie Wright-Rivers
(77C)

Committee Advisor

Bill Cleasby
MBE, IEng, FIET, SQ(W) (61C)

Treasurer

Bob McKeegan-Brown - (69A)

Recruitment Officer

Bruce Leslie (75C)

Bereavement Officer

Ian Scurr (68A)

Cenotaph Officer

Steve Thornes (77C)

Secretary

Nigel Canning (77C)

Vice Chairman

Mike Tizard
CEng, FIET, (76B2)

Webmaster

Mark Jobes (77C)

Database Manager

Jeff Baker (65C)

Membership Secretary

Robert Cassidy (65B)

Editor of the Association Newsletter

Andy Dickson (66B)

Committee Meetings are held at least twice a year in addition to the AGM that is held during the reunion weekend.

If you have any points you would like raised at these meetings, please contact the Secretary at least two weeks prior to the meetings.

The meeting dates and contact details for all Committee members can be found on the AOBA website.

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Front Cover: Original REME Cap Badge

Rear Cover: Quetta Officers Cap Badge

Members Passed since OBAN 85

Name	Intake	DOD	Information received from
Barry John Harrison	65B	10-May-23	David Brock
Rodney W G (Rod) Collins	60C	30-May-23	Ted Stanford
Denis John Marshall	46B	12-May-23	Twin brother George Marshall
Alan Benson	69C	09-Jun-23	Robby Ware
Geordie Mensforth	75C	10-Feb-21	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Martin (Charlie) Harriman	75C	06-May-19	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Robert (Rob) Davey	75C	04-May-20	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Anthony (Tony) Dillon	75C	25-Oct-21	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Paul (Cosmo) Robinson	75C	04-Jul-20	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
David Moss	75C	20-Feb-21	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Guy Pilcher-Clayton	75C	16-May-14	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Edward (Eddie) James	75C	23-Sep-18	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Michael (Mick) North	75C	16-Apr-01	Phil Bex 75C (Belated entry)
Barry Beezam	59A	01-Feb-21	Derek Wheatland 57B (Belated entry)
Terence (Terry) Hartley	59A	09-Feb-21	Derek Wheatland 57B (Belated entry)
Michael (Mike) Dean	59B	01-Dec-21	Derek Wheatland 57B (Belated entry)
Colin Bush	59B	09-Oct-22	Derek Wheatland 57B (Belated entry)
David German	59C	25-Nov-19	Derek Wheatland 57B (Belated entry)
Douglas Ralph Knapp	67C	30-Jun-16	Jack Shram 67C (Belated entry)
David F Atkinson	66B	28-Jul-69	Chalky White 66A (Belated entry)
William M (Bill) Thomas	44A	Dec-19	Ron Baker 65C (Belated entry)
Paul (Brum) Grosvenor	67C	Aug-15	Jack Shram 67C (Belated entry)
Roderick Graham Newbury	57B	?	Daughter Karen Chamberlain
Edward John Dutton	43A	25-May-23	Craftsman July 23
Steve Lagadu	71c	10-Jul-23	son july 23
Lou Gibson	49b	16-Jul-23	Roger Traves
Ian Donnelly McDonald	61C		Wife
Stanley Edwin Bristow	41A	27-Jun-23	Caroline Sayer Daughter
Terry Maryon	61B	19-Sep-23	Sharon Kenney Daughter
Dennis Noble	57A	09-Sep-23	wife Suzanne
Brian Clements	50B	29-Sep-23	stepson John Plumb
Geoffrey Rex Cook	49B	04-Nov-23	Daughter Jacky Mccusker
Kevin (Mitch) Mitchell	43A	01-Nov-22	son Andrew
Ray Doughty	61b	Nov-23	Alan Jones
Charles Cooper	52A	04-Oct-23	Wife
Nigel Booth	61A	10-May-23	Daughter oct 23
Godfrey ginge Flindall	57A	18-Oct-23	Son
Robert (Bob) Winston Beynon	56A	03-Jun-22	Published in OBAN 84 with incorrect surname spelling.

Stand Easy - By TC

No need at last to turn out more than the usual 'five minutes before'
 No final rub with yellow duster assembling for the morning muster,
 Duties now are in the past it's time for you now to 'stand fast',
 You did your time, you gave your best, and now you've more than earned your rest;

AOBA Committee Succession Plan

Appointment	Name	2016	2017	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Remarks
Chairman	Geordie Wright-Rivers						Appointed July 9 th 2022		
Vice Chairman	Mike Tizard						Appointed July 9 th 2022		
Committee Advisor	Bill Cleasby						At AGM		
Secretary	Nigel Canning						Appointed June 2022		
Treasurer	Bob McKeegan-Brown			Appointed Jul 19			At AGM		
Membership Secretary	Robert Cassidy							Appointed Feb 2023	
OBAN Editor	Andy Dickson	Appointed Sep 16					At AGM		
Webmaster	Mark Jobes				Appointed 2020		At AGM		
Database Manager	Jeff Baker						Jul 2022		
Recruiting Officer	Bruce Leslie		Appointed 1st Sep 17				ASAP		Soonest
Bereavement Officer	Ian Scurr							Appointed Jun 2023	
Standard Bearer	Dave Merrick			Appointed Nov 2019			At AGM		
Cenotaph Officer	Steve Thornes					Appointed July 2021	At AGM		

We are very happy to announce a change to the committee. Roger Traves will step down from his role as Bereavement Officer and will be replaced by Ian Scurr (68B) at the Annual General Meeting in June. We are always looking for new Committee members and if you feel inclined to help the Association please get in touch with me via the AOBA website Contacts page.

Geordie Wright-Rivers - AOBA Chairman

AOBA Chairman's Report



Hello AOBA – it's been a while!

I'm absolutely delighted to have our Editor, Andy Dickson, back in the fold and pestering us to get our articles in to him on time (of course this one was slightly late just to keep him on his toes!).

Much has happened since the last edition, the highlight being a fantastic reunion in Jun where 200 of us came together to celebrate, among other things, the ascendancy of the 73ers into the Golden Year hall of fame. They were very well represented with folks travelling from far flung lands including the USA, Canada, Germany, The Orkneys, Bristol and Sunderland! The occasion was made all the more special with ex-apprentice Maj Gen Darren Crook and the Corps Colonel, Col Jason Philips, on hand to review the Standards Parade and add that extra pizzazz across the weekend (though I hear that Neil Diamond's agent has been in touch regarding royalties following the General's rendition of 'Sweet Caroline'!).

In November, I'm very pleased to say that the full AOBA compliment of 30 tickets for the Cenotaph were issued and we marched behind a 120 strong contingent from the REME Association – REME REMEmbered in force. Our thanks must go to Steve Thornes for organising a wonderful meal at the Victory Services Club before the difficult task of corralling this aging herd of cats at the Cenotaph the following day! Well done to all that took part in what is always a most moving and memorable occasion.

Also this month, we were invited to present the following trophy at Bohunt School, which as you likely know, is located on the old college footprint:

*The Apprentice Cup
Celebrating Resilience
Awarded to Rebecca Morris
Presented by the Arborfield Old Boys' Association.*

I was unable to attend and, on asking for volunteers, the very safe hands of Bill Cleasby and Ian Scurr were raised. They reported back as having enjoyed the evening and I have received a very complimentary letter from the school head. Personally, I'm very pleased to report that they were both very well-behaved and neither was placed on detention - well done apprentices!

So, to today. I'm currently putting together the Winter edition of the REME Connect newsletter where I am including a piece on 'Tackling Loneliness'. Whilst I know that the majority of you will receive it as members of REME Connect, I feel it's important just to mention it here for those who aren't. We, AOBA, enjoy a very special bond which underpins all we do and which makes our Association as strong and successful as it is. However, the vast majority don't have that and it those that we must look out for. Each of us was brought up on the Buddy-Buddy system so all I ask is that you all spare a thought for any of our veteran mates and muckers who might be alone or in need of a call or a visit. Check in on them and see how they are – it costs nothing and can make a real difference.

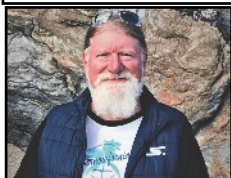
Enough from me for now but please let me reinforce how great it really is to hear that Andy's recovery is progressing so well. Asking him to slow down and leave the next edition for a while was futile and fell on deaf ears! We all thank you Andy and wish you a continued recovery and look forward to seeing you soon. You just can't keep a good man down!

Wishing you all a fun-filled Christmas and what I hope is an exciting and prosperous New Year!

I
Arte et Marte

Geordie Wright-Rivers 77C
Chair Arborfield Old Boys Association

Secretary's Report



Greetings from Cornwall

This morning the committee all received an email from Andy telling us that OBAN 86 was nearly ready so he needed our reports. What a wonderful thing to hear! Andy certainly has a story to tell and it is with gratitude and affection that I'm delighted to respond to his request.

Christmas is nearly upon us and once again the red suit is prepped, boots are polished and bells jingle-tested. The reindeer has been on a super-food diet since September and ready to fly around our big blue planet. The question remaining though is, where does Santa go to after Christmas?

Perhaps someone should write a song about it and put it on SoundCloud.

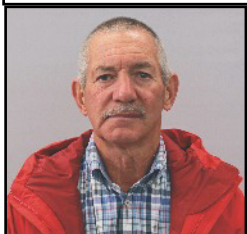
Since the last OBAN so much has happened locally, nationally and globally that sometimes it's difficult to keep up with it all and it's hard to find good news amongst the negative. But it is there. The AOBA has had members involved in all sorts of amazing fund raising, supporting each other through difficult times with compassion and care and generally looking out for one another.

For me that's the most important part of our merry band and ably demonstrated on social media and at the reunion.

Recently I joined a Cornish Shout, which is a collective of people getting together to sing old and new songs in a friendly and welcoming way. It's not a choir, although we did recently sing for a funeral, but just for fun. It's based at the local rugby club and was borne out of older players missing the sing song after a match which seems to be falling out of favour. So now we stand around singing, with a pint in one hand and a song book in the other without the bruises, aches and pains of actually having to play. Obviously, we all think we can still get out there but our bodies tend to say otherwise! Wishing you all a Nadelik Lowen!

Nigel Canning 77C

Treasurer's Report



It's been a long time since I wrote the last report and as it is nearly the end of the year I thought I would give an overall picture of how the funds have been used throughout 2023.

We started the year with about £69K in our two accounts. I forecast that we will end the year with about £62K, a deficit of some £7K. This was mainly due to the Annual Reunion which was subsidised to the tune of £9.8K. On top of that we made three grants to other charities amounting to £3K, the Pipe band were paid £600 for their performances over the past two years (we are their only source of funding) and those attending the Cenotaph were subsidised to the amount of £500 (£25 per head)

for their Saturday night dinner at the Victory Services Club.

Other outgoings were £1730 for various bits of software that are used to run the website and provide IT support for the Committee. Moorepay, who manage our Direct Debits, billed us to the amount of £930; this may seem excessive but there is no way a volunteer could undertake the work they do on our behalf.

There is the final edition of OBAN for this year to pay for and I estimate a bill of around £2200 but hopefully that will be offset by the Gift Aid payment which is now with HMRC for examination.

Two final points for the membership:

- PayPal payments do not renew automatically unless you have a business account. Please ensure you make a note in your diary and pay every year on the anniversary of your first payment. I do not have time to chase non-payers and membership will be terminated for those who fail to pay.
- Another appeal for someone to start training to take over as Treasurer. I have been doing it for a number of years and although it is not an arduous task there is a need to turn over committee members.

Recruitment Officers Report



We have had a steady start to the year post the 2023 reunion, with 10 new members, we are now well into the mid-70s for 50th anniversaries, so my concentration will be on the 74ers for the next few months, followed by encouraging more 75ers to join before their anniversary in 2025.

74ers

I have reached out the 74ers who are already members, luckily, they already have a Facebook group, which will be a good starting point for recruitment for their anniversary reunion next year.

Next Steps

Intake years 74, 75 & 76 current AOBA membership numbers are listed below for reference:

74 Divs – 11, 75 Divs – 25, 76 Divs 27

I believe we have a real opportunity to increase our membership of these intake years as we are, for the most part, starting from a position of strength, in addition the fact that this is my era should stand us in good stead. I have many personal contacts to leverage, especially the 75ers as 75C was my intake.

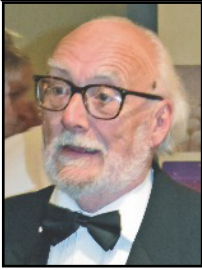
I will also be reaching out to our members from our 80s and 90s intakes with a view to increasing membership for these decades.

Current membership numbers for 80s and 90s are below for your reference:

80s Divs – 23, 90s Divs - 8

Bruce Leslie - 75C

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report



Hello, members.

DATA PROTECTION

We continue to meet all of our obligations under the Data Protection Act and UKGDPR. The new regulations are delayed in their progress through parliament and are unlikely to be enacted before March 2024.

DATABASES

All of the spreadsheets that form our database have been improved and are up to date.

I am currently finishing a new spreadsheet specifically for our bereavement officer.

This should help him deal with any information requests regarding specific apprentices.

It will also aid with his ongoing bereavement role.

AOBA's 75th anniversary year.

Still going strong, but some cautionary figures from the database if AOBA is to reach its 100th birthday.

50,000	Estimated total number of Arborfield Apprentices .
17,080	Names of Arborfield Apprentices that we know of. (Ongoing Project)
3,031	Arborfield Apprentices that subsequently joined AOBA.
778	Current active membership of AOBA.
14	Current members from the Army Technical School. (1939-46)
463	Current members from the Army Apprentices School. (1946-10/66)
271	Current members from the Army Apprentices College. (10/1966-81)
27	Current members from the Princess Marina College. (1982-8/95)
3	Current members from Army Apprentice College-2 nd time. (8/1995-9/2000)
0	Current members from the Army Technical Foundation college. (9/2000-8/2004)
96	Oldest current active AOBA member.
67	Average age of current AOBA committee
73	Average age of current active AOBA membership.
40	Youngest current active AOBA member.

WE DO NEED TO TRY AND ATTRACT YOUNGER EX APPRENTICES. ANY IDEAS ??????

Wishing everybody a merry xmas and a prosperous new year.

Membership Secretary's Report



Hello Everyone.

Receiving the last edition of OBAN I was sad to see on the front page the passing of Ray Pittendriagh. He was very much involved in Junior Division when I joined as an apprentice in 1965. To be honest I cannot say I remembered him fondly. After all I was a very young teenager away from home and his job was to 'knock us into shape' in our first three months at the camp along with the other, what seemed at the time, ferocious drill sergeants. I do remember him involved in athletics though where we got to see his softer side and I recall him being very supportive of the

apprentices. What I do know now is how formative those days were and the part those drill sergeants played in that process. So, somewhat belatedly, thank you Ray and rest easy.

A few weeks back I attended my first committee meeting at the REME museum where I got to meet some of the other committee members. My first meeting was via zoom so it was good to meet up in person. My plan though backfired a little as I expected to take a tour around the museum after the meeting but found that it was closed! Our next meeting is on a Tuesday so I hope to get to see it then.

I attended the remembrance service at our local town memorial in November. I have the task of laying the wreath for the Bowling Club that I am involved in. So once again I donned my REME tie and REME badge for the occasion.

On the membership front we continue to maintain a steady trickle of new members. I am sure this will build up once again when we start to publish details of the reunion and AGM weekend. Don't forget to contact me if you have any questions or feedback on your membership.

