

Apr
2024



Issue
87

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: Award Boards

Rear Cover: Award Boards

Members Passed since OBAN 86

Name	Intake	DOD	Information Received From
David F Atkinson	66B	28-Jul-69	Chalky White 66B (Corrected Div)
Dave Cutler	59C	24-Apr-76	Belated entry - Alan Jones
Ken Bennet	45A	9-Feb-24	Wife Jenny Bennet
Geoffrey Hewett	81C	2-Dec-23	Craftsman Magazine Feb 24
Gerry Malone	54A	7-Aug--23	Craftsman Magazine Nov 23
Reginald Walker	54A	25-Aug-23	Craftsman Magazine Nov 23
Brian William Barron	53B	21-Jan-24	Daughter Gabrielle Robinson
Mick Tavender	58C	3-Nov-14	Belated entry - Sons Mark & Craig
William Kellam	55A	4-Nov-23	Craftsman Magazine Mar 24
John Moran	64A	10-Jan-24	Craftsman Magazine Mar 24
John Hamill	61B	3-aug-23	John Feast
John Williams	52A	9-Mar-24	Daughter Lisa Lambert

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				At AGM		After 2025 Reunion
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 always looking for new Committee members and if you feel inclined to help the Association please get in touch with any committee member via the AOBA website Contacts page.

Geordie Wright-Rivers - AOBA Chairman

AOBA Chairman's Report



Hello AOBA.

Happy Springtime everyone!

I'm not sure about you all but I think that it's been a long, wet, cold winter and I'm very much enjoying the odd, pleasant day and certainly looking forward to some sunshine and warm (dry!) weather!

There has been little AOBA activity to report upon since the December edition as we each play catch-up in our 'other' lives and launch headlong into a new year.

But that doesn't mean that the wheels and gears have stopped turning....

As ever, our intrepid editor Andy has long forgotten his recent ailments and the polite nudges I get to 'do my bit' for the magazine, serve to inform me that he is well on the road to recovery (I promise to get 'my bit' to you early at least once during my tenure!).

The rest of the committee continue to work extremely hard too, to ensure that AOBA remains a going concern now, and long into the future.

We employ a simple strategy which ensures that we continue to recruit at every opportunity thanks to Bruce Leslie (though we know that this is getting increasingly difficult), we enjoy healthy bank balances, all strictly managed by (Scotsman) Bob McKeegan-Brown.

We are very well represented up and down the country by our standard bearer, Dave Merrick and at the Cenotaph where we are looked after by Steve Thornes.

Ian Scurr now has his feet firmly under the table looking after our bereaved families and Mark Jobes continues to pull rabbits out of the hat with our website and IT issues.

Our secretary (and resident Santa Claus) Nige Canning, Bob Cassidy and Jeff Baker look after all the difficult admin bits and pieces that keep us honest and above board!

And speaking of honesty, I am continually grateful for the advice and guidance of our resident gurus, Bill Cleasby and Mike Tizard.

Please drop any of the committee a note of thanks on occasion as these roles are all voluntary and they seek no reward other than to see the AOBA continue to thrive.

Of course, if any of you feel like volunteering for a role on the committee just drop me, or any committee member for more information about the role you are interested in.

See you all at the reunion. If you have never been then do give it a try – I know you will thank me afterwards (and I'll buy you a pint – if Bob McKeegan-Brown lets me!).

Arte et Marte

Geordie Wright-Rivers 77C
Chair Arborfield Old Boys Association

Secretary's Report



Spring greetings from Cornwall!

As I write, there is a service in Westminster Abbey celebrating two hundred years of the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution). We in Fowey are blessed to have our own station with a Trent class all weather lifeboat (AWL) and a smaller D Class inshore boat. As a result of this the whole town seems to be involved in some way or another often going back generations. There are several crew members living a stone's throw from my home.

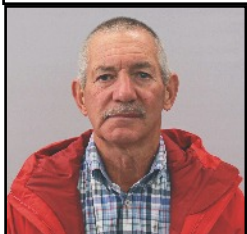
I was invited to be part of the Tours Team and from Easter to October I get to take groups onto the AWL which is permanently moored on the river. At the height of the summer season when Fowey Harbour is full of boats, the view from the fly bridge is probably the best there is!

The RNLI's motto, coined by its founder Sir William Hillary is "With courage, nothing is impossible". Their core values are: Trustworthy, Courageous, Selfless and Dependable. It has made me consider the core values that we may have been instilled with at Arborfield as youngsters. I rather feel we have a shared tradition.

I look forward to seeing old and new faces at the reunion in June so until then,

Kernow Bis Vyken!
Nigel Canning 77C

Treasurer's Report



The year started with the usual mayhem of reconciling who had paid their annual subscriptions and who hadn't. This task is made more difficult as there is a mix of those who pay by Direct debit and those who pay by PayPal. The Direct debits are taken on the first working day of January whilst PayPal payments are taken on the anniversary of the first payment date. My problem is people change banks etc and their Direct Debits are no longer valid so I have to chase them. On the PayPal side, payments are not automatically made annually unless you have an account which supports this function; so a lot of time is spent chasing default payers.

Thankfully this year Jeff Baker, our Data protection Officer, volunteered to do the chasing and he has done a great job in gathering funds and identifying members who no longer wished to remain. This is an ongoing task which would be much easier if members were aware of the need to update their details and to pay on time.

The account remains healthy with a balance of just over £11k in the Current Account and some £58K in the Business Account. These figures will be greatly reduced as the year progresses with payments for the printing and distribution of the OBAN and for the subsidies paid for the Annual Reunion. Nevertheless, I see no accounting problems in the near future and what monies we have in the Current Account plus some PayPal payments and our Gift Aid from HMRC should negate the need to transfer funds from the Business Account.

For those who are unaware, the REME Charity decided that we are too rich and have stopped paying us the annual interest on investments that we used to receive. This means that we are some £4K short of income annually compared to previous years.

Bob McKeegan-Brown - 69A

Recruitment Officers Report



Hello AOBA.

We have had fewer than hoped new members (16) since the 2023 reunion, but things should improve as we gain traction with the 1974ers. I am now concentrating on these intakes, see notes below on progress thus far.

74ers

I am in contact with members of the 1974 intakes and have been in contact Facebook group Admin for support with our endeavours. I have already been sent lists of intake names and an agreement to assist us with reunion comms and group access for messaging and recruitment of 1974ers. This is a very positive start which should bear fruit over the next weeks.

General Points:

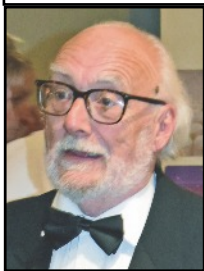
Several members, including 1974ers, have asked when booking for the reunion will be available, I have advised that comms from IoW Tours is imminent and that I/we will share as soon as it is available on our website.

I believe we have a real opportunity to increase our membership of the 1974 & 1975 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.

After finishing work in Dec 2023, I now have much more time to dedicate to the Recruitment Officer work, so I hope to be able to provide more support to the 74ers in their endeavours this year, as well as increasing the general recruitment figures.

Bruce Leslie - 75C

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report



Hello, members.

Data Protection

The new data protection regulations are still stuck in the House of Lords committee stage. I still expect them to become active in April, we will look at what is produced then.

Any changes to our Data protection regime will be made to any timetable it requires. Given the "cyber war" currently in effect worldwide, we are on alert for any problems. We are currently not aware of any serious problems with our site security.

Data base.

Our data base continues to function without any faults or problems.

Total membership continues to reduce.

Overall we have lost 69 members in the last 18 months. (109-40)

Sadly, we lose "active" members at a faster rate than we gain new ones. This is however, to be expected as 1/3 of our members are currently over 80 years old.

AOBA is the most successful of the Apprentice Old Boys groups. That success is down to you, the members, and your feelings towards the old school.

New members are always welcome. Threats, blackmail and bribes should be considered as optional. (That is a joke!!!)

May AOBA continue well into the future.

DPO/DBO

Jeff Baker- 65C

Membership Secretary's Report



Hello Everyone.

Welcome to the latest edition of OBAN. As I am compiling this report the March sunshine is streaming through the window and my study is warming up quite nicely. Makes a change from the dank, wet, cold days of February. I understand we are now in the Spring Equinox so here's hoping we are moving to more pleasant weather.

You might recall in my last OBAN report that I was hoping to get down to the REME museum for the next committee meeting and also take the opportunity to have a look round the museum. I was all geared up to attend in person. Then blow me, I receive a NHS appointment for the very day of the meeting and you just don't miss these appointments when they come along these days! So it is back to Zoom again. Until the next time perhaps!?

Membership numbers continue to be steady with some new members, some ex members re-joining and, unfortunately and sadly, losing a few along the way. If you like what the AOBA does and you are in contact with other ex-apprentices, please encourage them to join. We are always happy to welcome new members to the club.

I have also received a number of queries from existing members so the enquiry channel seems to be working quite well. I try to resolve members queries within a week of receipt (unless on holiday). So if you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Roll on Summer.

Bob Cassidy 65B

Webmaster Report



Hello, Members.

There is one main issue with the website at present.

This relates to PayPal payments system. The current basic PayPal payment system installed on the website is being discontinued. This does not affect us in the short term as the current forms will continue to process payments as they are, however there will be no further updates to this plugin in future. Wordpress are advising that we switch to the PayPal Commerce option which I have discussed with the treasurer in the past but decided to stick with the basic option at that time. It would appear that our hand is now being forced.

I am unsure at this time if this is a PayPal policy or that of Wordpress Forms (I suspect the latter)

The Treasurer has also setup a "Stripe" payment system. Allowing us to take credit/debit card payments.

I have incorporated that into a totally new form that will change according to a "Payment Type" selection box allowing us to have just one Membership application form for all scenarios (new members, renewals overseas and UK, Direct Debit etc etc) I have almost finished this form and need to test it but will not put live until we discuss the Paypal problem as this may fundamentally change the form as the PayPal Commerce option also allows credit/debit card payments which may cause confusion. I believe there is a cost to having PayPal Commerce (Through PayPal itself) There is no cost to use on the website.

After the usual January payments cycle, we currently have 665 AOBA Full members registered on the website. There are 18 in the "sinbin" for non payment which, if not paid up by the end of February will be deleted from the system. These members do not currently have access to members content.

I have nothing further to report at this time.

Mark Jobes - 77C

Webmaster

OBAN Editors Report



Hello to you all.

Where did the first quarter go. I blinked and it was March already. The older you get the faster time seems to fly by.

Looking at the Committee Succession Plan on page 4 it strikes me that we could do with some volunteers to relieve some long standing members. I am not throwing the towel in just yet as I enjoy putting the newsletter together but I know Bruce Leslie is keen to move on and I think Bob McKeegan-Brown is also looking for a replacement.

One success we have had is Jeff Baker our DPO/DBO. Jeff joined with no experience of Microsoft Excel but applied himself over some weeks/months and got to grips with it. He is now extremely competent and is a valuable member of the committee. Well done, Jeff.

I had a video chat with Ian Clark a few days ago. He continues to make progress and is expecting the delivery of his new electric wheelchair shortly. This will give him some additional independence and should make him a handful around the nursing home. If anyone would like to send him an e-mail, drop me a line via the AOBA website and I will give you his address.

The reunion booking forms should be available by mid March. The venue remains the same as last year and the dates too. All will be revealed once you get the forms. I would encourage all you budding photographers to please send what you have to me so I can include the memories here in OBAN.

My Div mate, Ray Younger (66B), is recovering from a hip replacement. He was only in hospital two days so the operation must have gone well. I also spoke to him a few days ago and he sounds great and is looking forward to a knee replacement in the next few months. I think he got a job lot with the surgeon. Well done Ray.

I will be starting to take trips out in the next few days. I have an appointment with Odstock Medical, (on April 19th), who do marvellous things with people who have similar problems to me. It is 2 to 3 hour assessment of my walking ability and use of my left arm and hand. My wife wants to do a dummy run to Salisbury hospital where they are located so we will also practice getting into the car with all that entails in the coming days.

I hope you all are in good health. The warmer weather is just around the corner.

Best regards,

Andy Dickson - 66B

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

Ian Scurr - 68B (Continued from OBAN 86)

During my leave Alma got time off work and came to Stillington. On the Saturday we went in to York and bought a ring and got engaged. I don't remember how long I had at home, but it soon passed and I had to go back. My mother, dad and Alma came to the station to see me off. This was a very sad time and I remember my mother running down the platform, following the train as it went out. I was very upset.

We eventually arrived at Dover and boarded a boat and set off across the Channel. Once we were out in the Channel a Royal Navy ship came close by and there was a Royal Marine Band playing. We thought that this must be to celebrate the end of the war, but no one would tell us anything. We landed at Boulogne and went straight on to a troop train and we were soon on our way. We stopped somewhere in the centre of France where we were given tea and sandwiches. As our train pulled out, a train coming from the north, carrying troops who were homeward bound, passed us and the troops were all cheering.