Best wishes to you all for Christmas 2023 and Good Luck for the New Year

Bob Cassidy 65B

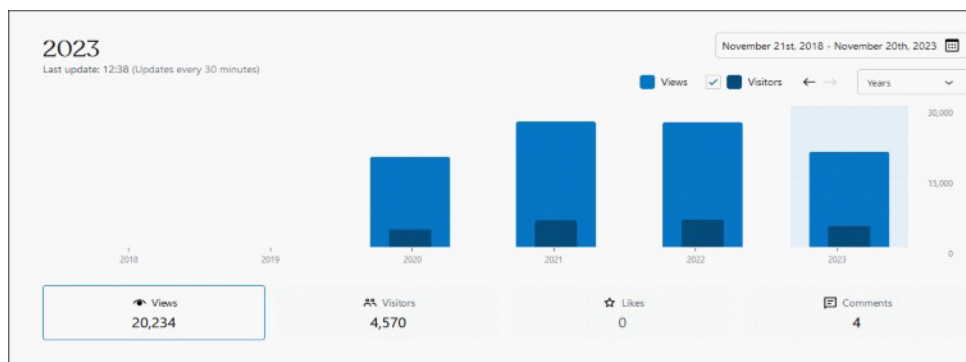
Webmaster Report



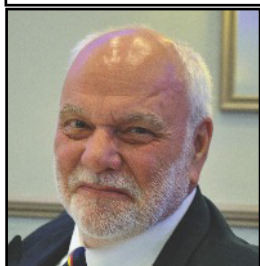
Hello, Members.

We have no issues with the website at present.
There are now 699 registered members on the site.
Below are the stats for the last 4 years to date.

Mark Jobes - 77C
Webmaster



OBAN Editors Report



Excuse my absence and the lack of OBAN's produced this year. By way of explanation I have started a review of what happened on page 30 of this edition. An update, I fell over at home on November 19th 3 weeks after my discharge from hospital and cracked the ball in my left shoulder. Full story will be published in a later edition.

Enough to say I felt like a complete idiot for not taking care. Still, I am back home now, in some pain but being well supported by my wife, Hampshire County Council Carers and the physios from the Stroke ward at Lymington hospital.

I obviously missed the reunion and didn't get many photos from those who attended. Those I did get hold of were in relation to the Jim Fox memorial. Thanks to everyone concerned.

Having been in hospital for 6 months of this year I must say I won't be sorry to see the back of 2023. I know you shouldn't wish time away but I seem to have missed so much and even now can only type with one hand and everything takes twice as long. I am pleased with myself for getting this edition out only 4 weeks after leaving hospital. Everyone keeps telling me to get better and not to worry about OBAN but I do worry and you deserve something for your subs. My apologies again.

I haven't pestered you guys for many months due to my absence but it is time for me to start asking for your input again. I still get a trickle of articles and stories in my e-mail but could really do with a backlog of stuff to draw on. Don't be shy. Drop me a line via the AOBA website if you would like to contribute.

Thanks to all the members who made contact with me during my absence and those that visited me. Roger Traves especially who spent many hours visiting and chatting with me.

My desk here at home is a mess with paperwork that has accumulated over the last 6 months and I don't feel inclined to do any filing but needs must. It is so hard to pick up all the threads from letters and e-mails. If I miss responding to questions you have sent me I promise I will get back to you eventually.

By the way, if any of you want to opt for the electronic version of OBAN just drop me a line and I will change the database accordingly. You will need to download it each time from the AOBA website.

Lastly, it is hard to believe it is December and Christmas is almost upon us.
I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Andy Dickson - 66B

Memoirs of George Scurr - 19th December 1924 to 28th April 2004

Ian Scurr - 68B (Continued from OBAN 85)

It was a fairly miserable Christmas - the first one I had spent away from home! We had dinner with men from many other units and I met some members of the 4/7 Dragoon Guards who had been at the The Boys School in the Band and another ex-boy Spud Murphy who was With the 76 Field Regt. RA We only spent a few days on board the ship but we all thought we were going to raid Europe! I suppose we had no idea what was going on, as private soldiers we just did as we were told and didn't ask questions!

In the New Year we returned to Southern England, to Petworth in Sussex where we continued training. Occasionally we were taken to the coast where we were loaded onto landing craft and then taken further along the coast and taken off again, I Suppose it was all a practice for the real thing - D Day landings - but at the time we did not understand what was happening.

Around Easter we were given 7 days leave and when we returned we went to a camp in the woods near Cowplain which was on the A3, Portsmouth Road. We did various exercises in that area. I remember the gradual build-up of convoys of various types of vehicles and equipment along the roadsides. While we were at Cowplain we were entertained one day by George Formby and his wife Beryl. The time came when we were not allowed to leave camp and all out going letters were censored. Our address was Cowplain Camp, Home Forces.

During my training I had at some stage, learned to waterproof vehicles. Now came the chance to do the real thing. To waterproof meant that vehicles could travel in water up to about 4 feet deep. In our camp there was a large man-made waterway where the water proofed vehicles could be tested. This became a full time job and as I was one of the lads with the know-how and I became an inspector. When the vehicles had been waterproofed various breathe holes were left open until the final day before being loaded onto the landing craft.

As the time to depart drew near we were given talks on what to expect once we had landed. We were given a special currency, I think it was called BAFF (British Armed Forces Francs), but I am not sure. I know a lot of money was lost playing cards! When we left Cowplain we travelled towards Southampton, stopping near Botley for a brew up, then onto the assembly area to await loading.

Once on the landing craft the smell of fuel oil was terrible and quite a number were physically sick. We were on the craft for several hours before we set sail and then only just offshore in quite rough seas. Although this was June it was quite cold and miserable. On June 4 we set sail, but we soon stopped as the weather was not suitable on the French coast for the landings to take place. Wherever you looked around, all you could see were landing craft of every shape and size, bobbing up and down in the rough sea. There was a lot of sea sickness. We were fed Compo rations which consisted of various tinned foods, sausages, beans, stewed steak etc., fruit salad, 'Christmas' pudding etc. Tea was made with a ready mix of dried milk, tea and sugar.

On the 5th of June we were told that the weather had improved and we were on our way once more. When we had been sailing for a few hours the sky seemed to fill with our bombers and gliders and later on the battle ships guns could be heard. We were becoming excited now and looking for the French coast. There were lots of craft in front of us, some of them rocket firing craft, which strafed the beaches. These were supported by Rocket Firing Typhoon Aircraft.

When we landed our craft went right in and we barely got our feet wet. I can't remember what happened next but the point at which we landed was Ouistrehan, a nice flat, sandy beach, but the properties were badly damaged. Fortunately the Royal Engineers had landed before us and a road was cleared up to the outskirts of the village. Our task was to silence a gun emplacement which was achieved quite easily and off we went to link up with the Airborne Division at Pegasus Bridge. By this time it was night and we were very tired. We slept under the one blanket and ground sheet which we each had.

The Airborne had done a wonderful job and things appeared to be relatively easy. Our vehicles behaved very well, they were mainly jeeps and trailers and GUY 15cwt. 4x4 trucks. The main fighting troops went on foot and were extremely fit. Fortunately we got a ride as we had tools and spare parts to take with us. At Pegasus Bridge we saw a number of gliders which had landed close to the Bridge and the men they carried actually captured the bridge. This bridge was very important as it crossed the Caen Canal and the road led up the coast. We reached a place called Sallenelles where we stayed for a long time.

By this time we started to do repair work on the vehicles. The fighting troops were in action round about us. We were static here for about six weeks, and then we were aware that something was happening. One day hundreds of our bombers came over and bombed Caen. I had never seen anything like it. Within a few days we on the move, up the coast towards those nice places of Pont l'Eveque, Honfleur, Le Havre and Fecamp. We did not seem to stop until we got into northern France and to the Belgian border. We eventually reached Brugge where we went into the barracks which had been occupied by the Germans.

We had 'proper' beds for the first time in ages and seemed to be living a normal life. We were told that we would not move from here for some time as the fighting units were being brought up to strength ready for another onslaught.

At this time most of France and Belgium had been liberated, so Holland was the next target, although Eastern Holland and the area around Arnhem had seen some fierce fighting but the Dutch coastal area was still occupied. The port of Antwerp had been liberated but shipping could not use it because the Schelde estuary and on the island of Walcheren the Germans had their big guns with a 360 degrees traverse that could stop anything going through to Antwerp.

There is a small area of Holland on the Belgian side of the Schelde and this area had changed hands a few times. The town of Breskens was almost raised to the ground and was eventually liberated in October. This town was only a few miles across the water from Flushing. The island of Walcheren was shaped like a saucer and was mainly reclaimed land. We, that is my group of mates - David Nicholls, Harry Hunt, Eric Aldridge and myself, settled into our barracks very nicely.

Eric and I became very friendly and went into town on a regular basis. One night someone came into our room and asked if anyone would like to talk to a man who was at the Barrack gate and wanted to invite soldiers home to meet his children. Harry, David and I went to the gate, met the man and were taken to his house but not before we had managed to put a few sweets, cigarettes and food into our pockets.

The people were called Anne and Arthur Van der Voorde and their children were called Marie Clair and Eddie. When we arrived at their very nice house we handed over our 'goodies' and the children were very excited. Anne and Arthur could both speak a little English. Later in the evening a little old lady (Arthur's mother) appeared from the kitchen bearing a large tureen full of chips and this was followed by a platter of eggs. What a feast!! More chips were brought in and also a few bottles of Henry Mals beer. At last it was time to leave and a date was made for another visit. Visits became a regular event. Anne wrote letters to David's mother and to my mother and also to Harry's wife. We noticed that Arthur's bicycle tyres were tied up with string, this was because he was unable to buy new tyres in Belgium. I informed my mother of the situation and she sent out some new tyres and in turn Anne sent strawberries to my mother. Mother and Anne became very good penfriends.

While we were in these barracks 'comforts' arrived from South Africa. I was given a lovely sheepskin jacket. All our kit was brought up to scale and life went along very nicely until late October when we prepared to take part in the liberation of the island of Walcheren. I was attached to 47 Commando Royal Marines. I carried a few tools in my pack along with ammunition and grenades. We went to Wendune on the north Belgium coast, to a big hotel which had been taken over. Here we were briefed as to what we were about to do.

The date was October 1st 1944. That night under cover of darkness we boarded the landing craft. We were warned not to smoke on board as the floor of the landing craft was loaded with jerry cans of petrol and water and with boxes of small arms ammunition. The dykes surrounding the island of Walcheren had been breached at two places and the island was flooded several feet deep and with the tide having widened the gaps there were strong currents at those points.

Prior to the flooding the Germans had placed large poles at various points with mines at the bases to prevent planes landing. The raid we were to carry out was the first daylight raid of its kind and H hour was 1100 hours. We sailed early in the morning, quite a small convey. Giving covering support was HMS Warspite and Monitor Roberts - two very powerful ships. They fired into the coast from about 20 miles out, right over our craft. We could see rocket firing typhoons straffing the beaches. We must have been half an hour from our due landing time we were fully kitted, on deck and looking around when our craft hit a mine mid-ships.

The whole craft exploded. The men in the centre were blown up and the front end sank immediately. Fortunately I was at the back near the wheelhouse. Something hard hit my foot; I think it was a tin of food as a big food locker burst open. The lad next to me, my mate, Eric Aldridge had a bad cut across his head - I didn't see any more of him. They shouted 'abandon ship' and those of us that were left jumped overboard. Thank goodness we were wearing Mae West life jackets.

I think I must have hit the bottom of the North Sea! When I came up I could see the remains of our craft. I still had my beret on for I had pulled it right down, but how it stayed on I'll never know. There were several survivors in the sea for another craft had also been blown up. Evidently we were in a mine field. I hung on to a piece of debris and floated around. I don't know how long I was in the water but an RN craft came round. It had nets hanging down from the deck to the sea level. The sailors on board were shouting Grab hold of the net and 'climb up'. I did. When I got near the top I was exhausted and a sailor said, 'Put your arms through the net', which I did and eventually he pulled me up on to the deck.

I was soon down below and being stripped of my soaked clothes and given a white knitted sweater to keep me warm. No sooner were we on board than the craft went alongside a burning craft to take off the crew which then exploded causing us to panic but the RN crew kept us down below. After a few hours we were taken to another craft on which we huddled together on the open deck, covered with blankets. We were given hot soup and hard biscuits. The seriously wounded survivors had been transferred to a hospital ship (Kingsmill). During the night we landed on to a concrete ramp

near De Hanne and went through a large tent where our personal details were recorded. Then the injured were treated and we were taken to hospital (which is still there today i.e. 2004) and given food and put to bed.

The next morning we were given a shaving kit which had to be shared and sent off to have a wash and shave. My dress was still just the white sweater. As I walked to the wash room the matron told me to put some clothes on! I'm afraid I told her, her fortune and went on my way! We had breakfast and went back to bed. During the morning David Nicholls, one of my unit, came in to the ward. He had not on the landing because he had a carbuncle on his arm. He had come to collect me and take me back to Brugge. He brought me a full set of clothes.

I dressed and we set off I do not know how the information was passed on as to where I was but I was glad to be on my way and back to Brugge. However it was only for one day because along with other survivors I was sent to Breskens where we got onto amphibious vehicles called Buffaloes and run by the Royal Engineers. They took us to Flushing and from there we went by Buffaloes to join our unit which was at West Kappel. This was a scary trip as there were no roads and all around there were poles which had mines fixed to their bases. After a few days the German forces on the island surrendered and we set off, back to Flushing where what was left of the units had gathered to go back to Belgium.

One night we slept in a factory in Flushing and I remember that there were a lot of coffins in the factory and of course some of the men had to have a go at sleeping in a coffin! This caused some laughter and fun as the lids were put on top of the men who had climbed in.

The next day we embarked on a landing craft and went to Ostend, then on to Brugge and to our barracks. News soon travelled that we were back and Arthur Van de Voorde came to the barrack gates and asked that a message should be given to us to go out to visit them. We soon made our way to their home and were given a good meal, not easy under the circumstances, for there was a lack of rations. However Arthur had cycled out into the country to someone he knew who kept pigs and had returned with a piece of streaky bacon which Anne had sliced and fried along with eggs and chips. We had taken along sweets, cigarettes and tinned food.

In the next days we began to get kitted up again and doing quite a bit of vehicle repairs.

Just before Christmas we moved to Goes on South Beveland, where we camped in a granary area near to the railway station. There was a large building on this compound which we used as a workshop. One or two tons of coal was stored there - we were told not to touch it but we were never cold as we had secret stores! We slept in the granary among the sacks of corn.

The weather became very cold that Christmas and the canals froze and the locals skated on them. David Nicholls and I had a trip back to Brugge, by truck, to collect something or other, so we visited Anne and Arthur and stayed the night there. On our way back we were going to rest in Antwerp for a while as there was a military car park there guarded by MPs, and a good canteen nearby, but when we got there we found that a V1 (doodlebug) had landed and destroyed the whole area killing many troops.

During this period the various Commando Units were spread out on North Beveland and along the south bank of the River Maas as far as S' Hertogenbosch. The Germans were on an island between the Maas and Waal and were causing quite a lot of problems as they could shell us and lay mines during darkness so if we raided we were likely to suffer casualties, which we did. On several occasions we tried to capture this island but without success. Eventually it was captured by the Polish Armoured Division.

We moved to Bergen op Zoom where we stayed for a short time. Harry, David and I were billeted in a house with a family who had been collaborators with the Germans. (Having us billeted on them was considered a punishment!) It was not a very happy situation but we did not have to stay there long. As we soon moved to Kleve and crossed the Rhine at Rees-Bocholt. This was an area which had been totally destroyed.

From there we never seemed to stop moving until the war ended. Leave to the UK had started in January and my turn came, I think it was in April. I went by truck to Nijmegen then caught a military train to Calais. It took ages to get there. From Calais we got a boat to Dover where we greeted by the Salvation Army who supplied tea and sandwiches. Finally, before boarding a train we were paid in English money. The troop train went all round the Outskirts of London where we saw the terrible bomb damage, on to Reading and then took the reverse journey to York that I had taken when I first joined the army.