When we arrived at Nijmegen Station we had to report to the Rail Transport Office, where we were told where our Units were and how to get to them. My Unit was at Winterswijk, just on the Dutch - German border. A truck came to collect me and I was told that the end of the war was being celebrated. When we got to the unit I was put on duty right away and not very happy about it as all my mates were out celebrating and some of them had had their leave earlier on, before me!

Our routine changed very quickly. We started doing exercises and parades, on occasions led by our Brigadier (Jumbo Lester.), who had earned the DSO for the Walcheren landings. He was a terrific man who believed in leading from the front.

A system had been worked out for our future. All regular soldiers and those of a certain demob group were to return to the UK, the remainder were to stay for the time being. We were gathered together and told we would be forming a new Brigade to go out to the Far East. We travelled by truck and train to Calais and crossed to Dover. From there we travelled by truck to Petworth where we were able to clean ourselves up and we were given a month's leave. (Disembarkation/Embarkation). We were sent on our way and told that we would receive a letter telling us what was going to happen.

I first went to Leicester where Alma was living with her Mum. She couldn't get any holiday as she had had hers while I was on leave earlier on. She worked for British Thompson Houson (BTH) as a capstan lathe operator. She had to work from 8.00am to 8.00pm so I would meet her after she had finished work and we had to do our courting after that!

I went up to Stillington and Alma came for a weekend. During my leave I did a bit of farm work to earn some money. A letter arrived telling me to report to the Yellow Motor Garage in Kemptown, Brighton. I reported there to find Harry Hunt had just arrived. We were taken to civilian lodgings in Bristol Gardens where our landlady was Mrs. Taylor whose husband was an RSM in REME stationed at Selby, near York. We were paid six shillings and eight pence (34p) per day to pay for our accommodation and food. We had good lodgings.

Each morning we paraded at the garage. Our OC was Captain Munroe(?) and his driver 'batman' was Ernie Elgood. The new Brigade began to take shape and we did a lot of route marches and fitness training as we were told that we would be going to the Far East in early September. We were able to go home every weekend from Saturday lunchtime to Monday morning. Alma and I decided to get married mainly because we would be able to get the marriage allowance which she could save while I was away in the Far East. All parties agreed, that is our parents, and the date was set for September 1st 1945 for us to be married at Claremont Street Methodist Church in Leicester. My mother bought an ox tongue and a ham which were from one of our pigs which had been killed earlier in the year. I was able to get leave from the Thursday until Tuesday.

The week prior to the wedding I developed a carbuncle on my right wrist and had to go to Brighton Hospital for treatment. I had my arm in a sling right up until we went to Church. Incidentally, the war in the Far East ended in the August - after we had set the wedding date! Now we didn't know what was going to happen - I did not know where I would be posted. Our wedding went ahead as planned and we spent a weekend honeymoon in Scarborough, staying at my Aunt Frances' guest house. We travelled to York on the same train as my parents and then made our way to Scarborough. We had arranged for Alma to return to Brighton with me for a few days and to stay with Mrs Taylor. However when we arrived there we learned that her sister-in-law had died and several members of her family were staying there. However Mrs Taylor had made arrangements for us to stay with Mrs. Sullivan who had a Commando billeted with her. She was a nice old lady; she and her husband had a fruit and veg stall in Brighton market. We had a four poster bed with white nets around it. Alma had to go back home to Leicester, after a few days.

During October we were moved from our billets and went to Ardingly Hall in Sussex. We carried on doing our usual work until after Christmas. We all had leave for Christmas and were able to go home except for a few who elected to have New Year instead. In January we were called to meeting in Hove Town Hall where Lord Mountbatten, head of Combined Operations, told us that the Army Commandos were to be disbanded. We were given two options, either transfer to the

Royal Marine Commandos or return to our Units. I elected to return to REME I was posted to H.Q. Vehicle Group Organisation at Leeds. I was interviewed the next day and posted to 302 Vehicle Workshops on the race track at Castle Donnington in Leicestershire. This suited me very well - it was just a bus ride from Alma. I was interviewed by the CO, Major Hyde, who had been a S/Sgt Instructor when I was a boy at Arborfield.

He told me that I should be wearing a stripe, as according to my records I was promoted to Lance Corporal in June 1945. After a long chat he recommended me to go on a Leading Artisan S/Sgt Course which would be at Blackdown in Hampshire. This was arranged very quickly and I attended the Course which I think lasted for six weeks, having been promoted to unpaid Staff Sgt for the duration of the course. It was almost like a refresher course and an update on vehicles. I passed the course and returned to my unit where I was promoted to paid Staff Sgt.

I soon settled in as the NCO in charge of vehicle inspections, a job I enjoyed. We were housed in Donnington Hall (now the H.Q. of BMA) was a fine mansion house and I was able to get home every weekend unless on duty. One Saturday in May 1946 I went home and Alma wasn't there. I asked her mother where she was. She replied "She's in hospital - she has had twins, a boy and a girl!" I could hardly believe this as we had been told the baby was due in mid-June. But it was true.

I went with her mother to the hospital to visit. First we saw Alma who didn't look too well then we saw the twins who were in an incubator and very small, somewhere around four pounds each. Alma stayed in hospital for two weeks and I had to return to work. When Alma came home from hospital I took my 'end of war leave' which was four weeks and helped with all the new tasks of nappy changing, washing etc. We had bought a full layette and pram for one baby so we now had to try all ways to get financial assistance to get a second set. Finally the SSAFA came up trumps and provided a second full layette. We managed to buy a second hand Silver Cross twin pram; it was very large. We were able to sell the single pram we had bought to Margaret Wood at Stillington who was expecting a baby in the June. (I think) put the pram on the train at Leicester and they collected it at York Station. Alma soon got into the routine of feeding the twins - every two hours.

Things went well during 1946 until October when I was called forward to go for an interview, with a view to going on an Armament Artificer Course. I was accepted and started the course at Blackdown in March 1947. This was a twelve months course which covered General Trade at Blackdown, Armoured and B vehicles at Vehicle Wing at Hazelbrouck Barracks, Arborfield, and Electrical Work at Balleaul Barracks and Regimental Training at Poppering Barracks.

There were only five on the course, Joe Hills, Bill Clarke, Titch Whitlam, John Pritchard and myself, so we almost received personal tuition. During this year I had taken up playing Rugby as this seemed to be the thing to do, at that time, to keep one in the UK. The mainstay of the rugby was Captain Arthur Rose who had been in Boys Service two years before me. I was soon playing for the Garrison 2nd. XV. We had a lot of enjoyable games.

At this time we could only have a weekend pass once a month, so the three spare Saturdays were for rugby. This took us to London to play some good sides and the 'drinking' afterwards was good! When we were doing our Regimental Training we were combined with a squad doing a LASS course. This proved to be very interesting because members of our course had seen service in India, the Far East and Europe while the LASS members were quite young. The Senior Drill Instructor was CSM Jack Glover, ex Grenadier Guards. He was a tyrant and everyone was afraid of him. Our group of five made up our minds to that we would not give him any cause to upset us. We had very well maintained equipment and highly polished boots! We were good at drill and after our first session with him he realised we were trying to do everything as per the book and this went down well. We had learned that previous course members had tried to be difficult to handle (bearing in mind there had been a number of pre-war soldiers in their ranks so we got on well with Jack.

We all passed with flying colours. The last piece of the course was on Corps. Training which took in procedures EMED. (Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Regulations), Army Organisation in the field and a few other subjects. At the end of the course I passed out with 92% - one of the highest marks ever achieved.

Now was the time for postings. I was asked if I would like to stay on as an Instructor on Corps. Training which I agreed to. However when the postings came through I was to go to REME Scales Branch at Woolwich. Arthur Rose had intervened - he had other ideas and I was to be an Instructor/Rugby player! This was all arranged. I joined "B" Company. The Company Commander was Major Pogmore, Admin. Officer - Arthur Rose, Chief Instructor - Capt. ?, WO1 ASM Wally Spinks, WO1I Archie Dodds, WO1I Kinsey, SIS Richards, SIS Scarlett and myself. We were a happy group and got on well together.

I put my name on the list for a married quarter but the list was miles long and I never got one. While I was there our Rugby XV got to the Army Cup Final versus Royal Signals, Catterick. The match was played on the Tigers ground in Leicester so I was able to go home, collect Alma, and take her to the match. We enjoyed the match very much. We lost - but it was an excellent game played on a very muddy pitch.

Our CSM, Johnny Egar, took his 'end of war leave' so Arthur Rose got me to act as CSM for the month. We were both in our element as we knew how a Company should be run! I had to attend a 'Methods of Instruction' course which was run in the garrison. It was very good and put me in line as an instructor. The summer soon passed and I received a posting to the Middle East. No-one could stop this!

I was sent to the mobilisation centre at Otley, near Leeds where we were formed into a Draft, inoculated etc. and kitted out with khaki drill, shorts, shirts and trousers. We eventually sailed from Southampton on HMT Eastern Prince. Alma and her sister Lil came to wave me goodbye - quite a tearful parting. We had agreed that I would put in for married quarters when I got settled, wherever it was.

We left Southampton and sailed first to Malta, then Piraeus (the port for Athens), Thessalonica and Port Said where we disembarked and went to 156 Transit Camp at Port Fuad. We had stopped at Greek ports because at that time we had a Military Mission in Greece and this was always being reinforced for at the time there was a lot of hassle with the Albanians and Greece was a poor country. Jack Clover was the RSM with the Military Mission.

While in 156 Transit Camp we were asked if we had any preferences for postings. I had a friend in Khartoum, so I put down for that. Days passed by and our numbers dwindled until one day my name appeared for posting - to Cyprus. (I had never heard of it!).

Eventually we were put on a small troopship, the Empire Peacemaker and travelled overnight to Famagusta. There I was met by S/Sgt Guy Sollet who was in charge of the REME Workshop Detachment in Famagusta. He took me to the Sgts Mess of 625 Ordnance Depot where he stayed. We had a good night - eating and drinking. The next day he took me to 348 L of C Workshops in Larnaca. I was put into the Sgts. Mess (a nissen hut). Our CO was Major Martin, Workshop Officer Capt. Miles, Admin Officer Lt Hunter, ASM WO1 Massey, WOII Armourer Ken Driscoll, Armourer S/Sgt Sid Joseph, myself - Vehicle Inspections S//Sgt Along with Sgt George Wilget. The general trades Sgt was Sgt Lyons. There were not many junior ranks but all drivers and recovery mechanics were junior ranks.

The three Officers wives were in married quarters, also Sid Josephs and Ken Driscoll - The quarters were civilian houses rented by the army. Christmas came and we had good celebrations. The senior ranks served tea in bed to the junior ranks. There was no Officers Mess so the Officers came to the Sgts. Mess for Christmas lunch time drinks, then we all served the junior ranks with Christmas dinner, before sitting down to our own meals. Mr. Massey was a teetotaler and quite a loner - he was not popular - he tried to put a damper on anything we tried to organise in the Mess.

We worked a six day week in the workshop, and had a day off every two on a rota system. Over a hundred were employed in the workshop, of various grades. Most of the admin staff were civilians. At this time the British government had agreed to Palestine being given to the Jews. In Cyprus there were two Jewish Illegal Immigrant Camps, where people were placed when they had been caught trying to get to Israel. There were about 53,000 people in the two camps. The camps were surrounded by high barbed wire fences and mine fields. There were watch towers where troops had searchlights and machine guns.

Occasionally people tried to escape, this caused quite a stir. The troops guarding the camps were the South Wales Borderers and 40 Commando RM. In mid-1948 they started to take the Jewish people to Israel and the camps, which were slums, were burned.

In March I was allotted a married quarter. Alma was informed by the Military Authorities and given details for her preparation to sail out. (I think this caused a stir in her family, as Alma was living at home with her mother and helping to pay the mortgage which was 11 shillings (55p) a week. We had agreed to continue helping to pay the mortgage, but others in the family would not agree, so Alma's mum sold the house and went to live with her daughter, Lil.

Alma and the twins, Sylvia and Terry, sailed from Southampton aboard a liner, Oriental Princess. There were quite a few military families on board, among them Mrs. Samis and family, the wife of Ben Samis who was in the Physical Training Corps and stationed at HQ in Nicosia. Ben had been the P.E. WO1 at Popperinge Barracks when I was stationed there. Alma had many tales to tell of happenings on the liner - especially at meal times.

The liner docked at Port Said and the families were taken to a transit camp on the Bitter Lakes - evidently it was quite a dump. Alma did not like this and let me know in no uncertain terms when we met! I think she was there for over a week before she set sail for Famagusta aboard HMT Peacemaker. I went to the dock to meet my family. When they arrived I was surprised to see Alma dressed in the New Look - a blue costume with a calf length skirt! We drove to Larnica in a 15cwt Truck.

Alma was pleased with our quarters, No. 6 Aya Lavra Street, a three bedroomed bungalow with an open fire place in the lounge. The bedrooms had wooden floors but all the other floors were marble. Cooking was done on a Valor two burner stove. Another family who had arrived on the ship, the Gubbs, were our next door neighbours.

We had a nice garden with a big fish tank, pigeon cote, rabbit hutches and chicken run. There were peach and apricot trees and a vine and also we grew melons etc. We had some lovely big gold fish in the tank when we took over. The bungalow had a flat roof with concrete steps leading up to it from one end. This was a problem with two young children. The Joseph family were just around the corner from us and we soon became very friendly - (Joan Joseph came from York. We soon had a circle of friends and we took it in turns to get together in one another's home on a Saturday night.

To be continued.....

AVIATION MUSEUM UNVEILS 'SKEETER' CHOPPER IN LATEST AND LARGEST DISPLAY



The Wight Aviation Museum recently hosted a Skeeter presentation lunch for all those involved in the donation and preservation of the museum's latest and largest display, a Skeeter Helicopter XL765.

The aircraft was used by the British Army as a 2 person aerial reconnaissance aircraft and was designed and built at Saunders-Roe, in Cowes, in the 1950s.

The special guests at the lunch were John Phillips and Adrian Brimson, who previously owned the Skeeter before donating it to WAM for preservation and display. The WAM team, led by

Jonathan Lamb and Paul Carey, have worked hard over the winter closed period to get the Skeeter ready for display.

They were assisted by a number of volunteers. Of special mention should be Nigel Johnson who arranged the transport, which included a lorry from Steve Porter Transport to bring it from Melksham to Sandown, and Red Funnel for the ferry. Also Pete Allen, who built a specially designed display frame, with steel donated by The Forge and his team Jon Fitness and Geoff White, from the Isle of Wight Bus Museum, who helped him to mount the Skeeter on it. Terry Ryan of White Eagle Signs did the lettering.

Helen Blake, chairperson of WAM, enthused:

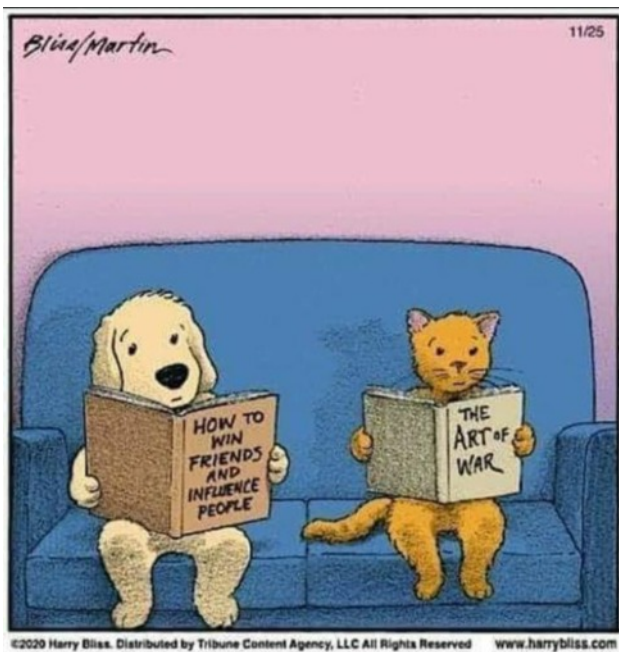
"The WAM team, along with the others, worked really hard to create an interesting and nostalgic display of the Skeeter, which looks just like it is actually taking off! It's always great to be able to display an element of the island's rich aviation heritage in the museum"

As usual, the museum will be open to all visitors on Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays from 10:00-15:00 each day.

Story is courtesy of the Island Echo. An Isle of White based newspaper. Thanks to Darren Toogood.

Thanks Peter Skinner for the link.

Ed's comments. I have had two or three articles from Peter over the last 12 months or so, mostly related to helicopters .If you get bored reading these articles, (I don't as an ex Air Tech Blackie) you just have to write to me and I will do my best to include any stories in OBAN. Andy 66B



ENGLISH IS THE ONLY LANGUAGE WHERE YOU DRIVE IN PARKWAYS AND PARK IN DRIVEWAYS.

IT'S ALSO THE ONLY LANGUAGE WHERE YOU RECITE IN A PLAY AND PLAY IN A RECITAL.

YOUR FINGERS HAVE FINGERTIPS BUT YOUR TOES DON'T HAVE TOETIPS.

YET, YOU CAN TIPTOE BUT NOT TIFINGER.

THE WORD **QUEUE** IS JUST A **Q** FOLLOWED BY FOUR SILENT LETTERS.

JAIL AND **PRISON** ARE SYNONYMS. BUT **JAILER** AND **PRISONER** ARE ANTONYMS.

WHEN YOU TRANSPORT SOMETHING BY CAR, IT'S CALLED A **SHIPMENT**. BUT WHEN YOU TRANSPORT SOMETHING BY SHIP, IT'S CALLED **CARGO**.

1980A Reunion - Edinburgh - Kevin Davies 80A

Well continuing our tour of the country (sharing out the long drives for everyone) 1980A's reunion this year was held in Edinburgh.

After previous reunions near Rugby, (We missed out in 2021 due to COVID), Whitby and last year's trip to York, we had another great weekend. We unfortunately had a few missing due to various commitments but still had 12 turn up including wives.

Staying at the Lieth Waterfront Premier Inn (Checked and recommended by Brian Dunn).

Plenty of bars and restaurants nearby, and a short trip on the Tram to the main centre (Weekend tram ticket for £10 highly recommended).

Some stayed 2 nights, leaving on the Sunday whilst four of us stayed the Sunday and visited the National Aircraft Museum of Scotland. (Highly recommended).

On the evenings we all talked rubbish and recounted tales from our training, in both the old school (spiders et al) and our subsequent move mud training to Princess Marina College.

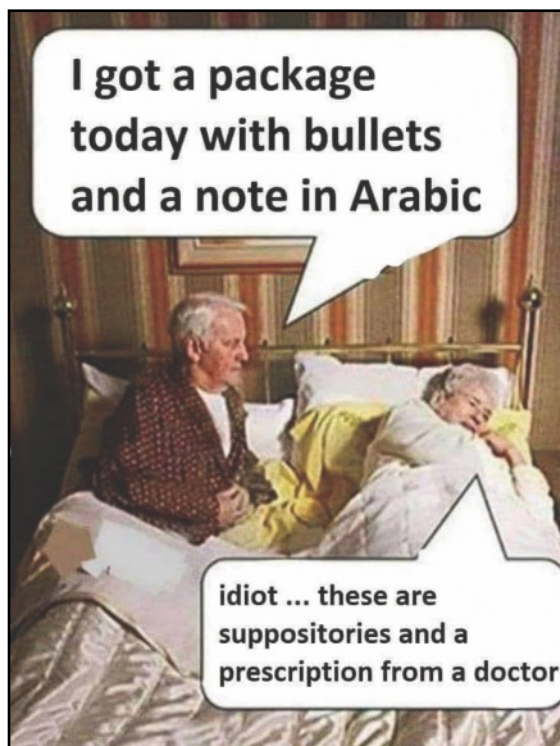
We all look forward to these reunions and are looking forward to next year's which we will be having in Bath, so us Plebs can visit the REME Museum whilst the wives will be enjoying a Spa day
So hopefully see them all next year with hopefully some additions...

If anyone from 1980A wants to join us please contact me via email at:

poddavis@outlook.com

Or check us out on Facebook @ "PMC 80A REUNION"

Kevin Davies 80A



BOYS TO MEN - By Rob Castell 64A

Part 1

It has now been sixty years since my life changed forever when I first walked through the gates of the Army Apprentice School Arborfield, so now is the time to recount a few of the memories I have of my time there. I've tried to be as accurate as possible and also tried to keep events in chronological order, I'm open to correction if the little grey cells have let me down.

'J' Company

Being an Army brat I had always, as far as I can remember, wanted to join the services.

Aged sixteen I was attending secondary school in Malta, where my father was posted, and with my parents and younger sister living in a flat overlooking St George's Bay, it was a good time in my life. We had views of the Mediterranean from our balcony and the hot summers seemed to last forever. Because of the summer heat schooling was only in the mornings, so afternoons were spent at leisure which consisted mostly of swimming and snorkelling. The school I attended was run by the Royal Navy with both RN and civilian teachers. So with this strong Navy influence I joined the Sea Cadets and as a result when I left school had thought about joining the Navy, as many of my friends did. However, my father was having nothing of it, quoting Jimmy Edwards by saying the Navy was all 'rum, bum and baccy', having heard this, and wanting none of that sort of thing, I decided then that the Army would be far better choice and duly applied. A wise decision.



Entrance road to the camp

I was to train as a Vehicle Mechanic, and I hoped the Army was up to the challenge as I had very little mechanical knowledge, however I was keen to learn and was very much looking forward to being at Arborfield. Moreover, I was to be paid £2. 9s a week, riches! And far more than the 3s 6d pocket money a week I was getting at home.

So, with the relevant entry tests passed, the papers signed and my suitcase packed I flew in an RAF Comet from Luqa airport to RAF Lyneham on the 10th of January 1964. I reached the UK and travelled by train, from the wilds of Wiltshire to Wokingham.

On arrival at the station, I duly phoned the guardroom, saying who I was, why I was there and would they please send transport to pick me up. As I was unexpectedly early arriving none was available and I was told, in no uncertain terms, to make my own way. An hour later I walked from where the bus had dropped me, through the gates and into the guardroom. I recognised the R.P. lance corporal who first greeted me from our earlier telephone conversation, unfortunately he also recognised me, he didn't look too pleased.

Because I had joined from abroad I had arrived at Arborfield several days before the rest of my 64A intake, consequently on my first few nights I was the only new boy in my barrack room in Jeepland. The A/T NCO's preparing for the new lads seemed well disposed towards me, generally including me in their conversations. I remember them talking about the new Jeeps and what they would be like, and me thinking the British Army had Land Rovers not Jeeps. I didn't realise the Arborfield terminology for someone junior to yourself. I was woken on my first morning by somebody coming into the room and shouting for me to get up, as it was still dark I didn't take much notice and rolled over saying I would get up later. As a teenager I didn't even know there was such a thing as 6.30 in the morning.

A bad mistake to make, and as I was tipped out of bed I realised I was wrong.



Jeepland - Robbo in the foreground.

The days passed and the rest of the intake started arriving, 64A had become reality. My barrack room gradually filled up with the new faces, Adderley, Carse, Bendall, Bonner, Bradbury, and Duffill, were my new roommates. In the room next to ours were Dyball, Golby, Grint, Hambly, Hatt, Hicks, Hillier, House and Howes, with a further nineteen boys in the other two rooms on our floor making up 'A' squad. Jeepland had transformed from a ghost ship of those first few days to a hive of activity. I was now one of the crowd and my erstwhile A/T NCO

friends showed me no more favours, we were jeeps, the lowest of the low. Our room NCO was A/T L/Cpl John Swarbrick, there was an A/T LCpl in charge of each of the four rooms on our floor, 'Robbo' Robinson was the A/T NCO in charge of the room next to ours and in overall charge of the floor was an A/T Cpl. We were 'A' squad, thirty-five of us in all, and our Permanent Staff drill sergeant was Sergeant Jim Shanley (REME) a fair but firm man who became a father figure to a lot of us in those difficult first few months away from home when homesickness was at its worse. Early on our first day together we assembled outside Jeepland in what could loosely be called three ranks. It was a cold and dark January morning; we were all strangers to each other and our surroundings. We were all in civvies, shivering, and hungry, we were on our way to the cookhouse for our first taste of Army food. We set off, most of us in the same direction, trying to march, with the A/T NCO's shouting encouragement, we managed to turn at the end of Jeepland and headed off down the square, arms flailing, trying to look like soldiers. As we approached the bottom of the icy square I overheard an A/T NCO asking his companion how to stop us, "shout halt" came the reply, which he did, and which some of us either didn't hear or understand, next he tried "stop" which we all understood and slithered to a standstill on the ice, some falling over. Our first introduction to drill was not an entire success. Jim Shanley persisted though, eventually succeeding in turning us from scruffy uncoordinated civvies into a smart body of men able to drill with the best. He wanted all our drill movements to be 'short, sharp and shit hot', unsurprisingly he gained the nickname of 'Shit-hot Shanley, never said to his face though.

Reveille was at 6.30, quite a shock for us teenagers who were used to lying in bed in the mornings, and it was made all the worse by the fact that it was still dark at that early hour. Lights-out at night was also strictly enforced and there was to be no noise allowed afterwards. However, it was the Sixties, and the start of the pirate radio stations, some of the boys would sneak a transistor radio into their bed to listen very quietly to Radio Caroline. Having a trannie under the bed clothes had a very different meaning back then.

Part of the initiation to the Arborfield was a visit to Charlie the camp (as in Army camp) barber, it was not a good experience as we'd always exit his little establishment shorn. As it happens before being posted to Malta my father was at Depot Arborfield, so I went to school at St Crispin's in Wokingham, Charlie's son was in my class and an acquaintance of mine. As I sat in the barber's chair I mentioned to Charlie that me and his son were best mates (we weren't) hoping for some leniency with the haircut, needless to say it cut no ice, Charlie's clippers did their work and I exited his small barber's shop looking as shorn as the rest.