On arrival at York Station I was told which train I had to return on and to collect a railway travel warrant from a certain office. There was a Forces Canteen and Rest Area on York Station where you could have a wash and shave and a meal, which I did. A car took me home and I was very tired but I soon recuperated with the help of my mother's good food and beer at the White Dog! The news coming over the radio was very encouraging. The Germans were being heavily defeated and there was talk of the war ending, My Uncle Charlie said "Don't go back, they won't miss you!" But I knew different.

To be continued.....

It's a Dog's Life. (Chester 1963 - 1967) - Mo Hope 59B

Hi everyone...If you served in any heavy armoured Units in BAOR in the mid 60's, then we might have well crossed paths on exercise. I covered most "Drags" that my Unit covered during that time while serving my days as the REME Workshop mascot with 123 Company RASC or later 23 Tank Transporter Sqn RCT after they rebadged.

I first saw the light of day, when my mum (Rex), a cross Alsatian was being trained as a war dog at the RAVC War Dog Training Unit based just up the road from the REME Workshop in Antwerp Barracks, Sennelager, where daily those kind kennel maids from the WRAC would exercise their charges up and down passed the front of the workshop (usually at NAAFI break time, when the Church Army Van would pull up).

Somehow my mum had a liaison with another War Dog and became pregnant resulting in a family of "pups". In the very early days my mum rolled over on me and caused me to have a dislocated rear hip and a broken leg. It was obvious at that point that I would never become a trained war dog, as I was left with a permanent limp.

Around this time it became evident that my Mum would also not make the grade required, and so was put out for adoption. A young Craftsman from the workshop named "Taff" Westicott, fresh off the VM production line at Bordon adopted my mum and named her "Rex", he obviously didn't grasp the fact that a dog and a bitch were somewhat different. But her name stuck.

The Vet's and nurses at the War Dog clinic treated me for several months until I was well enough to leave, and I was adopted by Cfn "Geordie" Chrisp, a REME Carpenter from the workshop (Yes the Corps did have Chippies in the early 60's, and due to my disabled rear leg he christened me "Chester" after Marshall Matt Dillon's sidekick with a limp from the Western TV series popular at the time "Gunsmoke").

When "Geordies" time came to return to the UK, I was very sad and feared being abandoned, but I needn't have worried as I became "THE" number one workshop dog, adopted and cared for by all my human friends in the block. I used to tag along with the boys from the block for the daily morning march to the workshop where I would sit nearby while the ASM Bowden or "Q" Youngman would do their inspection before breaking off for work. I spent my days in and around the workshop, usually sleeping in the corner somewhere until the day's work was done and we could return to our home in the block.

ASM Bowden never minded me being on parade as he was a dog lover, owning a small white "Westie" that occasionally came to work with him, getting under the feet of the lads working, and many a time it would appear from under a vehicle deliberately covered in grease or oil.

The ASM was a strange one with a bit of a chip on his shoulder.....whenever a new member joined the Sgt's mess, that he considered his domain he was overheard to say " My name is Kingsley Bowden, my friends call me King, but you can call me Sir!!"

I was certainly a well-travelled mutt, visiting most of the tank training areas such as Soltau and Hohn.

I even went to Borg Leopold in Belgium and Vogelsang on the junction of three countries: Belgium, Germany and Holland. It was always a risky and hairy time whenever we crossed a countries border checkpoint, as I was either covered in the back of a wagon and even placed in an Antar toolbox, with strict instructions to remain quiet and don't move because of the restrictions moving livestock across borders. If I had been discovered they may have taken me away from my friends never to see them again.

Whenever we stopped at a layby on the autobahn or a harbour area a long loose rope would be secured from the front to the rear of our FRT vehicle to which my lead was attached, which was when I knew it was time to go into guard dog mode, and I made sure that no one came anywhere near when it was left unattended.

I recall at Vogelsang there was not much going on so I decided to go for a wander when I caught the scent of a young lady which I followed down the hill for a couple of miles to the village of Gemund and so intent was I finding the source of the temptation that I got hopelessly lost and ended up spending a couple of fretful days. My friends realising I was nowhere to be seen started a search and luckily for me Cfn Tim Gainsford was out road testing one of the unit's motorcycles and he luckily found me in the village, and promptly strapped me over the fuel tank with my legs either side of the bike for a very uncomfortable journey up the hill and back to camp. The fur on my legs was burnt and singed from the engine and exhaust pipe...I never wandered off again!

One cold and frosty evening in early 1967 after my friends had got into their civvies for the nightly trip through Normandy Barracks down to the "Strip" for a pub crawl, I decided it would be a good idea to join them, so I caught their scent (or should that be their after shave), and padded across the square and out the camp back gate

An easy half mile trot passed the Church Army, bear left and on passed the NAAFI on the left and on to the main gates to Normandy Barracks where across the road was "Geordies" bar all lit up, I knew some of my friends would be in there, so across the road I went making sure there were no trams coming, when suddenly a car hit me, and ended my life.

On seeing the kerfuffle going on several of the WRAC dog handlers who were out for a night on the tiles found me and wrapped me in a coat and kindly returned me back to camp in a taxi. All my friends were very upset at the next morning's work parade. The ASM noting my absence and seeing how upset everyone was, detailed two men to go and dig a grave out the back of the workshop among the shrubs and trees I knew so well

I was wrapped in a canvas body bag hastily made by our unit textile worker Cfn Tony Gibson (Yes we even had a REME badged sewing machine jockey on strength), and I was gently interred into my final resting place.

Many of my friends came during odd moments they had during the day to help fill in the grave, even the ASM got his hands dirty on the spade.

The German civilian carpenter Herr Joe Hoenchon fashioned a lovely cross in polished wood and attached my trusty lead to it, while our German civilian coach painter Herr Hans Bekker produced a painted plaque to fit to the cross with the words "Cfn Chester 1963-1967". There was a short service and a few tears from my friends and the WRAC dog handlers who knew me.

In the passing years all my friends moved on and new replacements came into the workplace, and sadly my resting place became overgrown and neglected.

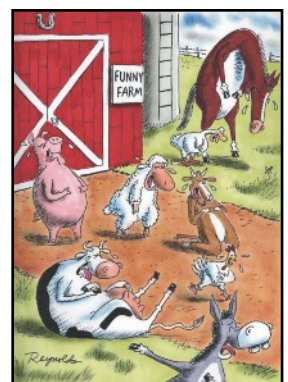
Occasionally the odd curious craftsman would come across my cross and stand there in wonderment as to who Cfn Chester was.

Almost twenty years later during the big exercise "Crusader 80", one of my old friends, Sgt Maurice Hope who was then serving in the TA as the Sqn REME Sgt with 125 FD Supp Sqn RE, was able to revisit and spend a few minutes with me, and although now there is no cross to mark my resting place and my earthly body is no more, I am still there in spirit on the morning works muster parade and a ghostly sight of a big black dog may be sensed patrolling around Antwerp Barracks.

Mo Hope - 59B

Anagrams

Dormitory: Dirty Room
Evangelist: Evil's Agent
Desperation: A Rope Ends It
The Morse Code: Here Come Dots
Slot Machines: Cash Lost in 'em
Animosity: Is No Amity
other-in-law: Woman Hitler
Snooze Alarms: Alas! No More Z's
Alec Guinness: Genuine Class
Semolina: Is No Meal
The Public Art Galleries: Large Picture Halls, I Bet
A Decimal Point: I'm a Dot in Place
The Earthquakes: That Queer Shake
Eleven plus two: Twelve plus one
Contradiction: Accord not in it



The REME 'Quetta' Badge by John Swarbrick 62A

I read with interest the article in OBAN 85 by Eric Davies (65C), about his early life, especially in Quetta, India which after partition in 1947 is now in Pakistan.

How many corps members are aware that there is a REME cap badge known to badge collectors as 'The Quetta Badge'? This is a scarce item and much prized by the collectors of cap badges, especially those for the REME.

As we all know, the REME was formed in 1942, and a cap badge was designed, approved, manufactured, and issued. However, we must remember that 80 years ago, in the middle of a World War, lines of supply and information dissemination were not as we take for granted today. There was no internet, no FAX machines, limited telephonic or radio communication and little or no air freight, especially to far flung parts of the empire. Consequently, on the formation of the corps the new cap badge was not readily available at the workshop facility in Quetta for wear by those RAOC and RASC personnel who were to be re-badged as REME.

However, the Army Council Instruction (ACI) detailing the formation of the corps gave a description of the new badge. This was no doubt obtained in Quetta, and without any pictorial guidance, the description was interpreted and used to have a badge made under local arrangements. The ACI description was as follows:

"A laurel wreath surmounted by a crown; on the wreath, four shields bearing the letters 'REME' ; within the wreath, a pair of callipers."

Given only this description, a badge was designed and produced locally, and in my view not a bad effort when compared to the official badge design, see the pictures for a comparison. This locally adopted badge was worn from October 1942 until the official issue REME badge became available in February 1943. I have two of these Quetta badges, which are both 40mm x 40mm one in bronze or a bronze wash (officer's) and the other brass (OR's), authenticity for both has yet to be proven. You will note that the Quetta badges are not identical, but this is not uncommon with locally made badges, as in India, as elsewhere, all were most likely made by the sand cast method. I have seen a photograph of a collar badge, the same design but slightly smaller. These would have been made in very small quantities (and thus much rarer), as collar badges were only worn by officers at that time.

A similar situation was evident elsewhere in the world, but at least in North Africa a few genuine new badges were obtained, although disappointingly made of brown plastic, which was an economy measure introduced for all cap badges during the war. This was deemed unacceptable and new badges were made in Alexandria, of brass and to the correct design. I have yet to find a genuine example of one of these.

A few words on these locally or 'theatre made' badges. A Regimental or unit QM would have a stock quantity of Spare badges. When these were exhausted, and as the supply chain was so long, especially to India and beyond, badges would have been sourced locally. As mentioned, they were usually made by the sand cast method, as presses and press tooling would not have been readily available, and in any event would have been financially prohibitive. They were predominately made of brass rather than gilding metal and would have had a variety of fixings attached to the rear.

In closing, if I have lit the fires of interest in badge collecting in anyone's mind, be warned, it is a fascinating hobby but can become addictive, and expensive, and it is also riddled with fakes and copies, so do your homework. Various books and websites are available for reference. Now that we have a new monarch, new badges will be issued bearing the 'Kings' or Imperial crown, CiiiR cypher or both. Unofficial badges are already available; indeed, I have recently acquired a REME badge with King's crown sold by the REME museum. The official badges for all regiments and corps will no doubt take a little longer to filter through the 'system', but I look forward to adding these to my collection in the future.



Quetta Officer



Quetta OR



REME Original

It's a Fair Cop (On Leave 1951) - Arthur Ward 50B

After joining AAS Arborfield at the age of fifteen, it was now time for all Divisions to go on leave after being paid in £5 notes which was handed over in brown envelopes to be checked at the table on that morning. Being amongst the sixteen year olds, I had never been so rich.

I Stood in alphabetical order with Bob West 50B on the pay parade line to receive our saved credits issued as lovely brand new old type large white notes, all in serial numbered order. Their printed value could only be seen on one side leaving the reverse blank.

"Check your pay and march away ". "Pay and pay book correct Sir". This would later cause me to become "The accused"

That morning, before our Leave transport buses arrived at the gym area at the main gate, I had sold a pair of Civi trousers to Bob W. for £2 which after receiving one of his fivers less my change to him we waited the orders to embus and be taken to Wokingham or Reading stations .There we again paraded to march on to what must have been the special sections of train carriages to London and our greater escape to the rest of UK for a few weeks leave.

My parents were in Singapore again, so like some others, I stayed with relatives in London. This would really allow me to explore and learn about the city highlights by using the buses or Underground rail which would always be the better of the two for getting around. Having the cash in your pocket was much simpler then knowing that when it was gone, that was it. No credit cards back then.

In the 50's you could see all the West End stage Shows like, 'South Pacific' and 'Paint your Wagon' for reasonable prices because many would have the afternoon Matinee where you just bought a ticket at the door .One lasting memory was of hearing the young Shirley Bassey's powerful voice singing in a variety show with the comedian Jimmy Edwards, performing at the Tivoli theatre in the Strand where the finale of that show had the full cast coming on stage to shower the audience with real flowers and some veg. Unlucky for some!

On the nicer days, I would enjoy hiring one of the long row boats on the Serpentine Lake for half a crown an hour just to try a bit of Oxford & Cambridge.

My Aunt would always try to get me on Gate Report to be back by ten but my lovely Nan gave me a door key. A friend in high places.

Unlike today, the museums were still coming out from war time protective locations and so had a limited amount of items on show. Some were in their temporary buildings, much due to bomb damage. Even at that time they were still exciting and interesting places to visit.

My Father had left me a dark dated style pinstripe suit and waistcoat which I thought, would be useful, should I wish to take some "Walk on part" in a black and white 1939 film. I decided to walk into an Edgeware Road gents outfitters so to become the new man!

In those days, some shop owners would make you sign and address the backs of the White five pound notes while they studied me and the notes for some time, maybe because of my age. I'm not sure what that proved? It was a decorative note which because none of us had a computer copier/printer in those days, it would not be easy for us to become millionaires overnight. Just joking!

I was to exit from this flashy shop with all the gear plus a 'Mac' for under fifteen quid while thinking only to find the nearest pawn shop where eventually, they would only offer me 15 shillings, cash with ticket in hand, should I return in days to reclaim and pay for it my old suit. No chance of that happening!

Upon one of my early evening returns to the family, I was greeted by my Aunt's serious expression and the words, "What have you been up to? The Cops want you down at the local police station." In all innocence and not having joined any local bent gang to do a bank job that night, I made my way to this Cop shop where I sat in the interview room, without handcuffs, until the appearance of two plain clothes types, known to me only as the Rozzers, who were dressed in the standard Cop Camouflage of knotted Mac' and Trilby's.

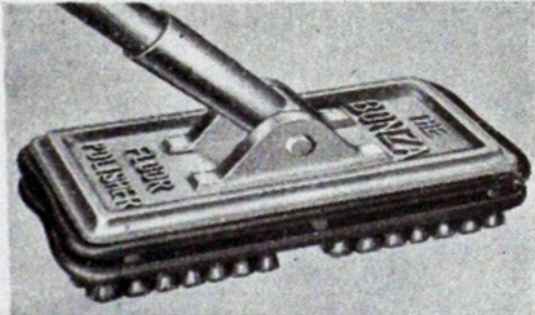
They knew that I had been paid in White Fivers and so demanded to see them and check the serial numbers. "Sorry, Constable, Sir. Yer honour, but I've spent some. With all the remaining notes being laid on the table, the serial numbers were checked so that after their further police type discussion, I was released from custody without charge only to return to Aunt and Nan to be forgiven.

When I returned to Arborfield with a clean sheet, Bob West explained that he was the one who had later checked his fiver serial numbers to find one number missing. I knew that the possible sale of my trousers to him had helped to confuse them all. Maybe. The investigation had led to all of the surrounding names and leave addresses being contacted by their local police areas.

'Evening all. Mind how you go'.

Arthur Ward - 50B

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 FISHPONDS : BRISTOL

Who remembers using one of these?

Commandants Inspection once a term with us all looking after our own bed space and then polishing the centre deck with that awful sticky and smelly floor polish!.

For a brief period the barracks all looked spectacular with floors that shone with a mirror finish.

No matter how hard we tried we always missed some small item that didn't meet the high standards of the room A/T NCO, Block A/T Sergeant, A/T Company CSM and then all the adult soldiers that trooped through the rooms at all hours.