We were issued with two pairs of boots, one for normal use and one for 'best'. Best meaning for display purposes only. We had to hammer studs into the soles and heels in a set pattern and then iron out the pimples in the leather on the uppers. Why couldn't they issue us boots without the pimples? The 'best' boots then had to be spit and polished to a high gloss, and then put away, never to be used except on special occasions. We were also issued with a pair of brown plimsoles, which we had to turn into black plimsoles using shoe polish. Why couldn't they just issue us with black plimsoles? I thought that there could be no more examples of poor procurement, that is until I first wore my army issue blue woollen swimming trunks in the water, and they took on a life of their own, independent completely from the wearer.

Another peculiarity was the laundry system. We had to tightly roll up our washing and secure it in a bundle, then fill in a ticket with our name, rank and number and what the bundle contained and securely attach it. This was then sent off (we never found out where to) and some days later we would receive a bundle of clean clothes back. Seldom did we receive back the same clothes as we had sent away, and I think most of us at Arborfield spent our time there wearing someone else's underpants.

We were encouraged to join one of the many clubs available at the school, there was an impressive amount of them, which were held in the evenings and at weekends. For some reason I decided to join the canoe club. To be a member we had to be able to swim, which of course I could very well, having spent some years in Malta. Us new members had to demonstrate our ability in the water, but instead of taking us to a swimming pool, as I imagined, we were taken to Reading where we had to jump into the Thames, in January! I immediately seized up and couldn't move at all because of the intense cold, I drifted some yards down river before I was fished out, by some other members of the club, to be told I'd passed my swimming test, presumably because I hadn't drowned, despite my waterlogged woollen trunks trying to drag me to the bottom of the river.

Another joy introduced to us was the gymnasium (which was also the cinema and, on Sunday, the C of E church) run by Len Burdett, a civilian PTI, and his gang of PTI's seconded from various regiments, whose working uniform was red and black striped jerseys. Few of this gang of Dennis the Menace look-alikes were very tall and we were soon to discover none of their parents were married either. Len and his gang ruled us with a rod of iron, but to be fair they had their work cut trying to get us teenage softies fit enough to be trained

killers. As part of our introduction to manhood everybody had to have three rounds in the ring, boxing another new lad of the similar height and weight, the only reason excepted for not taking part would be if you were medically excused. Unfortunately fear of receiving a damn good hiding was not deemed a medical condition and I duly entered the ring and received mine from a lad who kindly informed me just before our bout that he had been his school champion. I think it's called psychology now. We were both congratulated though, for having a good fight, so I didn't feel too bad about losing. One of our lads needed to wear pebble-glass specs because of his very poor eyesight and couldn't see his opponent and was duly disqualified for failing to fight. Another of the boys entered the ring not only scared but also needing the toilet, not the best of combinations as we were to find out. The resulting accident fell out of his shorts and onto the canvas for all to see, with the referee then deftly kicking the offending object out of the ring and into the audience. Others were cautioned or disqualified for biting, kicking or wrestling, I'm not too sure we all quite grasped the idea or rules of boxing. One thing that I always found curious about boxing at Arborfield is that we were not allowed to cheer during the bout, only at the end of the rounds.



Lost - Somewhere in Wales

On Saturdays the gym was used as the camp cinema and the duty company was responsible for dragging hundreds of chairs from the storage area and setting them up in rows. The P.S. corporal who was the projectionist was an old soldier who we nicknamed 'Beaky', I don't know why. When, inevitably, the film would break and the gym go dark a great cheer would go up, there would be a stamping of feet and shouts of 'Come on Beaky' while he was trying to fix the problem.

On Sundays the gym was used for the C of E church service, we all had to attend church parade every Sunday, I don't think any of us wanted to but it was all part of our

new life. After the service the duty company would have to return all the chairs to storage, dragging them noisily across the ground. A good piece of advice that my father gave me, before I joined up, was not to enter 'C of E' as my religion on my application form, instead I put 'Methodist'. This meant I was an 'O.D.' or 'Other Denomination' when it came to Sunday church parade, and I didn't have to attend the service in the gym. Instead, us OD's attended our own individual services. The Methodist padre was the Reverend Friend, a captain in the Army Chaplain Corps. I remember his name because when I first met him, and he told me his name, he said it was 'Fiend' but with an 'R'. Dave 'Jock' Carse also attended the Methodist services with me, I think he may have been church of Scotland but the Rev. Friend wasn't particular and needed all the congregation he could get. The Methodist services were held in quite a small building and at our first service somehow Jock and I, being the new boys, were volunteered into taking the collection. Standing in the aisle and starting at the front we passed the collection bag up and down each row, the boys carefully putting in their meagre offerings until we got to the back row, where 9 Div. were skulking, and who promptly took the money out.

The cookhouse, situated at the bottom of the square, was another experience I remember well. On one of our first visits, while in Junior Company, we were shown by a rather round and intimidating AAC WO2 exactly what the ration allowance was for each of us each day, it seemed very meagre and I could imagine me being permanently hungry, however to the AAC cooks credit the food was always good and plentiful. At the end of each meal, we had to scrape our plates into big slop buckets which, when full, would be taken away by the local pig man for feed. (for his pigs, not him). The WO2 would watch us as we were scraping our plates and any excess waste on the plate would result in an almighty explosion from him. At that time the Dave Clark Five were high in the charts with 'Glad all Over', and when it was played on the cookhouse jukebox and the chorus was reached the whole cookhouse would bang their eating irons on the tables creating a huge noise, and of course there was always the obligatory cheer when someone dropped their plate, smashing it loudly. Queuing for the cookhouse was always a lottery, getting there first meant nothing if a more senior div. arrived afterwards, if they did then it was a case of 'he who is first shall be last'. And there was always someone behind you who would smash their white china mug on top of yours, leaving you with just the handle dangling from your finger.

The joys of Jeepland!

To be continued.....

And then the fight started.....

When our lawn mower broke and wouldn't run, my wife kept hinting to me that I should get it fixed. But, somehow I always had something else to take care of first, the shed, the boat, making beer.. Always something more important to me.

Finally she thought of a clever way to make her point.

When I arrived home one day, I found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away with a tiny pair of sewing scissors. I watched silently for a short time and then went into the house. I was gone only a minute, and when I came out again I handed her a toothbrush.

I said, "When you finish cutting the grass, you might as well sweep the driveway."

The doctors say I will walk again, but I will always have a limp.

My wife sat down next to me as I was flipping channels.

She asked, "What's on TV?"

I said, "Dust."

And then the fight started...

Saturday morning I got up early, quietly dressed, made my lunch, and slipped quietly into the garage. I hooked up the boat up to the van and proceeded to back out into a torrential downpour. The wind was blowing 50 mph, so I pulled back into the garage, turned on the radio, and discovered that the weather would be bad all day.

I went back into the house, quietly undressed, and slipped back into bed. I cuddled up to my wife's back; now with a different anticipation, and whispered, "The weather out there is terrible."

My loving wife of 5 years replied, "And, can you believe my stupid husband is out fishing in that?"

And that's how the fight started...

My wife was hinting about what she wanted for our upcoming anniversary.

She said, "I want something shiny that goes from 0 to 150 in about 3 seconds."

I bought her a bathroom scale.

And then the fight started.....

After retiring, I went to the Social Security office to apply for Social Security. The woman behind the counter asked me for my driver's License to verify my age. I looked in my pockets and realized I had left my wallet at home. I told the woman that I was very sorry, but I would have to go home and come back later.

The woman said, 'Unbutton your shirt'.

So I opened my shirt revealing my curly silver hair.

She said, 'That silver hair on your chest is proof enough for me' and she processed my Social Security application.

When I got home, I excitedly told my wife about my experience at the Social Security office.

She said, 'You should have dropped your pants. You might have gotten disability too.'

And then the fight started...

80A Reunion Weekend - Pod Davies 80A

80A are currently organising our 2025 reunion on weekend of 10/11/12 January 2025.

We are looking at organising clay pigeon shooting on Sat 11th and visiting the REME Museum on Sunday 12th. I was wondering if you could mention it in the AOBA Newsletter sometime during this year ... see if we can reach some more of our intake. Anyone wanting to contact us regarding it can on the Facebook page or email me at poddavis@outlook.com I'll also attach what I've said to the lads which is on our Facebook site: "1980 Reunion"

After a brief discussion with Dave, I've booked into the Newbury South Premier Inn, (pay later and cancel anytime) for our 2025 reunion, booked on Trivago, as other sites were showing no availability (looked like wasn't set up for next year) We decided on Newbury as Bath was more expensive and there was no on site parking.

I've booked for the 3 nights Fri 10th Sat 11th and Sunday 12th.

There's obviously plenty of time to book, Dave's been looking at the shooting nearby for the 11th and we are still on for visiting the REME Museum probably on the Sunday 12th (depending on the shooting we could visit on the Saturday) any problems or ideas please add comments.

Cheers lads Pod



80A Lads

Thank You Kevin. Your booking has been confirmed

Stay at Newbury Town Centre South (A339)

Reservation Number: BGW1032822

Name: Kevin Davis

Check-In: Fri, 10 Jan 2025 at 15:00

Check-Out: Mon, 13 Jan 2025 at 12:00

Pinchington Lane, Newbury, GB, RG14 7HL

[GET DIRECTIONS](#)

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.



New Corps Secretary



Major (Retd) Geordie Wright-Rivers and Colonel Jason Phillips ADC

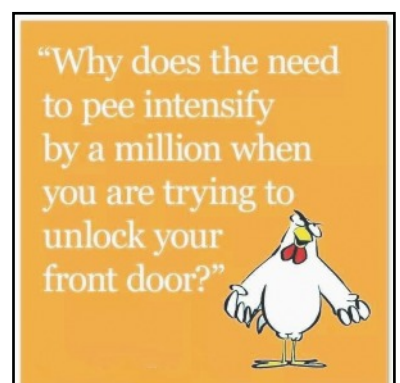
We are pleased to announce that Major (Retd) Geordie Wright-Rivers is the new Corps Secretary. A former Apprentice (1977-79), Geordie has long been at the heart of the Corps Family, most recently as the REME Association Development Officer. Arte et Marte.

Geordie's comments:

Absolutely delighted - who'd have thought it?!
Thank you all for the lovely messages and to the (very!) many of you who helped and 'educated' me along the way - I owe you beers!
Arte et Marte

Editors comments:

Well done, Geordie. Well deserved. You must feel very proud of yourself.



John Johnson's early years at AAS... (56B)

I was three months past my fifteenth birthday and of an independent mind when on 28 August 1956, I set out with very little fear or trepidation on a lifetime adventure. It began with a train ride to Brighton, compliments of Her Majesty's Government. It was a straightforward journey, being on a direct line from Chichester, that ancient of cities. When I arrived at Brighton railway station there were three or four other lads also waiting for the recruiting officer. We made our way to the HM Forces Movements Office on the station, as instructed in our letters. My next clear memory is of being seated in the recruiter's office and then being duly sworn in together and signing on the dotted line. In retrospect it was somewhat foolish to expect a fifteen-year-old lad to really know enough of life to commit himself to a three-year apprenticeship followed by nine years with the Colours.

So in that short and meaningful ceremony, I signed away twelve years of my life to the service of my country for a starting wage of 31 shillings and sixpence per week, before deductions - an adult decision by a child.

I remember there was a photographer from the local paper and the resultant picture shows the small group of us sitting around a table in the recruiting office, all smiling as if we had won a prize. What the picture does not show is the paper carrier bag jammed behind my back that contained one change of underwear and socks plus washing kit, carefully selected by my father. It was fraudulent to give me shaving gear; I couldn't raise any more than bum fluff and managed well into my twenties with shaving only every other day.

Leaving home was nothing new having spent some years with my grandmother, up to and after my grandfather's death, then later a couple of years at a British Army boarding school in Hamm, Germany, when my father's regiment (The Royal Sussex) was posted to Minden. The school was Windsor School; my schoolhouse was Marlborough House and my house number, MIS. To me, living in similar circumstances to a boarding school held no horrors. Little did I know!

Whether we each received a train ticket to Wokingham in Berkshire or whether it was group ticket I can't remember. Nonetheless, we all arrived at Wokingham on time. Of my companions, I can only remember Tiny Noble, a chap called Fry, and another called Sugget. Getting off the train in Wokingham, we met up with others who were also going to the apprentices school, amongst which were two old acquaintances from Windsor School, Ralph Wright and Klaus Pennington. I knew the former well, and his brother, Wright minor, as the Housemaster used to say at roll call, as we were Marlborough housemates. It is much easier being in a strange place with people you know, so it was going to be okay. Eventually we were ordered into a typically smelly army three-ton truck that reeked of oil and damp canvas and the short four miles journey to Arborfield began. There was no time to gawk at the countryside as we struggled to keep our balance on a rock hard seat and clutch our personal belongings. It was too noisy to talk and so we sat in silence and watched the hedgerows race away from us through the rear of the covered truck. In any case the countryside looked no different from the countryside in Sussex, which I had left that morning. I was to get to know the road from Wokingham to Arborfield rather intimately in the next three years, from the not so comfortable seats of the local bus service as well as by Shanks' pony!

Arborfield was the home of the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers; the regular army corps that we would all be going to once our three-year apprenticeship was successfully completed. Poperinge Barracks, the REME Depot, was a few hundred yards up the road from the AAS. In reality Arborfield was a village around which a garrison had grown. We rounded the curve where the local watering hole was situated, swept passed the REME Depot on the right and dropped down a gentle slope to the entrance of the AAS, spelled out in full across the arched entrance. This entrance road ran straight ahead through the main part of the camp and out through the playing fields to the back entrance, adjacent to the garrison hospital. Immediately to the left of the main entrance were the guardroom and cells. Next the gymnasium, behind that a playing field and then the permanent staff Sgts' Mess. A road separated this block of buildings from the first row of roughly U shaped spider blocks. There was a single row of these blocks separated into two sections that constituted A and B Company; they stretched off to the right going slightly uphill. Next came the cookhouse. Behind the cookhouse and separating A and B Coy from the other companies was the square, on which many a happy and unhappy hour was spent. The left side of the camp's main through road was occupied by administration buildings, company offices, QM's stores, NAAFI block and Band Room, School HQ, the armoury and then three more company offices, finally followed by the start of the playing fields and an athletics track. The educational classrooms were separated from the accommodation spiders by a road running uphill. After the classrooms the workshops, large steel structures, cool in the summer and achingly cold in the winter months. Thereafter the sports fields and sacred cricket pitch. In three years we were to come to know these fields intimately, as well as the QM's stores, the cookhouse and the attached boiler-room.

We were assigned to Headquarter Company where the initial training phase would take place, square bashing and other soldier like activities necessary to ensure that one fits into the system. This phase lasted six months, after which we would be detailed off to one of the other four companies, where we would be promoted to 'Two Division' and (unofficially) able to bully the new intake. We would spend the remaining two and a half years of our apprenticeship in our appointed companies. My intake was designated 56B, indicating the year and second intake of the year, there being two intakes, January and August, January's lot were 56A. We were jealous of our intake number and as all boys do, we thought it was superior to any other.

I was a chancy bargain as far as the Army was concerned, having been selected more for my cadet experience and record than my already stated dismal academic abilities. In addition, I was later to discover that more than one of my contemporaries in the AAS had been given an alternative by a juvenile court, 'The Army or a Borstal Boys detention centre'. So much for the touted selection process! Of what value was I?

The AAS worked on a six division system, beginning with one division (basic training) then progressing every six months to a higher division until reaching Six Division, which was the last six months of one's apprenticeship. By then many were receiving regular army rates of pay, because of their age. Our apprentice rates were somewhat less. To the rest of the Regular Army we were known as 'boy soldiers'.

We 'new boys' were shown into our barrack's spider block and put in the charge of an Apprentice Corporal. That is to say that he was an apprentice who held the rank of Cpl in the AAS structure. Anyone not holding an apprentice rank was referred to as A/T, meaning Apprentice Tradesman. The Corporal was to be our guide and mentor for the next six months. One of his first warnings was that smoking was forbidden until the age of sixteen and then only with the written permission of one or both parents. Fortunately for me, at that time I was a non-smoker. Each recruit had an iron bedstead, a bedside mat, chair (was it a chair or a bedside locker?) and six-foot clothing locker. On each bed was a mattress and bedding. Having dropped our meagre belongings on the bed, most of us stretched out on the bare mattress, wondering if we were ever going to be fed.

The Corporal, a wise old man of seventeen or so, ambled into the room and surveyed us motley lot then asked 'Anyone here from the South of England?' I was from the South. I was the son of an old soldier. I knew better than to fall into the trap of answering. Of the sixteen roommates, several raised their hands. 'Good! That means you can easily learn how to make a bed. I will demonstrate and you will all copy me and make your bed exactly as I show you'. From his voice we inferred that he was prejudiced against southerners. As it turned out he was merely parroting something he had been subjected to in his early days. And so he proceeded to show us all how an army bed was to be made up for sleeping in, and how it was to be stripped and boxed every morning. The stripping and boxing - a form of folding everything up to look neat, was done to ensure uniformity and prevent persons from going to bed during the day, or so I thought, and still do. Having successfully made the bed up, the Corporal instructed everyone to follow suit and practise this newest of martial arts. The person who had laid a previous claim to the bed space was grinning at the thought of having his bed made to perfection by the Corporal. In this he was to be disappointed because the Corporal simply pulled the bed apart and stalked off. So for a good half an hour we made and unmade our beds until the Corporal was reasonably satisfied.

The next activity was eating. Lunch had been kept over for us until after the older hands had eaten. We trooped after the Corporal a few yards to the dining room. The ritual here was to present a meal card, printed with little squares - three per day, which when offered for inspection by the dining room orderly, were scratched or punched out for each corresponding meal. Thus your attendance at meals was recorded and, more importantly, you couldn't go round twice, thus depriving Her Majesty of expensive victuals. We were to discover later that should your pal be on 'ticket duty it was very easy to do a double round, if you were particularly hungry and had the requisite constitution. Because there would be no reissue of meal cards, it was advised that they be looked after very carefully. To this end we soon learned that the best protection was to obtain a packing voucher cover from the side of the wooden boxes that clothing and other stores were delivered in to the camp. The voucher cover was in effect a picture frame like piece of tin, open at one end, solid at the back, into which was slipped an envelope containing the details of the shipment within the box. This served to carry and protect the information from the ravages of travel, weather and storage. Likewise it protected our meal cards from damage otherwise inflicted by constant handling and folding, etc.

There's little to say about the meals, save that none starved or lost unnecessary weight. We had good meals and bad ones. As young men we were perpetually hungry anyway, so no matter how often they could have fed us, we would never have had enough. To supplement your daily ration there was always a trip to the NAAFI, where for a very modest sum one could acquire a simple meal like pie and chips. Payday meant a treat at the NAAFI, if one was prepared to wait in a very long queue. NAAFI is pronounced 'naffy', not 'narfee', as pointed out by our mentor, the initials mean the Corporal assured us that it stood for 'No Ambition And F**k all Interest'. Amusing, but very unfair, seeing that they provided a worldwide service which generally was appreciated and very much missed when the facility was not available.

Having been fed and watered, we were marched (shambled, is a better description) to the Quartermaster's Store where we were to receive our uniforms and other items. As to the actual clothing received, it is a dim memory now aside from the World War I pattern high collar uniforms and three of everything relating to shirts, underwear, socks and the like. 'You gets free', says the store man 'cause you has one on, one in the wash and one in yer locker fer inspections!' Of the ritual that goes with the issue of equipment I do clearly remember the fact that I and one other had been given the same army number. Those experienced in these things will know that one's number is of paramount importance. The NUMBER precedes all else in seniority when it comes to filling in names and other personal details. Each of us was called by name and given a slip of paper on which was written the number we had been allocated. We were told to commit it to memory, as it would be required almost every day for the next few days. And so we stood about mumbling the sequences to ourselves in a determined effort to get it off pat before we lost the piece of paper. Clutching the said piece of paper, we filed into the hallowed halls of the QM stores where we were seated on a long and uncomfortable bench. We sat silently until the Store man condescended to attend to our needs. The apprentice corporal maintaining a superior attitude as befits wiser heads. As we sat and waited we smiled at the humorous notices pinned high above the issues counter. Of those there I remember only two, which although now known to be older than the hills, were very new to us. The first read 'We know it doesn't fit but think of the public expense!' The second read along the lines that Regardless of rumours to the contrary, there are only two sizes available in the Army. 2 BIG and 2 SMALL!

To be continued.....

Award Boards - Alan Jones

We have at last made some positive progress in the ongoing search for the Major Award Boards.

Following many failed attempts to arrange visits and a number of requests for our REME museum to investigate which boards are held in storage by them, in November 2022, I asked our AOBA chairman, Geordie Wright-Rivers, to make contact with them on my behalf.

Soon after I received a request from Richard Davies, curator, asking for further details on the boards we are looking for. On March 21 2023 I received a copy of the museum's report, sent direct to GWR, complete with a set of good quality photos of all six boards. (Attached below)

It appears the boards were found and made available for our committee to view during their meeting held on March 13 2023 at Lyneham.

Unfortunately, the two original boards need further inspection, to check if they have been adapted in any way, with the gold leaf on black background lists behind existing front. If this is the case, and very likely, the names from the beginning of training at Arborfield, dating back to 1939, will be there.

GWR hopes to take another closer look if the boards are still at museum and not placed back in storage.

Below you will find a bullet point record of our search from 2012 to date, followed by the full report and photos received from REME museum, Lyneham.

Alan Jones - 61B

E-mail below from Alan to OBAN Editor sent on 26th April 2023 - just before my stroke. The article was too big to cram into OBAN 86 so I have produced it here. I know the names are difficult to read and have included a larger version photo on the back page. I will try and remember to reproduce them all in this larger format in subsequent editions.

A word of thanks to Alan and his team of searchers for their diligence and tenacity.

Andy Dickson - 66B

Hi Andy,

Thanks for your email, sorry to hear you are having hip troubles, see, we didn't know we would have trouble later on, when told to lift your foot up one foot and drive it two feet back into the parade ground. The words from 'Beasty Roberts' at Arborfield still haunt me! How strange it allows you to use rowing machine but plays up on walks. Let's hope the ultrasound gives you the news you want to hear.

Right, I am sending you the complete report on Award Board search, if you have the space in OBAN 86. This will complete the job, apart from a few small loose ends.

1: It would be great if we could start it with my short 'introduction' to explain the situation and inform members where we are now. Word doc attached.

2: Followed by the SIX good-quality photos, referred to in introduction, attached below in a zip file.

3: My full report in bullet points, 1-15 below in a Word Doc zip file.

4: Completing this the report received from REME museum.

NB. I suppose it would mean using the complete REME report, including the poorer-quality pictures of boards therein, taking up more space in OBAN, as this forms part of their report and we should not edit it in any way. It also links up the 'Accession Numbers'

Due to size of attachments, REME report in separate email straight after this. I know you do have this report already but thought I would forward on, keeping my files in order.

I hope this all makes sense to you, sometimes difficult to get all details across in an email, depends how the person receiving interprets it.

Any doubts please let me know.

Take care,

Regards,

Alan Jones -



Editors comments: If anyone wants their own copy of these photos, contact me through the 'Contacts Page' of the AOBA website and I will see if I can get one e-mailed to you. It may be that in the various moves these boards have gone through some of the names may be in the incorrect position.

Andy Dickson 66B

On Stage - Arthur Ward - 50B

How to become an Opera singer.

Beginners please.! That being the call for all the first scene actors to be ready on Stage.

It was way back in 1954 when four of us young Regulars and National Servicemen received the Curtain Call when at "Back O' Hill "camp down below Stirling Castle in Scotland.

We had just marched the two miles back from REME workshops to enter our camp gate where we were met, as usual by our non-smiling Sgt major who was always ready to issue extra jobs for the day. When halted inside the gate, his smile broadened with the question. (The army teaches us to obey the last order. but never volunteer!.)
"I need four volunteers.? "No one moved. "It's for a show in town! "Again, no one moved. "They have too many girls and not enough boys?"

Being a hard decision, Tom Lennox .50B, myself and two National Servicemen put our hands up to surrender. We were told to report every evening in civi's to a room in the Council buildings where a group of actors were rehearsing the songs. Because we were not quality singers, we sat listening to all the melodies and trying to understand their sequence of appearance.

We were only expected to mime as the show progressed. One of us progressed to gain a girlfriend as they were a friendly cast on stage. After some weeks, we were now ready to begin our song and stage movements and so moved to the much grander stage within a large theatre building which had an orchestra pit, side balconies and seats in the Circle.

We were soon to understand that we were now part of the Cast in the Light Opera called," Merry England" which all takes place during the first Elizabethan age. In one stage scene, a non-singing cat was added.

Soon, all the dress costumes arrived ready for our full-dress rehearsals. Because we four were not the principle singers, we had only to learn our stage movements when dressed with helmets and Armour being known as the "The Spear carriers & Courtiers" This great hall would allow us to begin practice for the six evenings of public performances which from the start received large attendances from Opera and Music lovers alike and was enough to get our pictures in the local paper.

We would just do our best to project our miming and movements at the audience out in the darkness. The intervals were enjoyed by visiting the canteen above the Stage so that by the end of the week and after taking our final bows the curtain lowered and we four Extras were given fifty cigarettes each with thanks from the Director. So, the Spears carriers all went back to carrying rifles.