The Commandant was only ever in the room for a minute or so and I always wondered what he thought of it all.

In a later life, at 655 Sqn in Detmold the OC decided he wanted to inspect the single mans accommodation block. As the senior CPL it was down to me to get it organised. Not an easy task.

I tackled the OC at the start of the inspection and told him I thought this was an invasion of my privacy.

I led him through the block and he came to my bunk door and asked "who lives here?". "Me, Sir I replied". He walked straight past my door.

Andy Dickson 66B

Company Colour Ties

New company colour ties are now available via the AOBA website.

Mark Jobes has put an on-line ordering system in place and all you need to do is click on the link on the opening page and fill in the form that the link takes you to.

Ties are £10.00 each and are inclusive of postage.

Here is the link:

<https://arborfieldoldboys.co.uk/new-company-ties-now-available/>

In addition, I visited the REME Museum recently and noticed that there are a selection of berets available for just under £16.00

You can order these on-line at the REME Museum Shop.



Then and Now - Rob Castell - 64A

Hi Andy,
I hope your new billet is good and your recovery continues.
I'm sending this to you now as there's a danger of me forgetting if I don't!

Re your request for then and now photos for OBAN

The first of these two photos is me and Geoff Hatt with the old gym in the background, I reckon this was taken in late 1966, just before our three years at Arborfield came to an end.

The second one was taken in at the 1995 reunion, we had tried to position ourselves in the same place as the previous photo, but with the gym gone there were few reference points, hopefully we got it about right. In the background you can just make out the school gates and the memorial garden.

Not quite then and now but near enough, as you can see we hadn't changed at all (!), despite there being twenty nine years between the photos being taken.

Keep yer pecker up and speedy recovery.

Regards,
Rob



1966



1995

Once upon a time there was a man who was peacefully driving down a windy road. Suddenly, a bunny skipped across the road and the man couldn't stop. He hit the bunny head on. The man quickly jumped out of his car to check the scene. There, lying lifeless in the middle of the road, was the Easter Bunny.

The man cried out, "Oh no! I have committed a terrible crime! I have run over the Easter Bunny!"

The man started sobbing quite hard and then he heard another car approaching. It was a woman in a red convertible. The woman stopped and asked what the problem was. The man explained, "I have done something horribly sad. I have run over the Easter Bunny. Now there will be no one to deliver eggs on Easter, and it's all my fault."

The woman ran back to her car. A moment later, she came back carrying a spray bottle. She ran over to the motionless bunny and sprayed it. The bunny immediately sprang up, ran into the woods, stopped, and waved back at the man and woman. Then it ran another 10 feet, stopped, and waved. It then ran another 10 feet, stopped, and waved again. It did this over and over and over again until the man and the woman could no longer see the bunny.

Once out of sight, the man exclaimed, "What is that stuff in that bottle?"

The woman replied, "It's harespray. It revitalizes hare and adds permanent wave."

Like Father, Like Son

THE 3rd of May 1939, saw the arrival at the Army Technical School (Boys) Arborfield of Boy Scurr, George Thomas, to become later 7595004. He served as an apprentice fitter until June 1942, when he was mustered as a Fitter MT III. His first posting was to 57 Section RAOC, York, and after a brief stay he went to a new wksp being opened in Leicester, on the formation of REME he was transferred and became a Craftsman, a few months later he was trade tested and passed a Fitter II and subsequently a VM II and Lcpl. During 1943 he attended various waterproofing courses and was made an instructor, assisting with the waterproofing of vehicles for 'D' Day and also instructing with Canadian units at Barton Stacey.

During the NW Europe campaign he served with No 4 Commando Bde. He was a survivor of a mined landing craft in the North Sea during the daylight raid on the Island of Walcheren. When the Commandos disbanded in 1946 he was posted to HQ Vehicle Gp Org at Chilwell and later to 302 'B' Veh Wksp Detachment at Castle Donnington. After six months, attended a LASS Course at Blackdown and Arborfield and promoted Ssgt in October 1946, eventually went back to 302 'B' Veh Wksp as NCO IC inspections. December 1946 saw him at Blackdown to attend No 9 Armt Artificer Veh Course which he successfully completed and was posted to Tactical Wing REME Training Centre as a Corps Training Instructor.

In October 1948 he was drafted to the Middle East and arrived in Cyprus in time for Christmas. He served at Larnaca from 1948 to 1952; being promoted WO II in 1950 and taking over the duties of PWF Station Wksp. In 1951, when the trouble in Egypt saw most of the military leave Cyprus, George stayed behind as 2IC of the Wksp civilian complement.

Back in the UK he was posted to Edinburgh University OTC as a PSI where he stayed for two years and then posted to Korea, but for only six months, due to an accident he was evacuated to UK where he underwent a tendon transplant in his right hand. After five months off duty, he was posted to War Office Car Coy Wksp at Regents Park Barracks, where he served until 1958. During his stay in London he was presented with the LS and GC Medal.

As work study broke through into the Army, George was selected to attend a course at the College of Work Study at Cranfield. On completion of the course he was posted to HQ Scottish Command as Comd Work Study Warrant Officer. One year later, to 26 Comd Wksp, Stirling, as a member of a newly formed work study team. Having gained a further two years experience on work study he became an Associate Member of the Institute of Work Study.

On promotion to WO I in 1961 he was given the job of WO IC Edinburgh Detachment at 26 Comd Wksp, where he is still serving.

He is a Class I Army Football Association Referee, also a Scottish Football Association Referee. This season the SFA rewarded his efforts by appointing him as a linesman for the Hibernian v Barcelona match. He was appointed as Linesman in the 1962-63 Army Cup Final.

He was married in Leicester in 1945 to Miss Alma Evans. His wife gave birth to twins, Terence and Sylvia in 1946; they spent over three years in Cyprus during 1949-53. They have another son, Ian, who is now ten.

Terence has decided to follow in his father's footsteps. After finishing his education at Twickenham Technical School



and Isleworth Polytechnic he decided to become an Army Apprentice and on 8 January 1963, he arrived at the Army Apprentices School, Arborfield, as an apprentice VM, with hopes of becoming an Aircraft Technician. He is keen on swimming, cycling and archery, so we hope to see his name mentioned in these pages in years to come.

Ian is longing for the day when he, too, can join the army.

REME Ties . . .

Handwoven worsted ties of fine quality in REME colours as per Corps Instruction No 10 and specially made for the Association by The York Weavers can be obtained from The Secretary, REME Association, Moat House, Arborfield, Berks.

Price 10s each (including purchase tax), post free.

The Life of an Army Brat - Eric L Davies 65C

Return To Blighty

The family sailed back to England in 1944 My oldest brother Jack told me of the long train journey back down to Bombay from Quetta where they would embark on their even longer sea journey back to the UK. He told me of the convoy being attacked and one tanker being sunk. He would later recall that as a four year old he saw his first "Burial at Sea"

We lived at 27 Clay Street Gorton Manchester where David Ivor and I were born until 1951. Dad was posted away from our home there to Barton Stacey in 1945 then later in 1947 he spent some time on a detached posting to Enniskillen Northern Ireland. Rationing was still in force following WW2 and dad would send boxes of well packed fresh eggs from Northern Ireland through the post to mum in England to help out with feeding the family. Dad was later posted back to the Lancashire Fusilier Depot in Bury

In the 1950's Gorton still had cobblestones on gaslight streets, backyards with outside toilets, coal-fires in every room, no bathrooms or running hot water.

I do not recall my time spent at 27 Clay street Gorton since I was only one year old.

I have mentioned my first recollection of life was at the Castle in Chester. My father was posted in and around Chester 1951-54 on various admin jobs, by this time he was on detached service from the Lancashire Fusiliers. We moved from; Saighton Camp to The Dale Camp then The Castle followed by Blacon Camp, all of these I have memories of.



Street Party Clay Street Gorton Manchester celebrating the end of war

Place by Place by Place

Gorton Manchester 27 Clay Street

Gorton Manchester must have been a wonderful home. We had the steel coal fired full range cooker with ovens c/w hanging bars for pots in the living room, I dare say one room at least would be warm and not damp, other home comforts were hot water bottles for the beds and Pots Chambers under them. Memory of dad (RIP) would have me believe we had enough surpluses of "Army Blankets" to keep a "Full Strength Company" warm. Not sure how dad on "Sergeant's Pay" could have afforded to power the full range cooker without a supply of "Army Coke" His chain smoking would have ensured the house was free of any insects.



On Clay Street. Civvies' would almost become a swear word to Army Children but more about that later. Grandma (Amelia Thompson) and Granddad (Jack Thompson) lived just up the road at number 41, I am sure they were a great help to mum but Gran could be very stern with our tribe.

Dad being in the Army was not always at home and grandma in her younger days was a bit of a Battle Axe albeit knee high to a grasshopper. One story my sister Beryl told me was regarding small green bottle that Gran had found broken.

Matter not that WW2 had only ended six years previous during which time Gran herself had been charged, found guilty and fined for letting light escape from the "Blackout Blinds" at night leaving the whole street in danger of a German air attack.

Gran now had "Army-Brats" (as grandkids) to keep in order. Grandma's street reputation had to be defended. Gran always kept the front windows clean and donkey stoned the doorstep. Nobody would dare step on that doorstep, you stepped over it. Beryl was duly accused of "Breaking the Bottle" and as would appear went through the "Spanish Inquisition" with threats and tears. Eventually it would be uncovered that it was in fact my older brother Jack that was at fault, he had earlier found the bottle in the street. Not sure if any favouritism came into play but Granddad's name was also Jack so Jack junior got off lightly.

We left Clay Street in February 1951 too young at one year and one month of age to understand the more serious nature of what Gorton was all about with all its railway engineering history or what my older brothers and sisters got up to. I do know David and Beryl went to Peacock Street Primary School the very same school that Myra Hindley went to. I escaped the duty runs to Rotors the corner shop in Clay Street and the post office or post-box up the street unless it was in my chariot with someone pushing me. I would be sharing space with groceries. We had no car so I can just imagine my brothers running my pram up the cobbled street to see how the springs worked. Pram wheels were much sought after for homemade go-karts in those days.

Chester 1951 to 1954

We had arrived in the Roman Walled Town of Chester and lived in The Castle I mentioned earlier. I have no recollection of our first residence Feb 51- Jun 51 in 11a Militia Buildings on the Castle Esplanade or knowledge of the following move in Jun 51-Nov 51 to 2 Simpson Road at Moston Hall in the Dale Camp. By the time we moved to 113b Married Soldiers Quarters (MSQ) Saughton Camp in November 1951- Jun 52 I was then entering the "Terrible Twos" age. On our return to 8 Militia Buildings at the Castle in June 52- Sep 53 life was just about starting to come into focus at three years old.

128a MSQ Saughton Camp September 1953 to October 1954

My earliest tangible recollections (after looking down from the Castle Window) were of living in the house 128a Married Soldiers Quarters, Saughton Camp, near Huntington Chester. My younger brother Kenneth was born there in December 1953. Our home had a Glow-Worm cooker in the kitchen. Dad was a bit of a gardener and spent many hours cultivating flowers and vegetables; he was good at foraging and could purloin numerous items from roundabout farmer's fields. Dad was a dab-hand at "Fixing things" though if those "things" were not wearing a skirt it often led to complications. I am never sure why he was up in the attic the time he fell through the kitchen ceiling, or if flour was a suitable filler for fixing holes in house interior walls prior to handover.

Dad always looked smart in his Spotless Battle Dress and Beret with the Yellow Hackle and the three Sergeants Tapes on either arm gleaming from the whitener he used. The clack-clack noise made by him walking in his shiny black studded ammo boots let us know when he was around so we could scarper to avoid any punishment for any misdemeanours mum might have told him about. My mum's favourite threat was "Wait-till-your-dad-gets-home" I recall Army Coke Sheds where the coke was whitewashed, we were taught to remove the whitewashed coke fill the bucket and then replace the whitewashed coke on top of the original pile. I dare say the powers in control insisted that piles of coke should always look white in smart military fashion.

Those were the lazy fun filled days before I started school. I could be "Held to Account" for anything I did after that.

Whittington Barracks Litchfield December 1954 to August 1955



It was the 1st of December in 1954 when we moved to the MSQ a maisonette in the Barracks at Litchfield a few miles up the road from Royal Sutton Coldfield. This would be my seventh "Posting" another new place for accommodation and I wasn't yet five years old.

Dad was expert at packing up and moving, home posts were a luxury Dad had been in the Army since 1927 and with 27 years' service seen more action than most would care to live through. He was a Military man through and through the Army coming first and probably second and third. Dad had been married 16 years by this time so expect my mum his wife Olive came sixth; his fags came in at fourth, and his garden fifth.

Dad could be a little coarse round the edges; mum was his equal in all but physical strength. I learned basically to keep out of the way. It was the 1950s and kids should be seen and not heard, I would go one better than that to say be "Not Seen and Not Heard" and Escape Unscathed.

The 1950s was a time that members of a family ate at the same table together. This meant that at least three times a day you had to be there on the dot or woe betides you. Mealtimes were a case of shut up and eat up, rules, regulations and other information could be voiced by mum and dad only. We were not allowed to leave the table until everyone's plates were clear of all food; this was a little unfortunate for Ivor who didn't like cabbage or David who didn't like cheese. On the other hand mum was a brilliant cook and dad a brilliant provider (don't ask) in reality we were, to coin a phrase, "Fed up our backsides" often with far more than we could eat. Once our plate was clear we had to recite "Can I please leave the table" and wait for a response before actually leaving. Permission to leave was not an automatic issue of any rights of freedom. There was washing the dishes and wiping up and numerous other tasks to be done to help mum out.

I had become very aware by then that Mum and Dad didn't always see eye to eye. I am sure it was some sort of sport but mum didn't like to "Chastise the Kids" herself due to the bad right arm she had developed over the years. Mum would threaten "I will tell your Dad when he comes home" and she did! However I was the start of the "Lucky" generation. My oldest Brother Jack ten years older than me along with the first half got all the beating and my dad who was by now 46 years old was starting to tire of the effort involved.

Not equal to my mum in the culinary department my dad always likes to get out of the house. He would take me on great expeditions through farmers fields and orchards. It was no less than the farmers deserved; they hadn't like my dad been out doing battle with the enemy during WW2 but sat in Blighty enjoying the countryside. Rotund, with buxom wives and rosy cheeks, what would rationing mean to a farmer. A shotgun meant very little to my dad; it was a mere toy. Dad taught me if you are going to do something "do it bold as brass" as though you have every right in the world. I would add a clause to that. "Make sure you can run bloody fast too"

I started infant school in Whittington Barracks. The school was just at the end of the street. The summers seemed to go on forever and life was good. My younger brother Ken was by now over a year old so keeping mum busy, we would run errands to the Navy Army & Air Force Institute (NAAFI) using the pram to carry the shopping. I would start to enjoy being an Army Brat with all the military vehicles, the training areas, assault course, film shows, Christmas Parties and noticed the respect shown by others to my dad with his three stripes. In fact when I was out with my dad if he shouted at anyone they would come running up and stand to attention in front of him. Nobody mentioned that we were any different to civilians so I just took Army Life for granted.

The life of an Army Brat
Hell knows all the schools they were at!!
Life at the double some finding it trouble...
But for others ... (RIP) just have to look back

Warminster Salisbury Plains August 1955 to December 1956

On Monday 1st August 1955 we moved again. This time it was to 352-354 Imber Road Warminster in Wiltshire.

Warminster would be my eighth place of residence and I was just over five and a half years old, nothing like few changes in your life as you grow older. We lived in two adjoining houses there because one house was not big enough for us all; those houses stood the test of time and are still standing and occupied today despite our best efforts to burn them down.