It was a great time, knowing that it was not everyone who gets the opportunity to ignore. "Royal" when appearing at the Albert Hall because it was only the "Albert Hall "in Stirling, Scotland.

Athur Ward - 50B



Hi Andrew,

Thought the attached might interest you:

Photo 1:A very young A/T M Hope, first school Easter intake 59B, Junior Company or as it was then HQ Company with Major Hind (RA) Company Commander.

Photo 2: Fast forward to a few years ago on completion of the refurbishment of the Corps Memorial at the NMA Presenting the then Master General REME, Lt General Andrew Figgures with a full photographic record of the project. Part of the two man project team alongside Major (Retd) Gordon G Bonner. Now for my sins I am the Branch President of the Potteries & District REME Association.



Regards Mo (Maurice E Hope)

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

The R4 achieved many Significant "Firsts".

- First series production
- First trialled by UK Forces
- First to land aboard a ship – The SS Daghestan (RN) (The British navy received two of the first eight built)
- First successful rescue of downed airman from enemy territory – In April '44 in Burma it evacuated the pilot and his three (British) passengers from an aircraft which had crashed in Japanese territory. Flown by U.S. Army Lieutenant Carter Harman who ferried them two at a time to safety.
- First use of floats for water landing
-

It was, however, not quite ready for serious military field use, due to its limited performance and payload. Hot days caused problems and, on one flight demonstration to USAAF top brass, the R4 simply refused to leave the ground. However - it quickly demonstrated the value of the helicopter to the military, performing rescues and emergency deliveries under field conditions late in WWII.



Lawrence Bell & Arthur Young

No Helicopter history would be complete without mention of Lawrence Bell – who had seen the surrendered German FA223 "Deache". The Bell Aircraft Co already very successful and produced many well-respected fighters in WW2 and will live in aviation history for the later development of the Bell X-1 – which was the first aircraft to break the sound barrier in October 1947.

Lawrence Bell saw the development of a Helicopter is as a means of diversifying – no doubt influenced by his examination of the "Drache" in England during WW2. He employed one Arthur Young who saw it as a kind of philosophical exercise and a challenge to achieve something considered impossible. Throughout the war years Young (and a few friends) developed the idea of the twin-bladed rotor disc – referred to as "The Teetering Rotor".

The concept is a deceptively simple one (although it had taken years of trial and error). Put simply, the up & down (flapping) movement of the blades as lift forces increase and decrease, is catered for by the opposite blade simply moving in the opposite direction. In the fully articulated rotor head this action requires the use of highly stressed "Flapping Joints". In a similar way "Dragging" is eliminated by making the root ends of the blade extremely stiff and strong to withstand the forces encountered when the rotor blade advances and retreats. The characteristic stabiliser bar at 90deg to the main blades simply insulates the control input from the forces encountered by the blades.

My apologies to the ex-aircraft technicians reading this. I am aware that I have drastically over-simplified this explanation. It took Arthur Young nearly ten years to come up with this solution!

Most of the initial work was a trial-and-error process of making, flying - and destroying - scale models. As the Bell Aircraft Company was understandably preoccupied with the war effort, Young expedited matters by simply scaling up the few drawings that existed of his most successful model and building most of the parts by hand. In six months, the Model 30-1 was rolled out, and its first successful free flight was made in July 1943.



The Model 30 morphed through more phases into the famous Bell 47 – which actually received Helicopter Type Certificate H-1 for the world's first ever commercial (as opposed to military) helicopter, on March 8, 1946. Pictures exist of various early configurations of this craft



many of which show the simple platform later to be transformed by the famous "Perspex" bubble. Young had become interested in the newly available material, the development of which had been accelerated by wartime needs. In typical fashion, he looked for an application and developed the process by which "Perspex" could be formed into a complex (and large) shape. The rest is history!

This strange beast was known to many involved in military aviation on both sides of the Atlantic as the "Sioux". Of which more later!

However, by this time Young – in typical inventor fashion – had effectively lost interest and was off developing new ideas (including a coaxial rotor helicopter) but Bell were too busy with the Model 47 and the idea was dropped. In 1947,

Young resigned from Bell and throughout the 1950s, he studied philosophy, parapsychology, and metaphysics. He maintained some contact with Bell and some of his ideas reached the prototype test stage. However, he withdrew into a teaching career and wrote books on metaphysics.

He died in 1995 at the age of 90, having seen his rotor system used in such aviation icons as the “Huey” and the “Jet Ranger”. The Bell aircraft company did very well out of Young’s ideas.

The Bell 47

It is interesting that the Sioux - in British Army terms - was arguably only ever a stop gap measure, possibly to fill a gap between the home-grown Skeeter which was by now getting a little “long in the tooth” and the “Scout” which was still being developed by Westland.

Whatever the motivations, in 1965, the British Army took delivery of the first of 200 Bell 47’s – designated the “Sioux Army Helicopter 1”.



A select few of us may remember that there were some early Sioux's which had been built in Italy by Agusta. These were referred to a “Gallerati” (sic) Sioux and I remember carrying out training tasks on two bright orange painted examples at Middle Wallop in the early 1970's. There were also early Sioux examples where the conversion of Imperial to metric units had resulted in some very odd mismatches in components (I vividly remember changing a bubble in about 1973 and being alarmed by the amount of material we were having to remove to make it fit the metal structure!).

There is an explanation for this, and it is really quite prosaic. Apparently, the British Army insisted that the Sioux should be built by Westland - in order to provide UK Jobs. Westland in turn were restricted by the terms of their existing licence agreement with Sikorsky. (Both the Whirlwind and Wessex were Sikorsky designs).

The agreement prevented the building of aircraft which competed with Sikorsky. As a result, Westland actually licensed the Model 47 from Agusta, who had purchased a license from Bell. I suspect this satisfied the spirit of the agreement if not the letter! For this reason, the first 50 helicopters of the contract were built by Agusta - complete with inherent differences in the conversion factors from imperial to metric units - and the remaining 150 by Westland at Yeovil, presumably, at that time, in old-fashioned Feet & inches!

The history books record that the first “Westland” Sioux made its maiden flight on 9 March 1965.

Agusta were based in the town of Gallarate near Lake Maggiore in Italy – hence the anglicised (americanised?) term Gallerati. Some readers may even remember Sioux's with the wording “Agusta” cast into the aluminium rudder/tail rotor pedals. Interesting also to learn that the Augusta company were one and the same with highly successful motorcycle company who had an outstanding run of race successes between 1958 & 1976.

On the wider front, the Bell 47 had a remarkable if not record-breaking run and became the first Helicopter to gain a commercial license (actually in Sept 1946 – although the “Bell 47” name was chosen to evoke the year of introduction)

As well as providing memorable introduction to the film and TV versions of M.A.S.H (hands up if you're old enough to remember “Whirlybirds” - which ran for over 100 episodes from 1957 until 1960) it was one of the most prolific helicopters ever built, with nearly 50 civilian and military variants. More than 5,600 were produced worldwide including by Kawasaki in Japan (another motorcycle manufacturer) as well as the previously mentioned Agusta and Westland versions.

There is even a company who bought the design rights from Bell and today offer support and spares for Bell 47's still in service. In 2013 were offering to produce them in a modern format with a Rolls-Royce turbine engine. (Search Scott's Bell 47) – although the internet refuses to be specific and I suspect the idea may not have caught on!

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It holds a number of records: -

- A then height record of 18,550 ft (1949)
- First to fly over the Alps (1950)
- In 1952 a Bell 47 set a world distance record of 1,217 miles. This record still stands for piston engine helicopters. (Although long since exceeded by turbine engine machines)
- First to land on the 15,776ft. summit of Mt Blanc (1955)

There are also numerous examples still flying – including numerous ex-army models.

Conclusion

As I stated at the start of these rather disconnected ramblings on a rotary wing theme, I thought I knew a little about helicopters but was amazed how much fascinating "stuff" I uncovered. I hope you have enjoyed them and thank you for remaining awake this long!

From those early pioneering days, the basic principles have not changed. Engine Power to weight ratios have increased exponentially and today's designers can call on materials beyond the imagination of those early designers, such as titanium blade roots which can flex in one direction but be rigid at a 90 Degree axis, which are now commonplace – and remove so many of the headaches so ingeniously solved in the 40's and 50's.

As in so many fields of endeavour, without those early empirical efforts by dedicated (obsessed?) people, willing to literally put life and limb "on the line" in flimsy underpowered experimental machines, the world in general and aviation in particular would be a poorer place – and I and others would have had to look for an alternative career!

Peter Skinner - 68B

Ed's comments - Thanks for the articles on helicopters, Peter. As an ex 'Blackie' I still gaze up at the sky each time I hear one in the distance. My wife could care less what it is but I still tell her anyway. I get really excited when I hear something very familiar and a type I had worked on.

All you other guys out there could think about contributing something that brings back memories to you. I know you don't often get tanks rolling by your front door but I am sure there are things which tweak your nostalgia bug.

Andy 66B

Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson - 66B

My small WiFi device is intermittent and I think it keeps losing the phone signal and I have to keep rebooting it. Phone reception here is hopeless. My Tesco mobile can never find a signal and my WiFi device is connected to the 'ee' network and is generally ok. The hospital WiFi is impossible to log on to. It is a good job I am a little resourceful and can afford my own device. Many other patients have no Internet access.

Sunday, 17th September - fell over in the bathroom today. Overconfidence is something I will have to dial back. I have a sore forearm where I bashed it against the sink but that and my pride is all that is hurt.

Monday September 25th - bladder inspection and prostate. The appointment was set for 3.00pm. I got up in plenty of time and was told I had to wear a hospital gown. Seemed a bit odd as I had 5 hours to the appointment. This just meant I couldn't do any physio while I was waiting.

A doctor came and got me at about 2.30 and wheeled me into what looked like a small operating theatre. The camera gear was all set up and there were about 5 people in the room including the main surgeon who was built like a scrum half.

Scratched around to get a consent form for me to sign then up onto the operating table. Fortunately I couldn't see what was going on below my waist. The nurse on my left side wanted to know if I wanted to see what was happening on the monitor. "No thanks, I am getting enough feed back as it is".

The scrum half is testing the camera and the end of it is moving round like a wriggly worm. I closed my eyes I had seen enough. I assume he used some numbing gel on me as the next hint I knew was a sharp pain. "Sorry, just getting past the prostate".

It was very uncomfortable for the next few minutes while he had a good look around inside my bladder. There was another young doctor there who had a go on the camera. I assume he was under tuition.

The camera was on its way out and there was a sharp pain as it passed the prostate in reverse.

There was a bit of activity as the equipment was cleaned and stowed away and I was asked to swing my legs off the table and kindly pee into the funnel between my legs. With all 6 people watching this was never going to happen. I tried anyway but couldn't do what was asked. Back up on the table and an ultrasound device was used to look into my bladder to see how much urine was in there.

The scrum half suggested this was the cause of my bladder infection. I was not emptying fully when peeing. What was left was going bad and the source of the irritation, bad smell and sometimes pain. However, the good news was there was nothing sinister lurking in my bladder and hopefully the drugs they gave me to reduce the size of my prostate would solve the problem.

"Roll onto your side, please". Another prostate exam was performed, not as gentle as the last one, and I was done. I was told to drink plenty of water and was wheeled back to my room.

Not a pleasant experience but not as bad as I expected. Not something I would care to repeat. At least I know I am clear of the thing we all worry about and I can concentrate getting to the point where I can go home.

Tuesday, 26th September - Sue called me from home. All the "aids" that had been ordered by the occupational therapists had been delivered. Shortly afterwards a workman arrived to install the handrails I need in the bathroom and separate toilet.

I will be having a home visit soon with the therapists to make sure everything is in the right place and I can negotiate through the house. It seems going home is getting closer.

Friday, September 29th - Sue came in to see my morning routine. I asked Cathy (Occupational Therapist) what the possible going home date could be. We have a home visit planned for next Friday so I can see what I can and can't negotiate there. I will be accompanied by several people. Cathy indicated that I might be able to go home the week after this home visit. Yikes.

Monday, October 9th - home visit today. Ambulance arrived at about 09.20. Loaded with Cathy. The other two physio's are going in another vehicle. I'm a bit nervous.

Arrived home and unloaded onto the driveway. The ambulance drivers pushed me to the front door. I got out of the chair and stepped up two steps to the front door then over the lip into the hallway. Cathy suggested going into the living room and I sat down in my easy chair. Sue supervised making sure the wheelchair would fit through the front door.

Still nervous. I got up from the chair which was a challenge due to the rocking feature of the my easy chair. Easy enough though once I got the hang of it. I walked down the hall towards the bedroom where Cathy was fitting the grab rail to the side of the bed. I edged my way around to the side of the bed and sat down. I was surprised how soft it was and how I sank into it. It's funny how your memory is not clear on some of these details. I knew almost immediately that I was going to have trouble standing up from the bed. With my knees above my hips while in the sitting position this was going to be very difficult and the fact that the bed was too soft for me to push on to assist me.

Cathy and I talked about a grab rail on the wall beside the window so I could reach it from the bed. After several attempts I managed to stand up with the help of the three physio's. Back into the wheelchair and Sue steered me out of the bedroom. We talked about another, firmer mattress to go under our existing one. This would give me the 15 or so centimetres I need. We checked if I could use the toilet and then stand at the sink in the bathroom. No problems in that regard.

Sue pushed me into the study. She had already moved some of my furniture out and into the spare room. I could get to my desk easily enough. I didn't turn the PC on. Another trip down the hall to see if I could get into the kitchen. No problem there if I am careful.

Back to the front door and I got up from the wheelchair ready to step out of the house. A fairly easy step to the side holding onto the grab rail outside the front door and I was back at the driveway level. Back into the wheelchair and into the ambulance for the trip back to the hospital.

Very disappointed that the bed is going to delay my going home. There is no way I can leave the hospital until we solve this problem. The ambulance guys also suggested getting a ramp to make it easier to get into the front door. (Ramp was ordered today).

Back at the hospital I am very deflated. I start going through the options in my head and happen on a website that has some furniture lifters that fit under the bed feet. Sue is measuring the dimensions of the feet. These furniture lifters have a recessed area 3.5 inches in diameter. I have my fingers crossed.

13th October - ramp delivered at home. Bed lifting blocks on order.

15th October - the ramp works well. The blocks were delivered but are too unstable so going to option 2, a mattress to go under the existing one. Sue out shopping for one today.

22nd October - possibly the last Sunday here in hospital.

Nothing interesting happened this week. Lots of physio and of course visits from my wife who had a significant birthday yesterday. I am disappointed that I wasn't home to share it with her.

Friends came down from Lincolnshire so at least she had her best friend to keep her company.

25th October - going home on Friday, the 27th. Bed due today. All systems go.

26th October - Get out of hospital day.

More to follow in this sorry saga including another visit to the hospital. Some of the staff there think I am happier there than at home! Not true.

To be continued.....

Some of the physiotherapist team that looked after me in Lymington hospital.



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

Though my favourite verse was

Up there the sun is a big yellow duster
Polishing the blue, blue sky
With white fluffy clouds in a cluster
Hanging on a breeze to dry

But let me explain.



We were no angels by a long way. Dad smoked like a trooper and in order to cut costs often rolled his own. At five years old I had little interest in smoking but I'm sure it made things easier for my older brothers or sister to "borrow" some baccy. Dad also had a pipe, what was attractive to me was that he had "Matches" with matches you could create fire and with fire you could burn things, big things like hedgerows and old bits of wood or sheds. On more than one occasion the Army Fire Engine would turn up to save the day.

I discovered that my older brother "Albie" at fourteen years old was a "Nutter" It was cruel to think of him as such but we were kids. I wouldn't actually call Albie a nutter to his face because he was big and strong and could easily sort me out. Albie never grew up mentally from the age of six or seven right to the very day he died in 2011 at 69 years old. Albie was epileptic and mentally incapacitated though to all intents looked quite normal, although he did have a stutter.

Mum and dad were beside themselves trying to look after Albie, and to be quite honest looking after the rest of us kids as too. Throughout Albie's life he attended special schools and institutions. Back in the 50s and unfortunately even long after the 50s staff thought the best way to keep a mental patient in order was to beat or torture them. Looking back in later life I am sickened at what those institutions did and the bad treatments that Albie would have to endure. Mum and dad entrusted them to look after Albie which in their eyes it was their only option. Albie was as hard as nails in both mind and body; we were just what he needed for him to have fun. My only excuse can be that I was only six years old at the time.



We would get Albie to set off the camp fire alarms and such like and would then run away and watch from a distance. Albie of course couldn't care less and would await the arrival of the Fire Engines and tell them he had pressed the alarm just to watch them come. For all the senseless beatings that dad gave him to keep him in order I don't recollect him ever saying that anyone else was involved. One sunny afternoon without permission I took Albie for a walk miles down into Warminster to play in the park and paddle in the pool. We were not found for hours; even when we were found we were as happy as two monkeys and had no intention of coming home.

In those long sunny days we would explore Cop Heap and its surrounding woods getting up to all the mischief that kids could. We would be taken on trips to Longleat House and Stonehenge long before they would fence in the stones to start making money out of them or turn Longleat into a zoo.

It was in Imber Road that I met the first love of my life "Fanny Adams" in all honesty she wasn't actually "A Love" just the daughter of my mum and dad's friends "The Mallets" Ena and Ron Mallet. They never had a clue what we got up to while out playing, if the truth be known neither did I. It was all dares by older children for example could Fanny climb a tree with "No knickers on" Of course she could, but it didn't interest me much, I could climb higher than Fanny while the others watched on from below I took it as a climbing challenge. We used an empty coal bunker as our Playhouse while others watching in from the outside would tell us what boyfriends and girlfriends should do. I have no regrets.

My eldest Brother Jack had left school at 15 and was out in the "Big Wide World" earning money. Jack had a job down at the local NAAFI as "Delivery Boy" Army Families had the luxury of being able to leave an order down at the store then Jack on his NAAFI bicycle with its small front wheel and a massive basket would charge around the quarters area delivering those goods. I am not sure if he got tips in cash or kind but I thought it strange that he would give up that job which came with a free bicycle and then start another Door to Door salesman's job selling medical encyclopedias'. Maybe customers during his NAAFI days had asked his advice on a few "Medical problems" ' while their husbands were away on Exercise.

Beryl my older sister left school and started work down the road at Woolworths in Warminster.

Just a thought

Mum had said it was the stork
that brought my little brother
As time passed by that little lie
would haunt me like no other

Older brothers they knew well
the story was not quite true
Mentioned lot's of other things
would make the air turn blue

I was so young and innocent
just like my girlfriend too
They took pride and pleasure
explained what we must do

Didn't work for us of course
we guessed it was all talk
Mum had told the gospel truth
it must have been the stork



All of us kids went to different schools. I know Beryl and David went to the Avenue Secondary school and Ivor to a primary school, but I have lost track of the infant school I attended. To this day I can smell the fumes from the old diesel bus that used to take us down the road. I was reminded of that bus while on holiday in Malta where the buses used seemed every bit as old and decrepit as my old school bus and smelled exactly the same. I can identify postings I had with the British Army by smell alone, Warminster had the smell of countryside. If I were to associate it with a film it would be "The Sound of Music"

There were lots of exciting things to do in Warminster. It was the time of the Suez Crisis and Salisbury Plains was a huge training ground for military tanks and other guns and equipment. What more could a kid want living that sort of adventure. I remember convoys of tanks roaring down the road past the front of our house thinking that they must be going to war. Suez was a bit of a Flip Flop after WW2 and it was strange to me in later life that it would be the Cold War and the Russians that would be our biggest threat. We must have forgotten all about the Arab nations.



Left to right David Eric Ivor Albie and Jack on a
British Cromwell Battle Tank on Salisbury Plains

My dad Albert was an infantryman, he knew about survival skills. I still cannot work out what was going on in my dad's head. We knew from an early age that he was very sociable but for an Army Man he couldn't drink beer for toffee. Two half pints and he was drunk, that's the polite name for pissed. I don't know what he had, maybe it was the keys to the rations store, but he was a bit of a magnet with the women. Our house was always full of neighbours and not just the ones complaining about us kids.

Dad as I mentioned was handy in the garden. I think his favourite plant, one of the few we couldn't eat was sweet Pea. They always smelled lovely and offset the aroma from the Pet Rabbit hutch. The pet Rabbits looked more like wild rabbits to me and I bet there are not many of you that can say that you ate your pets. We could. Years later on a holiday in Malta when Rabbit was on the menu I tried it and found that it was actually bloody awful.

Winter in a Tin Hut in Maghull December 1956 to May 1957

No8 Military Families Hostel
Deyes Lane
Maghull
Nr Liverpool

I would have like to remain in Warminster with my girlfriend "Fanny" but "Needs Must" Dad had done his stint as the Senior NCO Rations with the school of Infantry and was now being "Head Hunted" back in Saighton Camp Chester. He was to be their Sgt's Mess Caterer. Before you wonder why my old dad George was selected for the job I will relate a tiny bit of most probably "misguided information" about Saighton Camp.

The Camp was the home to RAEC Remedial Education Unit and rehabilitation center for the "Sick Lame and Lazy" These were soldiers who had been incapacitated or damaged in any shape form or size. The Great War had been over for 38 years my dad had remembered that one as a 9 years old orphan. WW2 had been over 11 years my dad was 36 back then, still no-one knew anything about PTSD. We had more than 90,000 troops into the Korean War but that had also ended in 1953. The cold from 1947 continued on but don't think that caused too many injuries. Maybe now in 1956 it was just damage associated to a more "Peacetime Army" inflicted on the Wednesday Sports afternoons that was keeping the spiders in Saighton Camp full. The way I saw it from a six year old point of view, ask no questions, they just needed my dad. Anyone that has been in a Sergeants mess in charge of anything will know you have to be tough as old boots to keep that lot in order, especially where food is concerned. Being a "Mess Caterer" would open all sorts of doors for my dad, mainly the ration stores ones.

Just a note here to bring Saighton camp up to date, in later years it has been used as a nudist colony, a paintball war games area and I believe now a civilian housing estate. I missed all the later ones but my mind runs wild as to what all those nudists did?

Either there was no accommodation available for us at that time in Chester or no house big enough for us whichever way when we left Warminster in September 1956 we were sent to Maghull. I was still six years old and this was my 9th Place of Residence and 3rd School. No chance of a stable education at that rate. The door was open and the horse has bolted.

1956 Maghull (just north of Aintree) 8 miles north-north-east of Liverpool city centre.



To be continued

Letters/E-mails to the Editor

From: Alan Cubbin - 59C

Good nearly Christmas

I have just read the latest OBAN (86) and pass on my wishes for a good recovery.

I have read a lot of articles in the magazine and wonder where the 59ers have got to, we are not that old! Yet!

Would you be interested in a small article about a 59er who eventually served for nearly 40 years in four corps (if you count the GSC) from A/T to Major?

Alan Cubbin

B Coy, 59C

(Recovering from a recent stroke!)

ED's comments: I responded directly to this e-mail. Alan raises a good point though. Where are all the 59ers? Surely there must be some of you out there with stories to tell. Andy 66B

From: Alan Jones - 61B

Afternoon Andy,

Do hope this finds you feeling well again and getting settled back at home after the recent events.

Now I want to stress, at this point, I am not moaning, I hope you know me better than that by now, again I say I am not moaning.

Just received and read OBAN 86, surprised to find the board report is not in it after getting it to you at the start of your last page set out period, way back in April.

The main email is dated 26 April 2023. If you think it is too big or now 'old' news I will understand, in fact I am tempted to add it to the Arborfield Apprentices group page under the 'File' section, for those who are interested to look up, and not put in OBAN.

Look forward to your thoughts.

Great job on OBAN 86 Andy, well done.

Take care and enjoy your Christmas.

Best wishes,

Alan Jones - 61B

My reply to Alan:

Hello, Alan.

I thought you might make contact regarding my omission.

Your article deserves more pages than I had space for and I wanted to make sure all the photos and your report fitted in the same edition.

I started OBAN 87 this morning and have got everything in, even one photo on the front page and one on the back page. I hope you can accept my apology and take solace in the fact that it is in the next edition. (See pages 22 & 23 and front and back covers).

Best regards and Merry Christmas.

And Ian's reply:

Hi Andy,

Now, I feel awkward when you say you were expecting my contact, then I realise, as I mentioned before, ' You do know me'.

Certainly no apology required from you, you do a grand job, and I am really pleased to hear your update on report. I appreciate your comment about it deserves more pages than you had space. Thank you.

Best regards and Merry Christmas back to you and yours.

Alan.

Letters/E-mails to the Editor

From: Eggy Egleton - 52B

Ref. News letter issue 86 regarding REME. Quetta badge I have only seen one owned by a retired REME Officer. I have many EME badges from all over the world.
Regarding this King (King Charles III) badges will not have a Kings or Imperial Crown but a Tudor Crown.

Eggy52B

From: Alan Cubbin - 59C (23rd Dec 2023)

Good nearly Christmas

I have just read the latest OBAN (86) and pass on my wishes for a good recovery.

I have read a lot of articles in the magazine and wonder where the 59ers have got to, we are not that old! Yet!

Would you be interested in a small article about a 59er who eventually served for nearly 40 years in four corps (if you count the GSC) from A/T to Major?

Alan Cubbin B Coy, 59C

(Recovering from a recent stroke!)

My reply to Alan:

Hello, Alan.

Nice to hear from you.

I am pleased you got and enjoyed your OBAN. I am sorry it took me so long to get it out. 6 months laying on my back in hospital gave me lots of time to think. When I came out of hospital one of my goals was to get OBAN 86 finished and mailed before Christmas. I did 3 months of work in 3 weeks and achieved my goal.

I am always happy to get articles to use. Don't be shy. Make it as long or short as you like. If you have photos you can send them to me via Wettransfer, (this is a very easy way to send big files and it is free).