Salisbury Plains, who could wish for a better place to grow up, there was spectacular rolling countryside and Max Bygraves singing Out of Town from the film "Charley Moon" 1956. We should have altered the first verse to:-

Say what you will,
The countryside is still
The only place that easily burns right down
Troubles there are so much rarer
Out of town



To be continued.....

A Lesson in Life - Tony Moogan - 66B

Ex Larch Pole (Jan – Mar 79)

We were a 10 man strong section of 7 x mechanics, 1 x electrician, 1 x storeman and 1x Ssgt Artificer (me, Moogs).
Nominal Roll (As far as I can remember)

Ssgt Tony Moogan

Cpl Stewart Gillions

Cpl Dave???? (The 27.5 KVA expert)

LCpl Dave Goodhew (the glider pilot)

LCpl Smudge Smith RE

LCpl Davey Campbell RE

LCpl Smudge Smith RAOC

Spr??????? Blonde hair from Barry S.Wales

Cfn Bobby Keene

Cfn Steve Goldsworthy (Electrician)

We were the pre-advance party from 36 Engr Regt Wksp REME based in Maidstone, Kent.

Our task was to prepare the Engineer Plant Equipment (EPE) to go “up country” to our project area and then support the Sqn advance party, building the exercise camp infrastructure.

Having done that we were to support the main squadron from “36”:

50 (Constr) Sqn RE in its role to build a new camp and infrastructure for the Kenyan Royal Armd Corps which was to receive the new Vickers (30 tonne) Light Tank.

‘The 3rd Kenya Rifles battalion were also located on the same airfield

Location (See Maps 1,2 & 3)

We arrived in theatre on 12/13 November 1978 (just after the All Blacks cheated to get the win against Wales by 1 point! – bah humbug!!)

The advance party would follow us out 3 weeks later in early December, after we had moved the EPE up to our designated area. Its job was to build our camp infrastructure in our exercising area.

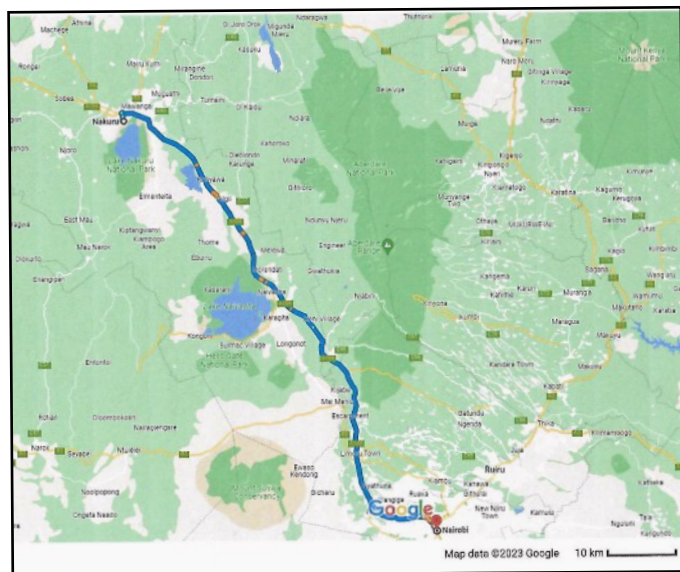
It (the advance party) would be followed by the Sqn main party in early January whose job it was to build the new camp from the ground up, it was great to watch these boys produce what they did!

Our location was Lanet, a little village 12 kms E of Nakuru and 160 kms SSE of Nairobi.

Map1 - Photo of the route from Nairobi to Lanet

Map 2 – Route from Lanet to Nakuru

Map 3 – Modern day aerial photo of our project site at Lanet! As “bare-arsed” a place as ever you could find when we were there! Eg – Lanet flying club is now Nakuru City International Airport!!!!



Map 1

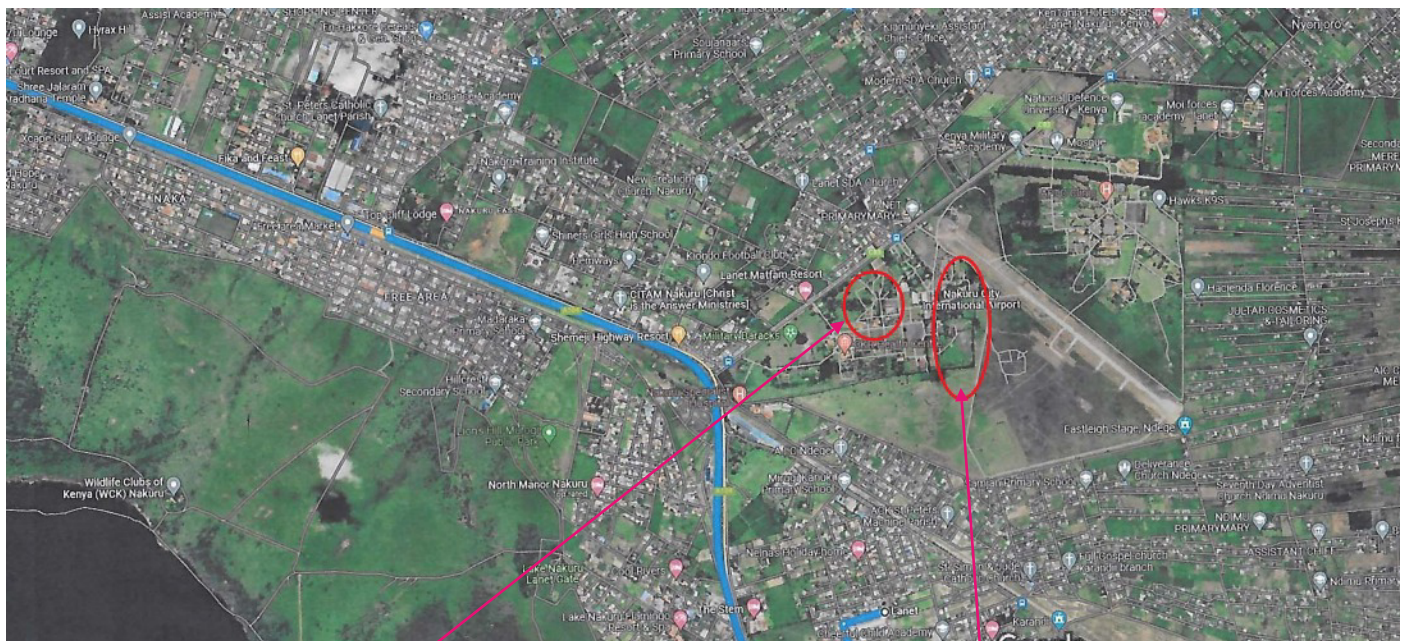


Map 2

Fast forward to get to the reason for writing this little “When I” ditty.

Lanet Daily Routine

Advance party life had settled down to a daily routine of work, work and overtime to keep the EPE serviceable, particularly during the groundworks phase.



3rd Kenya Rifles

Map 3

50 (Const)
Sqn RE

We all settled in and got down to it, also with Christmas approaching we were getting a little homesick. “all work and no play” etc so, Christmas Eve 1978 arrived and I made an executive decision (after a suggestion from Cpl Stew’ Gillions of our parish – an old head on young shoulders and an all-round great bloke and 2i/c!) to knock the blokes off an hour early (1800) we usually worked till 1900 when it got dark on the equator and effin’ cold!

I had sent cfn Bobby Keene and his sidekick, our storeman LCpl Smudge Smiff (2 FFs) in our LAD dumptruck (kindly donated by Maj WAG Carter, the Garrison Engineer (GE) and Project Boss) to allow us to get around the site in good time, it was a big site!!) up to the sqn bar and buy a lot of Tusker Beer (local brew) for us back in our makeshift Light Aid Detachment (LAD), a disused aircraft hangar. We shared this location with the sqn chippies who, like us had to work night shifts until the earthworks were completed!

So here we all are in the middle of possibly the most beautiful and diverse country in the world, sitting our toolboxes (I had to borrow one of course – can’t say why??) giving it large with the immortal phrase which came out the Falklands campaign, when the Islanders named the subsequent occupying troops “When I’s” !

I’m not going to explain why because it’s got to be one of the funniest tales of squaddie humour being matched by these local folk down south!!

Anyway we were all have a good ol’ chinwag about what we had and hadn’t done (when I?) until one of the lads drew my attention to a group wriggly tin huts some 400 hundred metres distant out in the Bondu. I looked and. sure enough there were 4 or 5 children holding hands in a line and walking towards our hangar. They didn’t appear to be afraid or indeed nervous of us until they reached the open doors of the hangar and stopped.

There were 4 of them; these little girls, led by an 11/12 year old, then 2 more of similar age 7/8 I’m guessing and a little ‘un about 3/4 - a similar to my younger daughter Laura back in Blighty with her Ma and sister Louise. The leader, the eldest then said something in Swahili at which point these little ‘erberts started singing a Christmas Carol to us, “Silent Night Holy Night” in Swahili. It was a beautiful and heartfelt rendition from these kids and there was not a dry eye in the house, well not from us and especially me as I’m a legend in me own lunchtime for blubbing.

In reply our lads stood up and sang Good King Wenceslas to these children, I’m sorry because I just do not have the vocabulary explain the effect our blokes had on these kids and they us!

Their smiles would brighten the darkest day, and they sang another! I can’t remember what it was but it was so uplifting and made all the more so because we were thinking of our families and loved ones back in Blighty. These kids made our Christmas that year.

One of the lads asked if we should give them our compo tins of chocolate and boiled sweets, I said yes of course, with a proviso that they were not to be thrown on the floor but just to open the cans and put them down on front of these little ‘uns. However for every step one of us took toward them they took a step back, the eldest, clearly a very protective young woman, placing herself in between our chaps “advancing” and her girls “retreating”!

My Lesson in Life - 1

When the treats had been placed we expected it to be a bit of a free for all, but.... no chance, the eldest took them up to the treats and then gave each one a bar of chocolate and a couple of sweets until all were allocated and safe in the hands of their very grateful recipients, when the little 3 year old whispered into the ear of the eldest, who nodded kindly to her.

Puzzled we wondered what it was she asked for and it wasthe empty chocolate tins, there were 2, the delight on these kids' faces was wonderful to see, not only because of the sweets but because the tins!!

The goddamn tins!!! Which we in UK throw in the bin willy-nilly and here in front of us were these little kids who were beside themselves with glee and happiness because they had something to take home for their parents to use!! Unbelievable.

For goodness sake, there are kids at home who don't show half the pleasure or gratitude shown by these little 'uns, with what they receive at Christmas and here we have these children almost doing somersaults over a bar of chocolate, some boiled sweets and..... a tin!!!

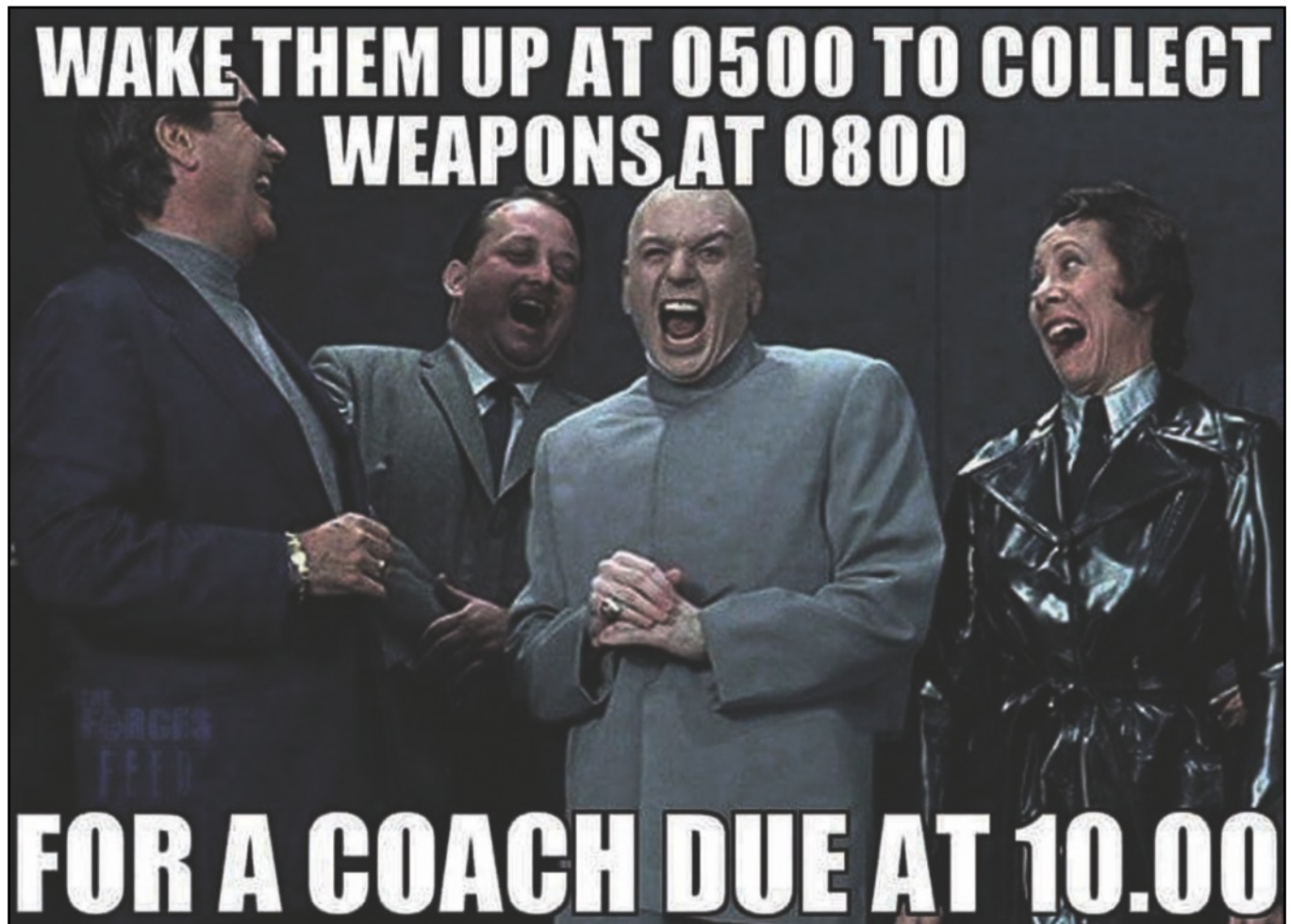
I promise you it was one of the most heart-warming Christmases I have experienced, especially as the year before in DEC 1977; we had missed Christmas at home because of the Firemen's Strike! Sheer unadulterated delight!

In that short period of time, 20 minutes maybe, those kids reminded us what it is to appreciate everything we have in our lives and **TRY NOT** to take anything for granted!! I have tried very hard to stick to that little maxim but believe, sadly, that I have failed miserably on one or two occasions!!

Ha, gotcha, - only jokin', I'm an artificer and therefore by default must be at least as clever, if not more so, than a wagon load of monkeys!!

[QUOD ERAT DEMONSTRANDUM](#)
[\(QED\)](#)

Tony Moogan - 66B



So you think you know a bit about helicopters? Peter Skinner - 68B

Well, I thought I did! Despite a brief and inglorious military career (the army and I parted company “In Mutual Incomprehension” in 1974) I have always maintained my interest in things aeronautical in general and helicopters in particular. Over the years I’ve been happy to bore unsuspecting colleagues to death when asked the question “How do they work”. Indeed, in days of management training, when required to “talk on any subject for 5 minutes” my subject of choice was often helicopter related.

Since I retired, I’ve joined our local “Probus” club. My wife scathingly describes this as “WI for Blokes” and indeed there are similarities in that weekly meetings are usually addressed by a visiting speaker with subjects covering an eclectic range, although for us they rarely include jam making! I enjoy the club, its ethos and the opportunity to meet new people, many of whom have had fascinating careers - before they became just another old bloke.

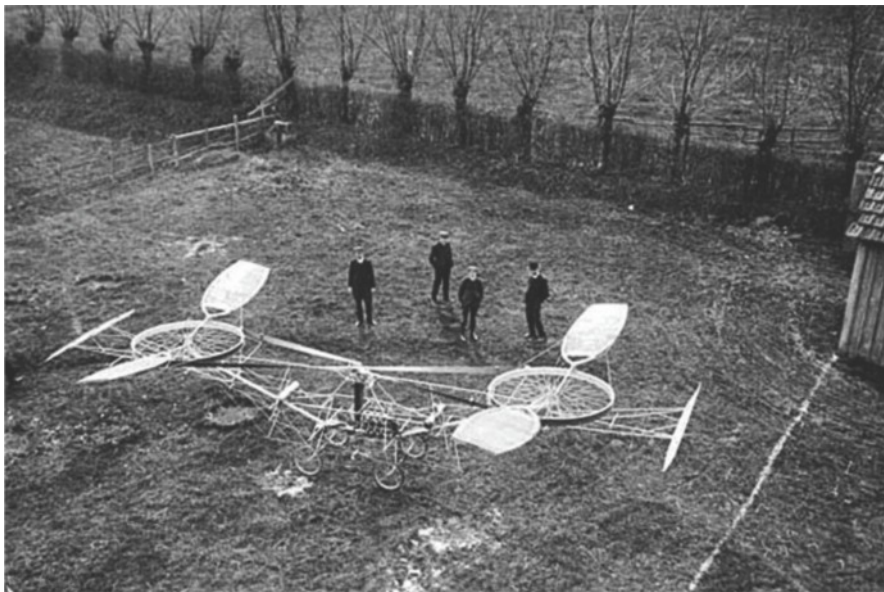
As a result of this I ended up offering to give a talk on “Helicopters - and how they fly” for which I set out to produce a PowerPoint slide show complete with the opening bars of M.A.S.H. and a rare picture of me in uniform leaning nonchalantly against a Sioux, doing my best Steve McQueen impersonation.

From there, I thought I would insert a few slides about early helicopters and their evolution to the machines we know today, before moving on to how the rotor head works and moves in all its axes. The history is where this story really starts, since it was here that I uncovered a lot of facts - and personalities - involved in the gestation of these amazing machines, of which I was completely unaware!

Here’s a brief rundown of some of the things and people I discovered....

Paul Cornu

Almost as soon as Orville & Wilbur first flew at Kitty Hawk in 1903, inventors had been thinking about a machine which could land anywhere and not be constrained by the need for runways and prepared landing grounds. In 1907, a Frenchman, Paul Cornu, flew this helicopter himself for the first time.



The flight lasted about 20 seconds, only about 1 meter off the ground and barely under control - but it flew using a system of powered rotors. For this he won the Archdeacon Prize, a competition set up in 1904 by a wealthy aviation fan.

Note that his design incorporated twin contra-rotating rotors – thus neatly side-stepping the torque reaction issue – it was to be some years before this problem was solved. Sadly, despite this initial success he never made enough money to develop his ideas (it’s unlikely the materials technology would have been available at the time) and he returned to his day job as a bicycle mechanic in his father’s business – experience which seems to have informed his design of undercarriage and rotors!

Jose Cierva

Or, to give him his full name, Juan de la Cierva y Codorníu, 1st Count of la Cierva was a Spanish Aristocrat and self-taught aeronautical Engineer, born in 1895. In 1920 he successfully demonstrated the “Autogiro” which was an early attempt to achieve shorter take off and landings by the use of rotating wings.



Helicopters and Autogiros have an essential difference. The Autogiro has NON Powered rotor blades and the Rotor Disc is kept turning by the upward motion of air through the blades. Electively an autogiro is always in a controlled descent with the forward motion (provided by a conventional propeller) and the passage of air upwards through the rotor combining with the momentum of the rotor disc to provide lift. By definition, an autogiro needs forward motion of the craft and cannot hover. This principle will be familiar to any former Air Techs or pilots reading this, who will be familiar with engine off "Autorotative Landings".

What Autogiros do offer - and what has been well exploited - is STOL and extreme manoeuvrability.

Cierva's place in history is guaranteed by his recognition of the need for, and successful development of, the fully articulated rotor head. One in which the blades could move about their own axes to accommodate the forces generated by advancing and retreating blades – and all that other stuff we learnt about all those years ago. This resulted in the world's first stable rotary-wing aircraft.



His company was relatively successful, and the RAF adopted them, with an initial fleet of 12 entering service between 1933-35 as the "Avro Rota" at RAF Old Sarum. Some of these survive in museums. The RAF were still using autogiros in the early post-war period. Most were – as contemporary pictures show – heavily based on a standard biplane fuselage with the wings replaced by a rotor mast. As designs progressed, Cierva built their own fuselages – although it is said that he was mainly interested in developing and licensing his fully-articulated rotor system.

Ironically – for a leader in a pioneering field of aviation - he was killed in 1936 as a passenger on a civil airliner which crashed. At the time he was working hard on the development of a "True" Powered Rotary Wing aircraft

There is also a fascinating footnote to the Cierva company which will chime with any of us old enough to remember the "Skeeter" helicopter. Their factory was initially at Hamble near Southampton and later moved to Eastleigh Airfield (now Southampton Airport) where they rented hangar space. (This later became the Ford Plant where the Transit was made for many years) This hangar space was later acquired by Saunders Roe who had already acquired Cierva designs. One of the final products from Cierva was the W.14 of 1948. This design became known, from 1951, as the Saunders-Roe Skeeter.

Henrich Focke

Professor Henrich Focke was the founder of Focke-Wulf but had been ousted by the Nazis in 1936 as "politically unreliable". The German company had built Cierva designs under license and had developed the concepts to produce their own designs. Focke concluded that the limitations of autogiros could only be eliminated by taking power to rotor.

In 1932, whilst still with FW, he and engineer Gerd [Achgelis](#) started work on a design which offered this. In 1936 the first of two machines produced flew successfully. This became the FW 61 – arguably the world's first functional "Helicopter".



As you can see from the pictures the Airframe/Fuselage was based on previous FW Fixed-wing designs, but now a single (BMW) radial engine drove, through gears and shafts, twin rotors mounted on tubular steel outriggers, each with a fully articulated rotor head with three tapered blades.

There were interesting technical features, The two rotor heads were contra-rotating thus neatly solving the problem of Torque Reaction. (Not

unlike a modern-day Chinook) and, although there was a conventional direct drive propeller, this only provided cooling for the engine at low speeds and provided negligible forward thrust.

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Probably the most remarkable feat was that one was flown *indoors* at the "DeutschlandHalle" in Berlin in Feb 1938. This was not a one off but was a "nightly show" for some weeks – you can see film of this on YouTube. The FW61 claimed an altitude record in June 1938 of 11,243 ft - all good Propaganda for the Third Reich.



In 1937 – at the behest of the German government - Focke-Achgelis was formed with the brief to develop this new-found technology, leaving Focke-Wulf to concentrate on fixed wing planes. This led to the design and introduction of the FA 223 – known as "Der Drache" (The Dragon). This probably the first time we see a Helicopter designed from scratch rather than adapted from a fixed wing fuselage.

"Der Drache" first flew in 1940 and they were used quite successfully during WW2 from about 1942 onwards. Production had been planned at 40 per month but this never happened as a result of carefully targeted allied bombing. Only about 10 machines were ever built and flown. It could cruise at 175 kilometres per hour (109 mph) and had a top speed of 182 km/h (113 mph) with a Max Altitude of 7,100 m (23,300 ft). It could (and did) transport over 1,000 kg of cargo.

The "Drache" can also lay claim to being the first helicopter to be used in a rescue mission to inaccessible places, when one was used to recover salvageable parts of two aircraft which had crashed in mountainous alpine terrain. It was also the first Helicopter to demonstrate its abilities in carrying underslung loads.

The pilot on both these occasions was one Hans-Helmut Gerstenhauer - who seemed to live charmed life surviving many mishaps (including running out of fuel in Russian held territory).

However, eventually his luck ran out and his unit (and the two surviving Drache machines) were captured by US Forces.



One machine was shipped back to USA – and has never been seen again. The other was handed over to the British forces – and by that route became the first to be flown across the English Channel, when Gerstenhauer flew it from Cherbourg to RAF Beaulieu (near Southampton) – where these pictures were taken there but, unfortunately, it was crashed and written off very soon afterwards.

Gerstenhauer claimed this was due to mechanical failure caused by poor maintenance..... However, by that time, the allies (and a Mr Lawrence Bell) had closely examined it. None survive today – although it deserves a place in history! There is a theory that, following the crash, it was simply buried in a big hole dug by the side of the runway at RAF Beaulieu!

Igor Ivanovich Sikorsky

Meanwhile in America throughout WW2 Igor Sikorsky was busily pursuing his version of the Helicopter dream on behalf of the company which still bears his name.

Born in 1889 Sikorsky already had distinguished background in aviation design. Before he fled post-revolution Russia in 1919 for the US he had designed and flown the world's first multi-engine fixed-wing aircraft, the “Russkaya Vityaz” in 1913 and the first recognisable airliner in 1914.

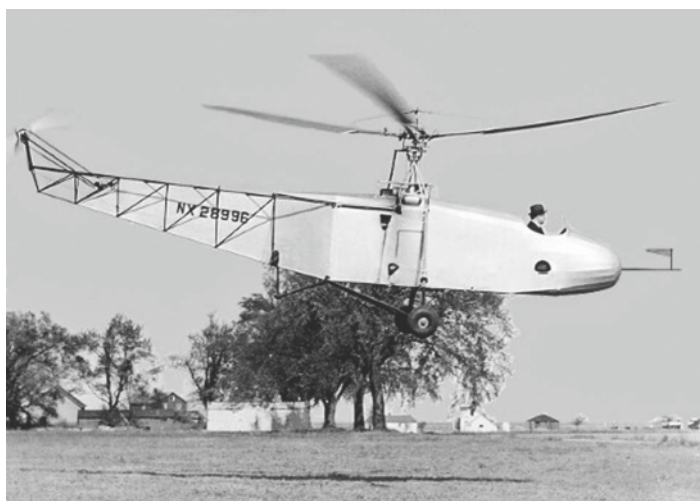
On arrival in America, he founded the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation and had great success with flying boats, many of which were used by Pan-Am Airways throughout the 1930's. In the late 30's and early 40's he embarked on a remarkable round of “trial and error” development aimed at producing a viable helicopter with the materials and engines available at the time. To modern eyes, these seem to be remarkable contraptions, but remember, these were the days when designers came up with ideas, built them - and then strapped themselves in and flew them! Of note also is the complete lack of protective clothing. Mr Sikorsky seems to have conducted his tests in an office suit and grey Homburg hat!

The principle of the powered fully articulated rotor had been pretty well established by this time, but, as we have seen in Germany, the most successful designs had been based around twin contra-rotating main rotors. Sikorsky evangelised the concept of the tail rotor and developed and flew a bewildering variety of development aircraft.

These all exhibited a single main rotor and a variety of horizontal and vertical rear rotor layouts aimed at improving directional stability in forward flight and providing the ability to rotate the aircraft about the main rotor axis.



Bridgeport History Center



Through a variety of iterations, the design culminated in the VS300 which first flew in 1939. This exhibited the Main Rotor/Tail Rotor configuration - and the collective/cyclic /rudder pitch control systems seen in most helicopters today. Sikorsky himself presented the VS300 to the “Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation” in 1943 – where it still resides today.

The Tail Rotor was a remarkably simple solution to the “Torque Reaction” problem – with the advantage that it could be easily configured to give directional control. Again, for anyone who's interested remarkable movie footage can be accessed on YouTube.

The VS300 was, in reality, a flying test bed but it did give rise to the “Sikorsky R4” - The first helicopter produced for the U.S. Army and later the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard - more than 400 were produced by the end of WWII and 8 came to the UK.

To be continued.....

Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson - 66B

12th of May 2023. I was sitting watching some cricket on TV and had just made myself a cup of tea. My wife was away house-sitting and I was still struggling with a terrible back pain.

I had contacted my GP and he prescribed some painkillers which were delivered by the pharmacy. There was no chance of me getting into my car, never mind driving it.

I realised I wanted something that was on my mobile phone which was in my left hand fleece pocket. I continued to watch the cricket and a few minutes later thought to myself, "Why isn't my phone in my hand?"

My left arm wouldn't respond and I reached over with my right hand to find my arm was completely lifeless. As one does, I thought "Crikey, something is not right".

I got my phone fired up and turned the camera on and looked at my face in selfie mode. Sure enough, the left side of my face was a bit droopy.. I called 111 and suggested to the lady who answered that I might have had a stroke. She asked if my speech was slurred and being in a sarcastic mood I asked if I sounded normal. She agreed I sounded a bit funny. Anyway, after a few questions back and forth she arranged for an ambulance to come and get me.

It was at this point I realised two things; I needed to pee quite badly and the ambulance guys wouldn't be able to get in as I had locked the front door, and taken the key out, luckily.

I called my wife's sister (Lindy) who lives locally and asked her to come round asap. (My wife was too far away to help and had dogs to look after so couldn't come and help me).

Lindy arrived and we concluded I had indeed had a stroke. As calmly as I could I asked her to gather a few things for me that I could take to the hospital with me. She was a little taken aback by my calmness and organisational ability in the midst of this medical emergency.

I still needed to pee.

The ambulance arrived and the two paramedics assessed me quickly and confirmed our diagnosis and bundled me into the ambulance on a stretcher commenting on the way that it looked like I had wet myself. I really didn't want to get into a long explanation so I just said I needed to pee. Just hang on till we get to the hospital. Fat chance I thought but one tries.

"Where are we going?" I asked. "Southampton or Bournemouth" was the reply. Knowing my wife was not a fan of Southampton hospital I chose Bournemouth. After a few phone calls, off we went.

We arrived in no time with blue lights flashing and I felt quite privileged to have experienced the ride at speed.

Straight to the MRI scanner to confirm what we all knew and also confirmed it was a bleed and not a clot.

I still wanted to pee.

Up to a ward where I was plonked on a bed and finally got access to a urine bottle to pee in. Relief of sorts.

I was catheterised at some point but don't remember exactly when. I did realise that would mean I wouldn't need the urine bottles again, at least in the short term.

I got settled in by the nurses and told not to worry I was in the right place.

It was quite late by now and I was a bit sleepy and soon dozed off.

Sue, my wife, having arranged for the pets she was looking after to be cared for by somebody else and raced over to Bournemouth to see what had happened to me and how I was. One thing I was not prepared for was my emotional state. I seemed to be on the verge of tears at the slightest little thing. It was later explained to me by a doctor that this was a normal side effect of a stroke. I was prescribed some "happy pills" to put me back on an even keel. I will be taking these for at least another year.

In the morning I took stock of my surroundings. There were 5 beds in the ward, all stroke patients, some better off than others. No comfort to me really. I started to take things in and worked out what my call button did and chatted to the senior nurse to get as much info as I could about my situation.

My back was still killing me and I got some painkillers. They didn't do much for the pain but made me a bit drowsy so I slept a bit more.

Sue arrived as soon as they would let her in. She was in shock as you can imagine but did her best to be supportive and confident. We were both in shock when we realised the enormity of what had occurred and the impact it was going to have on our lives.

After a few days, still in debilitating back pain, taking paracetamol and oral morphine, I finally complained enough about the pain for somebody to listen to me. A doctor arrived at my bedside and suggested I needed pregabalin to address the pain. I could care less what it was called or the side effects, if there were any, and started taking a pill each morning and evening. The pain dulled to a manageable level and I was at least able to get out of bed for some physio.

It was about this time that I started to be severely constipated. That was no fun and eventually I asked for an enema to move things along. Blessed relief I can tell you but not an experience I want to repeat.

Having a catheter became an issue on day when I was preparing to settle down for the night. I asked the two nurses to take my shorts off. They both yanked them down at the same time not realising I had the catheter drain bottle between

my legs on the bed. The pain was like nothing I have ever experienced as the balloon on the bladder end of the catheter was pulled hard up against my urethra. I was just about hanging off the ceiling. The pain stayed with me most of the evening until by chance I bent my knee to get comfortable in bed. The pain disappeared immediately and I assume the balloon was released from the urethra back into the bladder. Needless to say I had the catheter removed as soon as I was able.

We asked the staff if I could get a bed in Lymington hospital. This is only 15 minutes from where we live and we save my wife having to drive 40 minutes each day to Bournemouth. There were no beds available but I was put on a waiting list.

My wife managed to find an ex military chap who was an Armed Services Community Advocate. He popped in to see me regularly and offered assistance should I need it. Once I moved to Lymington I was out of his catchment area so I have lost touch.

I was visited by Mike Tizard, Tony Moogan, Roger Traves, and family and friends. I had plenty of phone calls and messages from ex boys which were very supportive. I also am keeping in touch with Ian Clark and his partner who are going through a similar recovery although I seem to be faring better than Ian. His recovery is much more complex than mine.

I finally managed a shower, (sitting down on a commode), after about 6 weeks which was bliss. My skin seemed to think otherwise and it started to fall off. Not to worry, it was just dead stuff that the shower had triggered to change. It was about this time that I was weighed and shock horror I had lost 16kgs. Not exactly the way I would have chosen to lose weight. I think it was all muscle mass anyway as I still have a big belly.

No haircut or beard trim for many weeks had me looking like the wild man from Borneo. This would all have to wait. Sue became proficient at cutting my finger and toe nails. (How useless can I get? I can hardly do anything for myself).

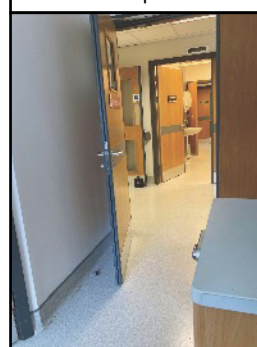
I was jealous of some of the patients on my ward who had the ability to shuffle around and move about in wheelchairs etc. I just lay in bed most of the times letting my muscles waste away. I tried to exercise what I could in bed but just exhausted myself.

Finally got notification that they were moving to Lymington. No blue lights on the ambulance this time. Just a sedate drive.

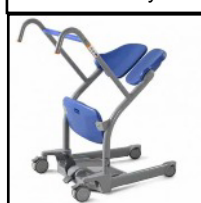
When we arrived I was shown into my room on Deerleap Ward. I told the ambulance guys they must have got the wrong room. I was assured this was mine. (See the photos). It was a private room with its own bathroom, TV and window. I was welcomed by a number of staff, swabbed and prodded and questioned about my medical history for quite a while. Eventually I dozed off, I was very tired.

Sue visited and was impressed by the room and staff and how much better it was than Bournemouth.

Door to my room on Deerleap ward

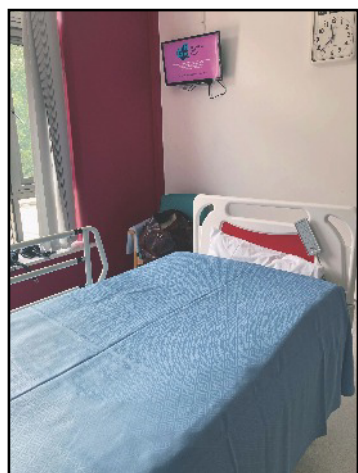


Sara Stedy



I have got to know the hospital staff quite well in the last few months. There is quite some banter which makes life more acceptable. The consultant was very open and Frank and we discussed my condition in detail. It was going to be a long recovery. The physios were/are brilliant. I have graduated from being lifted from bed with a sling to using a device called a Sara Stedy-sit to stand (see photo). This is much easier for the staff to manage getting me out of bed but it did take some weeks to master the technique of using it.

I can now also get out of my wheelchair onto an adjacent bench and vice versa. I have yet to try getting from my bed to the chair. This is one of the next steps in my rehab.



My bed. I spent 12 to 15 hours a day in this bed for over 5 months.

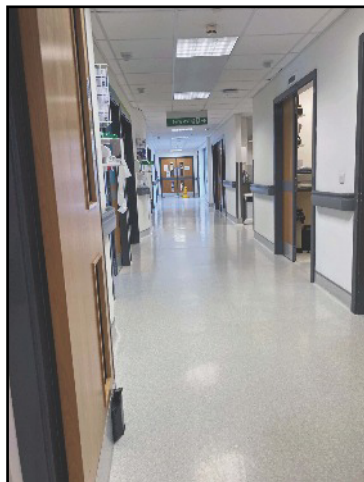
I have progressed from laying down or sitting to being able to stand upright. Re training my muscles to do what I want them to do has been a challenge. I was so weak too and each physio session wore me out. I have stood unsupported for over 3 minutes. It is hard to keep my balance.

I graduated to standing next to a set of parallel bars and eventually was coaxed into taking a few steps. This was a strain on my good arm and knees. However, continued attempts have me "walking" the length of the bars up to four times a session.

Two weeks ago I was introduced to a stick that has 4 contact points with the floor and did a couple of sessions standing with it. I am now starting to "walk" with the stick. Learning how to do something as simple as walking again when you have been doing it for over 70 years is very strange and I find I have to concentrate on the simplest things, (stand up straight, keep your knees locked, pick your feet up, move your left or right hip forward prior to taking a step etc.) when I finish these sessions I am worn out and very sweaty.

One of the physio is an ex 2 Para. He pushes me really hard and we have quite a bit of banter going. He made me go further than I thought I could each time. (Remember what it was like during PT at the school/college. Quitting is not an option. Sadly Roy has moved on and is back in University for the next 2 years getting his degree. I will miss him but he has left a legacy in that the other physios have taken a few lessons from him. Thanks, Roy. You helped me a great deal. I get some sort of physio each day on my left arm and hand. The normal movement exercises are becoming easier and I can feel my arm muscles getting stronger. It is still a dead weight but I am making progress. A few weeks ago my hand was being massaged and the physio said, "Move your fingers", and I did! Sue was sitting in the corner and missed it so the physio asked me to do it again and this time she saw them move. Much joy. Things have moved on slowly and I can almost move them at will these days after I "wake them up" with a little coaxing.

I also get some electrodes applied to my forearm and to a device which gives my nerves a little shock. This causes my fingers and thumb to react and my hand opens up as if by magic. I do this almost daily for half an hour. It takes some getting used to.



My longest walk with the aid of the quad stick.

Still getting physio every day and it is becoming more targeted at what I will need once I get out of hospital. (While that thought makes me very happy it also scares me as I won't have the crew of people looking after me and my needs).

I can now "walk" with the aid of a stick and some physiotherapists supporting me. I can manage from the laundry, (At the far end of the corridor in the photo), the last door on the left, to the double doors just visible on the left of the photo. It's about 60 feet I reckon. The rest of the day is a mess once I have done this as I am worn out from the effort.

My energy levels are not helped by a bladder infection that I seem to have had for months. It all came to a head on Thursday the 31st of August. I had a terrible night's sleep interrupted by the need to pee regularly with not a lot coming out.

I reported it to the nurses in the morning and all of a sudden I had a doctor prodding and poking me and asking a ton of questions. He disappeared to look at an ultrasound scan I had the previous week and came back and told me that my prostate was enlarged.

This wasn't news as the technician who did the scan told me the same thing but not to worry as it was normal for someone my age.

The doctor proceeded to put on a rubber glove and I thought, "I know what is coming now". I don't know what I was worried about. There was no pain and the exam was over in a matter of seconds. He then took some blood to check my PSA levels and kidney function.

I had all weekend to think about the possible results. Monday morning another doctor came and told me my PSA levels were completely normal and my kidneys were functioning well. So, I was prescribed some medication to help reduce the size of my prostate. I started with these yesterday morning and last night managed to sleep from about 0100 until 0600 without the need to pee. Success so far.

I have to wait and see how long I have to take the medication for. (If you are interested, the pills are Tamsulosin - 400mg, and Finasteride - 5mg). I have been on these pills for about a week and I am back peeing too often.

I can't seem to get the balance of bed clothing and window opening right while we have this warm weather. One minute I am hot and uncomfortable and the next cold and looking for a blanket.

I posted a message on the Arborfield Old Boys Facebook page about my current condition and hopes regarding the next issue of OBAN. I have had well over 60 positive responses to my post. Thanks guys.

I was weighed again today (9th Sep) and I have lost another kilo in the last week. This has to be fat as I am doing enough exercise to be able to compete at the next Olympics and am building muscle.

To be Continued.....

Remembrance Day Photos 2023

Photos courtesy of Jim Griffiths, Mike Tizard & Geordie Wright-Rivers



Letters/E-mails to the Editor

From: Ned Greaves (nee Fox)

Dear Roger and all the kind members of the AOBA especially 57 Intake,

I wanted to send you a link to some images from the 2023 AOBA reunion for anyone who would like to take a look:

Also a link to all the images and recent news paper articles of Jim for anyone who wishes to see these:

I also wanted to send you a heartfelt thank you for very kindly hosting us as your guests over the reunion weekend. I learned so much about my father's life as a young man at Army Apprentice School. I enjoyed meeting my father's very dear friends and experiencing the Arboretum together as well as the poignant memorial service for all the lost members this year.

I think you all have such a wonderful bond and companionship between you. You showed us Foxes a lot of warmth and kindness, treating us like one of you.

With much love
Please keep in touch
Ned Greaves (Nee Fox)

Speech for dad:

Firstly a huge thank you to all of you, especially Roger and his team and of course all the kind members of the old boys association for generously including us as guests of honour. It means a great deal to us to be able to meet some of his dear friends and share a meal side by side this evening.

Those of you who knew my father< (Jim Fox), will agree that his tenacity, perseverance and indomitable spirit in sport were equally matched by his kindness and sense of humour. When I was much younger, my father was very understanding of my mistakes as a teenager. Most notable of these was when I had my first driving lesson with him learning to join the A420 dual carriageway. His advice was this "keep calm.... very quickly drive over the central reservation carefully at the very immediate next opportunity since you've turned the wrong way"

My father was a great deal of fun to spend time with, especially when we were children. If there was snow, he'd tie a crate to the back of the tractor and tow us screaming along at a good lick. If we fell off, he'd tell us it was just a scratch and quick jump back on and if we didn't like what as for supper he'd always tell us it was good for us and would put hairs on our chests... All of my siblings are also female.

As I grew older, my father was a great source of advice for relationships and difficult to navigate life events. When he was diagnosed with motor neuron disease I was 16 years of age and doctors told us he would only survive a few more years. My father cheated death for 27 more years, saw all his children marry and spent a little time with both of his only grandchildren. His eldest grandchild Ben is a spitting image of my father aged 10 and appears to have the same love of sport.

During his last week of life, my father never gave up pushing himself physically as he has always done, even when his flesh and bones wouldn't work any more. May he rest in peace and we will forever miss him.

Please stay seated and raise a glass - To Jim.

Ned Greaves

AOBA Charity Donations:

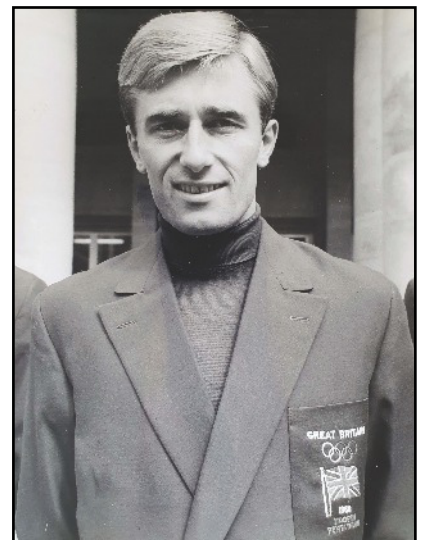
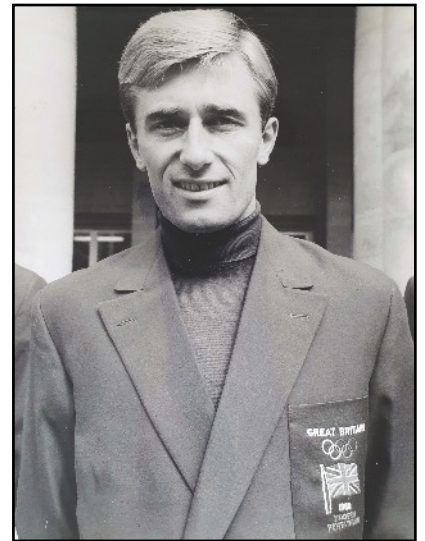
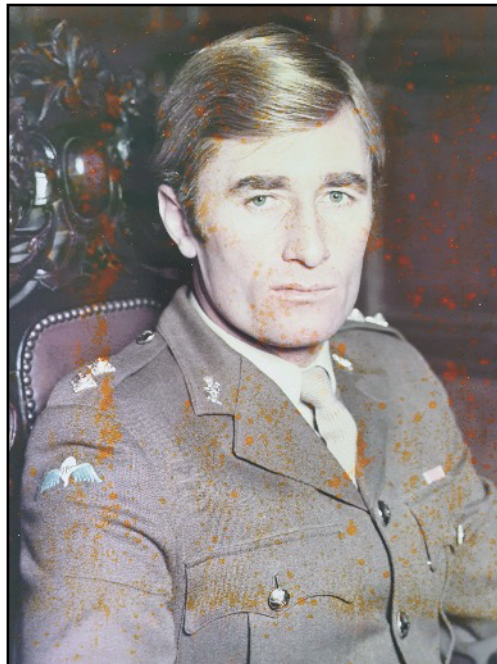
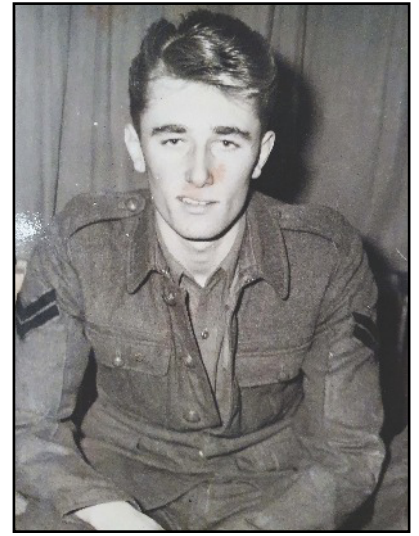
I would like to propose that a donation is made to the ABF The Soldier's Charity this year.

The ABF The Soldiers' Charity is the Army's national charity, here for soldiers, past and present, and their families for life. The charity stands at the forefront of support for the Army family, last year supporting 70,000 people in 45 countries around the world. As one of the largest funders in the sector, the ABF awarded grants to individuals and families, and funded leading organisations that support soldiers, former soldiers, and their families. When the ABF hears of a person or family in need, they aim to respond within 48 hours!

Assuming my knee has recovered from surgery on time, I intend to take part in the ABF's Front Line Walk fundraising event in France in October which finishes at the iconic Menin Gate. I would like to request permission from the AOBA membership to place a wreath from the Association at the "Gate" during the Last Post ceremony on the evening of the last day of the walk.

Bruce Leslie - 75C

Photos of Jim Fox from Ned Greaves



Eulogy - Arthur Hodgkins - 63B B Coy

Arthur Hodgkins was born in Cawnpore, India, on the 6th of November, 1937. His father was an officer in the British Army and the family lived a privileged life as citizens of the British Raj.

After Indian Independence in 1947, the family arrived in England, and life was very different to the colour, heat and privileges that they were used to in India, and so Arthur began his military career by enlisting at the Army Apprentices School, Arborfield, in 1953.

And so it was that Arthur and I first became acquainted.

Me, barely 16 years old, and Arthur as an apprentice sergeant, eighteen months or so my senior in charge of a spider of 20 Apprentices.

Arthur, as might be expected, carried the rank with easy authority and was well liked, respected by the lads in his charge, and it was obvious to see that he possessed the maturity of a much older man even then.

One thing that was noticeable was that he had a crucifix on the wall of his bunk – a rather unusual thing to be displayed by a teenage youth, but which proclaimed immediately his deep religious convictions, something which he demonstrated daily by his no-nonsense attitudes to bullying which was always a problem.

It was quite evident from the outset that Arthur was one of those who excelled in all that he did, immaculately turned out, expertly practising his trade as an Instrument Mechanic, Captain of the School rugby team, and generally regarded as an all-round 'good guy'.

As we did not enjoy the freedom of movement which came later, we were at least able to attend the School Dancing Club, organised by Fred Hall a civilian Instructor, which held dances on a Tuesday night, when local girls from Wokingham and surrounding districts would be invited to provide dancing partners, and it was here that Arthur met the lovely Eileen, and where their story began, and where I also met June, my wife, in exactly the same way.

It also transpired that Eileen and June's parents were very close friends – not unusual in those days, when it seemed that most of Wokingham's residents knew each other!

So that when Arthur and Eileen and June and I were married, Arthur and I became sort of extended members of the well-known Rose family, continuing to meet at family events and Old Boy's Reunions.

After Arthur qualified and passed out, transferring to REME, he and Eileen became engaged in 1957 and married in 1959, moving to Barton Stacey, Arthur's posting, living in a caravan locally.

As the family increased with the birth of their eldest daughter, Arthur in a career change, left the army and moved to Wokingham, joining Sperry's, one of the foremost employers in Bracknell, the perfect place for for a skilled Instrument Technician to practice his profession, this was swiftly followed by housing moves, firstly to South Ascot, then to North Ascot, the 'posh' end of the village!

Now, family settled, it was time for him to apply his undoubted talents to his profession and began a successful career working on Royal Navy projects involving lengthy spells away from home, but doing a job which he enjoyed hugely, working with trusted and loyal workmates whom he felt mirrored the camaraderie he enjoyed in the army.

Moving on, he became a Civil Servant and became responsible for the setting up of a new Compass Observatory at Portland Bill – which is still operating today, thanks to Arthur's efforts.

Eventually, retired due to ill-health, Arthur was at last able to turn his devotion and talents to 'Ariel', his other true love, spending hours caressing the sleek lines of that shapely frame, even accompanying and riding to the Continent for week-ends away with his motor cycling pals, oblivious to the chagrin and envy of the neglected Eileen, which she accepted with her usual stoicism, uttering no word of reproach to that fickle, male chauvinist!

Despite increasing ill-health in his final years, Arthur never lost his optimistic outlook, his real love and loyalty for his military past, and we did enjoy some great reminiscences about our youthful days in "B" Coy, sharing the good, bad, indifferent, but never dull times which we were so fortunate to live.

I'll remember with affection a true and loyal friend with whom I was privileged to spend a formative part of my youth and beyond, albeit more often apart than together, but this was forever a soldier's lot.

We would meet at our reunions in latter years and continue conversations half completed at our last meeting, or maybe at one of the 'Rose' family gatherings in the early days.

"We're told old soldiers never die, they only fade away,
But that is in the mortal self, by physical decay,
In memory and vivid recollection there's no sign
Of truth in that oft-repeated military rhyme.
We, who now remain can still bring those old friends to mind,
They will not 'fade away' to those of us who are left behind,
The opposite is true because of past times that we shared,
And so it will continue, while there are those of us who care".

Goodbye, Arthur old friend, knowing you and sharing your life was an honour and a rare privilege..
Till we meet again at the final RV.

Sgt Stuart Vasepuru - Obituary

19th September 1955 - 28th July 2022 (66)

Arte Et Marte

(By skill and By fighting)

SERVICE (as far as Known)

72C (Sept intake) to 74 ?

Army Apprentices College (Arborfield)

Trained as an ECE (Electronics Technician)

1974 to 1977

Elizabeth Barracks, Minden, Germany (BAOR)

L.A.D. (Light Aid Detachment) - Kings Own Royal Border Regiment, mechanised infantry.

1977 to 1980

7 Armoured Workshops, Fallingbommel

1980 to 1972

Larkhill (UK) (BAOR)

Royal Artillery

9 years' service

Passed away suddenly (Heart attack) 28th July 2022 – Taken too soon

LAST PARADE

Internment Monday 29th August (11.00am)

Held at : Fawkner Memorial Park

Hadfield

Melbourne

Victoria

Australia

Stuart Vasepuru 72C



In July 2022 I was contacted by David Loxley on behalf of the family of Stuart, who passed away in South Australia 22nd July 22.

David knew Stuart from their time together in the Corps.

24234954 Stuart Vasepuru joined the AAS Arborfield with intake 72C and served as a VM reaching the rank of Sgt before ending his service I believe in 1996.

After a time in UK Stuart emigrated to Australia and settled near Melbourne. David kept in touch and when he passed Stuart's partner contacted him to see if some form of REME presence could be arranged for the final parade.

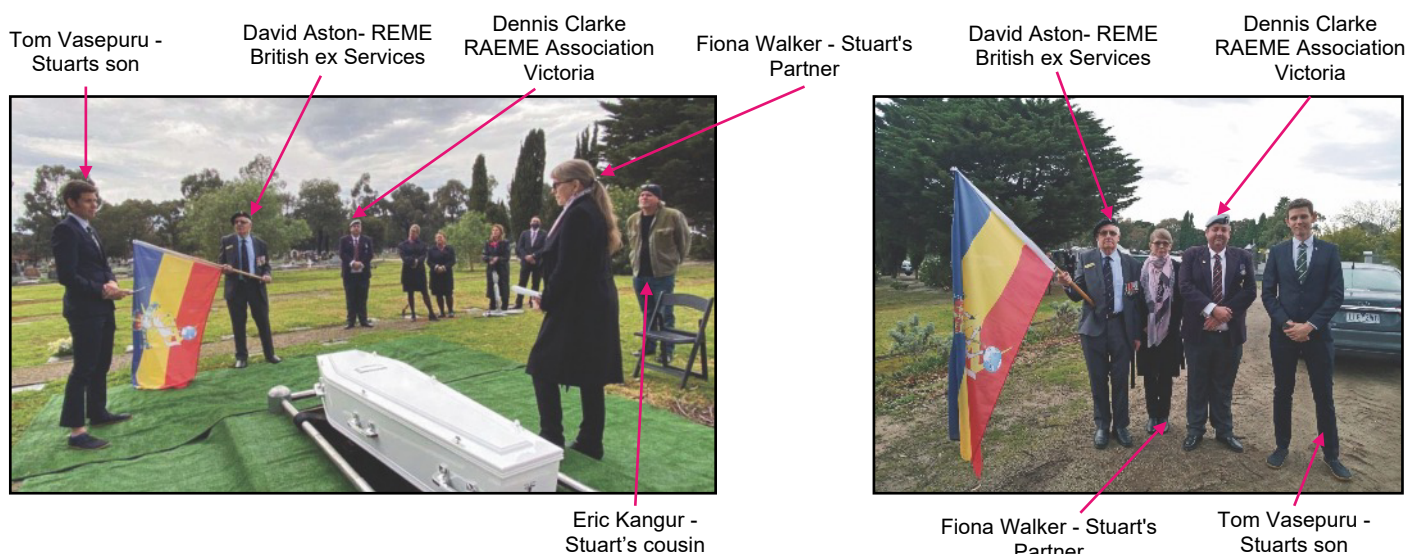
David contacted me (after meeting at AOBA reunions) and asked for help, I was able to contact an ex RAEME pal I knew from Singapore who arranged for the RAEME S. Australia Association to provide a Standard and several veterans to attend.

I also managed via Ex REME in Oz web site to get several ex REME Vets in the Melbourne area to attend as well.

Stuart's partner Fiona and his son Tommy are (all being well) going to attend the AOBA reunion and trip to the NMA in June.

Stuart was laid to rest in the Fawkner Memorial Park, Hadfield, Melbourne on the 29th of August 2022 with the S. Australia RAEME Ass Standard carried by their Chairman in attendance.

Ian Tilson. V.P.,. Doncaster Branch REME Association



Obituary ex WO1 (ASM) Brian Clements



Scribe: Major (Retired) J Plumb

I have to advise that my Step Father-in-law, Ex WO1 (ASM) Brian Clements, passed away on 29th September 2023.

Brian was born in Kent in 1935 and spent his school years there before joining the Army as an Apprentice at Arborfield, intake 50B, and trained as an Instrument Technician.

On completion of his trade training he was posted to Donnington, but not being particularly happy there, he volunteered to go to Korea in 1954.

After Korea he was notified of a posting to Cyprus. He applied for Artificer Training and after passing selection he attended a 23-month course which was part of his trade conversion to Electrics, Instruments & Radio (now known as Avionics).

On completion he was posted to Middle Wallop and then moved to 71 Aircraft Workshop REME in Detmold in 1966.

Life in Germany was rewarded with an unaccompanied tour to Sharjah in 1970, which was to last for 9 months as he had an R&R break in the middle. He returned to a First Line unit in Netheravon before being promoted to WO1 and posted to Aircraft Branch REME at Middle Wallop. Brian specialised in the Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wireless-guided (TOW) missile system and continued serving on the Long Service List at Aircraft Branch until his retirement in 1980. With his detailed knowledge of the TOW system he became the resident Civilian Instructor at Aircraft Engineering Training Wing until his return to Aircraft Branch where he remained until his final retirement in 1995.

After his retirement Brian continued his personal interest in Archaeology and was a volunteer at the Andover Museum. He spent the remainder of his life at the family home in Andover before ill health meant his moving to a nursing home for the last two years of his life. He leaves behind children Debbie and Michael and Grandchildren Katie and Max.

Courtesy of The Craftsman Magazine

Obituary Sgt Kevin Mitchell (Mitch) 43A

Scribe: Andy Mitchell (Ken's son)

Kevin Mitchell (Mitch) was born in 1928 and joined REME as an apprentice, intake 1943A. He served in Singapore and Malaya (1947-50 and 1961-64) and BAOR (1952-56, 1959-61 and 1964-66) before retiring in 1968.

Mitch's life was shaped by his REME service, thriving in the company of friends, at AOBA reunions and in later life with his local Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association. He had some great stories, especially of LAD detachment with the Inniskilling Fusiliers in Malaya and with the RMP in Osnabruck.

He met his wife Jacqueline as an evacuee in 1941, marrying in 1956 and having three children and six grandchildren. Mitch was a caring family man, loved for his stories, jokes and puns. He cared for Jacqueline for several years as her health deteriorated, with characteristic determination and devotion as his own health declined. Married for 66 years, they passed away within three weeks of each other in November 2022.

After leaving the REME, Mitch worked as a service advisor for several car dealerships, often surprising the mechanics with his experience and ability to diagnose problems. In retirement, he and Jacqueline enjoyed gardening, grandchildren and caravan holidays in Ireland, France and every part of the UK.

Captain Denis John Marshall Intake 46b

Scribe: George Marshall 46B (Twin Brother of Denis)

I sadly report the loss of Denis who died on the 12th May 2023 after a long and painful illness.

Denis, along with twin brother George, took the King's shilling in September 1946, (despite the advice of elder brother Fred, 45A) all three Marshalls wearing the yellow flash of 'D' Coy. On passing out in 1949, both twins were posted to 18 Command workshops, Bovingdon helping to repair ex wartime armored vehicles. In practice this consisted of 'handing tools to the civilian workforce.' This did not suit a bolshy, recently skilled third class tradesman, so Denis took up the role of Ration Corporal whilst George found work in the Drawing Office.

Eventually draft Overseas Orders appeared for both of them to 'The White Man's Grave', or to be precise 1 Station Workshop, Accra, West Africa. This was a plum posting supervising the African soldiers where, due to the climate, work only took place during the mornings leaving afternoons free for swimming, tennis and other sports. As supervisors, the minimum rank was Acting Sergeant in order to enjoy life in the European Mess. To keep us youngsters out of mischief, (and the bar) the OC kindly allowed use of the workshop facilities, enabling the vehicle lads to enhance their skills repairing Officer's cars.

Due to the climate, the posting consisted of two eighteen month tours with a three month recuperative leave in between, taken in the UK, during which the King, George VI died. With all flights to and from W.Africa being taken up by Colonial funeral escorts, the effect resulted in a long inter tour leave that severely tested the three pounds a day limit of withdrawal of funds to finance the beer ration.

On returning to Accra for the second tour, the OC at the time decided that separating the two Marshalls might, as he put it, 'develop their individuality'. So Denis went off to Takoradi as the Vehicle Sgt: with 1 Gold Coast Regiment. There he met his wife to be, Jean who was living there with her parents in the civilian education world.

All good things however come to an end and the next posting was to 6 Bn in Bordon. Now we all know of the tremendous job they did there, but teaching recovery on the heath and associated 'bull' was difficult to adjust to. Seeking a way out, taking a Tiffy Course seemed a possible option as they had both qualified as first class tradesmen. Meanwhile his Jean returned to the UK, to Aldershot no less and the romance continued. They eventually married in the Garrison Church there and moved into MQ's in Bordon. (Where the tin baths hung on the wall).

Successfully completing 106 Art Veh course, still with brother G, both were sent off to the Station Workshops in Singapore, on a three week 'cruise' accompanied passage, stopping in Aden and Columbo. On arrival there Denis was allocated a hiring in Serangoon. At this point G became a non person due to the Military establishment unable to cope with two soldiers sporting similar army numbers. All was sorted eventually and D settled to an interesting Farelf tour, inspecting the island's equipment, working from Fort Canning. (As a point of interest, brother G joined Denis on the team after his unit upcountry supporting the building of Malacca was civilianized two years later).

Back to the UK, Denis went off to the TA in Ipswich as their PSI to 161 Inf Wksp, G in a similar appointment with 162 Wksp, such that they often met up on Divisional exercises.

From then on we tended to go our own way with Denis off on secondment with the Federation Army in Malaya followed by a posting as an ASM to the Base Workshop in Wetter. From there he took a Commission as Captain, taking up Command of the School of Signals LAD in Blandford. Whilst there with a growing family, he bought his own house and the career of constant moves ceased to be so attractive, so he resigned from the Army and retired back down to Cornwall, setting up a successful Boarding House in Bude, his place of his birth.

He became involved in work on the Town Council, whilst his wife Jean studied and was eventually ordained as one of the first lady vicars. Much of her work centered on the Bodmin area and they took over the Parish of South Petherton, residing in an immense old Victorian vicarage, then on to Lanhydrock the NT house with the church part of the Estate. During this period, Denis organized and ran the Parish magazines, supporting his wife in many ways. They had by now sold their boarding house in Bude, deciding to settle in Bodmin as they had befriended many in the area and there they settled happily for their retirement.

Unfortunately Denis's health began to deteriorate such that he needed constant nursing by his wife Jean, eventually moving to Burnham on Sea to be near their youngest daughter to help out with his care. When he finally had to go into a Care Home, he died peacefully on the 12th May 2023.

Altogether a long and interesting life, underpinned and help shaped by his time as an Arborfield 'brat'.