Great to hear from you and I hope you continue your recovery. I still struggle with my left arm and left leg although I can hobble around with the aid of a quad stick.

Keep your chin up and share any progress you make if you like, (Not for publication, just for my interest).

Merry Christmas to you and your family.

Best regards, Andy Dickson 66B

From: Arthur Ward 50B

Hello Andrew . To begin, I do hope that you are making good progress with trying to get back in marching order. and had a comfortable Christmas. My Daughter gave the party for all of us so I didn't carry any plates back afterwards. hmm.!

I am calling because I did send you a story called." How to become an Opera singer " Since then , I may have updated some minor parts of that original story . If you should decide to use it , I am sending now this .Update .Marked . 1/24. separately. Because my original computer /screen and printer all had a Fit ,I am still practicing with the new gear but hope to send you the Updated story . 1/24 [One page.] soonest.

Good Luck to you for this year.

Arthur Ward . 50B

From Craftsman to Chaplain - Canon Bev John 66A

He said, "I'll stick you down as C of E!!"

I was born into a truly ecumenical family. My paternal great-grandfather was a Deacon in a Welsh Congregational Chapel. All Welsh Deacons are black suited, white shirted, black tied, funeral director looking, with an inborn scowling countenanced. In every Welsh village Deacons are respected by the grown ups and feared by the children. My paternal grandparents were Methodists, and my maternal grandparents were members of the Salvation Army. Their five children (my mother was the youngest) were all brought up as Anglicans (Church of England / Church in Wales). Any Anglican influence ended when my mother died in 1958.

As children, my friends and I were sent to Sunday School in our local chapel by our parents to give them an hour's peace and quiet.

When, with others, I was driven through those unforgettable gates, in a less than luxury coach, on 11th January 1966, Sunday School was very much a distant memory.



We were herded into the WVS for squad allocations and in no time at all I found myself in 'D' Squad. We were marched (marched?) to Junior Company Block and sent to Charlie for a light trim (remember this was the 60s!), then, 'that' form to fill in. We were all helped by an A/T NCO and here I met, for the first time, A/T Cpl Johnny Hartley (a Brummie, I seem to remember). Filling in the form was proceeding to plan until we arrived at the little box marked, 'Denomination'. Now, as you have already read, the number of denominations in my family was confusing and here I was trying to decide which of these denominations had had the major influence on me "Well," I said, "I'm a Christian." Johnny Hartley's reaction, having had to fill so many other forms, no doubt, was completely barren of patience. He roared, "We're all *#*##* Christians! WHAT DENOMINATION ARE YOU!!" Timidly, I replied that I wasn't sure. Then he roared words that would open a door for me that would slowly, but surely, change my life. "I'LL STICK YOU DOWN AS C of E!!" Had I chosen a particular denomination or, out of exasperation, had he put me down on the form as OD (other denomination, of course), then there would be no church service, I would have simply sat in a room for an hour, reading a book. But Johnny Hartley had pushed open that door and I walked straight through realising it at the time what lay ahead.

Like everyone who ticked the C of E box, we were marched to church, the Camp Hall, of course, every Sunday morning for a service led by our chaplain, The Rev'd Brian Morris. Jim Schofield persuaded me to join the church Choir and, reluctantly at first, I agreed. It wasn't long before Padre Morris persuaded me to be confirmed. Early one Sunday morning, in the Spring of 1966, I was baptised in the camp chapel by Padre Morris, and confirmed that evening, in Windsor, by the Bishop of Windsor.

Padre Morris moved on and Padre Bob Woods moved in. I remember that at the end of his first service, as a witness to his faith, he knelt before the altar for a few seconds. An amazing gesture, I thought, in front of an assortment of 16 year old – 18 year old young men. I remember thinking that there has to be more to faith than I had realised, and I wanted to know more.

Padre Morris was quite introverted, Padre Woods was the opposite. He thoroughly enjoyed provoking arguments! He would make a controversial statement and encourage us to challenge him, with freedom and confidence. He forced us to think things through. E.g. he once said, "If you plan to marry, deliberately take the young lady out in the rain and take note of how she reacts to getting soaking wet. If she laughs it off you will know that she would be worth marrying." I was horrified and told him, in no uncertain terms, that I found the suggestion appalling! The argument took off, with the whole of the choir arguing against him. Padre Woods was a man, I thought, who was ahead of his time, and he had an important influence in the development of my journey of faith.

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

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

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



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

I was ordained in 1985 and, following two curacies, I was licensed as Vicar of my present parishes in 1988.

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

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

Because of parish commitments, the only event that I was able to attend at the 2007 Reunion was the Dinner on Saturday evening. I drove up for it and drove home after it. It was definitely worth the effort though, to meet so many friends that I had not seen for forty years. Another highlight.

In 2008, Sher and I were able to be at the Reunion from early Saturday morning until late Saturday night. Bill Cleasby had invited me to lead the Drum Head Service, such a privilege. To lead the service before so many fellow Arborfield Old Boys was overwhelming and humbling and I felt that, at last, I was able to give something back to a place that had given so much to me. The highlights were getting higher.

During the afternoon barbecue, David Ashton Jones, the Garrison Verger (alongside me during the Drum Head Service), asked if I would be available, and willing, to lead the Dawn Service on 11th November. The Garrison chaplain had been posted out and his replacement was not expected until





the New Year. As I had no parish commitments, I readily agreed. Gentlemen, it is difficult to explain the atmosphere at that service. We were quite a large gathering at the monument on the lawn of the Sgt's Mess, standing in silence on that chilly, slightly misty November dawn, waiting for the light to become strong enough for us to read the words on the Order of Service. As the words became clear I inhaled to read the opening sentence, simultaneously, it 'dawned' on me that, 90 years ago, at that precise moment, the Armistice to end the First World War was being signed. At that very moment! The relevance was so moving that the hair on the back of my neck stood up. That thought moves me even as I write. Here I was back at

Arborfield, being allowed, again, to give something back. A higher highlight.

As David drove me around the old familiar places (shadows and echoes, now), I asked him what the procedure was at the two minutes' silence. He said that a gun was fired at 11am and wherever people were, they stopped working for two minutes, after which the gun was fired again and work continued. There was only one place I wanted to be for the two minutes' silence and that was with Bill, and all my friends, at the museum. At 10.30am, David and I popped into the museum to see Bill and to ask for his permission to join him at 11am and then we sat in the shop cafe with a cuppa. After a few minutes, Bill sat down with us and asked if we and the museum staff could meet in one of the rooms there and would I begin and end the two minutes silence with a short prayer. I, of course, leapt at the opportunity. Studying, with two of their teachers, was a party of, about twelve, Junior School children. They were scattered among the displays, making notes and drawing relevant items and the children were all wearing gas mask boxes. I asked one of the teachers if the boxes contained anything. She said, "Yes, their sandwiches!" We met, as planned, in the Medal Room (where better?) just before 11am and the children, with their teachers, came in, too. We stood, different generations, but of one mind, for two minutes of absolute silence. Again, the relevance of the moment 'dawned' on me. Ninety years ago, to the second, at 11am, the guns of the First World War ceased, silence like no other. It was so moving, and I remember thinking, that surely, 'Remembrance' is safe in the hands of children such as these. Another higher highlight.

Sher and I were able to stay for the whole of the weekend of the 2009 Reunion (thank you, Bill), and, as well as having the privilege of leading the Drum Head Service, I had the privilege of dedicating Ken Schofield's Memorial Tree. Now, for the first time, Sher and I were able to spend quality time with very dear friends.

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

David (Tich) Schofield had e-mailed me earlier in the year, to ask if he could nominate me, at the 2010 Reunion AGM, for the position of AOBA official chaplain; I found it impossible to refuse. At 3pm on 25th November 2010, Bill Cleasby confirmed, by telephone, that the nomination had been accepted. In my ministry, so far, there has not been a higher highlight.

As I mentioned earlier, Arborfield has given me so much, and now, as the AOBA Chaplain, I feel that I am able to give back even more. My journey has travelled full circle, from Arborfield (11.1.1966) to Arborfield (25.11.2010). Experiences and highlights will, of course, continue;

But today, I thank God for those words, "I'LL STICK YOU DOWN AS C of E!!" and I thank God that A/T Cpl Johnny Hartley spoke them.

God bless you, Johnny.

Canon Bev John 66A

Ed's comments: This article was published some time ago and I found it by accident trolling through some archive stuff.

I am happy to call Bev a friend and it is interesting how from leaving Arborfield we met up again when I started working in Merthyr Tydful some 40 years+ later. Happy days.

Andy 66B

Non Piu Andrai - Peter Skinner - 68B

Andrew Who?? I hear you ask - well, read on and let me tell you of a conundrum that has haunted me for 53 years, since I left Arborfield in 1970.

You might even recall I wrote some time ago along the lines of "What did Arborfield ever do for Me?" Several things have occurred to me since then – a bit like the Newspaper column "Very British Problems" My very ex-Arborfield problem is a vague uneasy feeling if all the shirts and jackets on my wardrobe aren't facing the same way – with, of course the hangers all aligned and facing to the rear of the locker, I mean wardrobe!

I digress! At the end of that piece, I wrote "There are still tunes that I whistle occasionally which have defied 50 years of attempts to identify. One, I think, was a pipe band arrangement of a Verdi aria - but I've never tracked it down yet!

Well in the most unlikely of ways my question has been answered. We recently settled down to watch "Trading Places" a 1983 film starring, among others, Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. These days definitely – and delightfully, in my opinion – Non PC. It concerns two aging city types who, for a bet, set out to swap the identities of one of their own brokers with the first person they meet following the agreement of the bet. Enter Eddie Murphy playing the part of a wise-cracking con-artist, eking out a precarious living by posing as a war-wounded ex-soldier. Believe me it plays better than it sounds on paper!

Anyway..... The music for the film was credited to Elmer Bernstein (he of "Magnificent Seven" and "Great Escape" fame) although acknowledged as adapted from various Mozart themes including "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and "The Marriage of Figaro". And there, playing over the closing credits was "THAT TUNE!"

My long-suffering wife looked skywards when I blurted out "That's my tune!" probably thinking "He's finally flipped". Next day I spent some time in deep and studious research. That is to say, I did a bit of googling (and YouTube-ing) and came up with this.

Here's the closing credits music on YT - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3Qs_ojJLuw

There's a comment in there which gives the all-important name of the piece on which it's based - "**Non più Andrai**" which translates as "You shall go no more". It is apparently an aria from Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro written in 1786, telling the bridegroom to be about the pleasures he will be foregoing when he marries! (As if)

Here's a clip of it from a formal production of the opera <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRNirc4fiql&t=134s>

There is also this simpler piano arrangement. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEzSuWo_rv0 Sadly, there does not seem to be and version on YT of a military band arrangement. Strange eh?

Of course, you can just search "Non Piu Andrai" into Google or You Tube. I would be delighted to know if anyone else remembers the tune as performed – and endlessly marched to – by (I think) the Fife and Drum Band at Arborfield. Maybe the tune will stir memories for others? Maybe there are ex band members out there?

Peter Skinner 68B

Ed's Comments: How many of you have memories triggered by songs or music? I try and listen to 'Sounds of the Sixties' on Radio 2 on Saturday mornings and quite often go through the whole two hours and naming all the artists. 'Monday, Monday' by the Mamas and Papas springs to mind as I am typing and it takes me back to my days in Jeepland.

It was sad to hear the news of the passing of Steve Wright yesterday evening (13th Feb 2024). I used to listen to him when he did his afternoon show. It seems like he was a real gentleman. RIP Sir.

Andy 66B

Obituary - Trevor Guest - 61A



Trevor Guest joined the Arborfield Army Apprentices School in January 1960 as an Apprentice Instrument Mechanic. His Intake was the penultimate to be offered Instrument Mechanic apprenticeships as from 1961 all future courses were transferred to the School at Hadrian's Camp in Carlisle.

Trevor after one Term in HQ Company joined B Company in the Spiders to the right of the parade ground. At that time there were still only six divisions for the whole school with A Intakes being in January (supplemented by a small number known as Easter Bunnies) and B Intakes in September. At the end of 1960 the first Senior Division was formed and from January 1960 there were nine divisions with A, B and C Intakes.

After a period of initial metal bashing training including filing, drilling, turning, sheet metal work, welding and black smithing Trevor started his serious Instrument Mechanic training in the two Instrument Workshops located on the Isaac Newton Road. The next two years got down to the basics of precision engineering, optics embracing binoculars, prismatic compasses, directors and artillery gun sights and watch making including how to use the Pultra lathe to make spindles for speedos subjects with much time spent using lathes and milling machine all skills that Trevor excelled in.

After Passing Out from Arborfield Trevor went onto SEME to achieve his 2nd Class trade accreditation in the Technical Training area at Borden. With training complete Trevor moved onto a full career in the Corps until he left the Army although he always retained an affection for the Corps but

especially for those initial three years at Arborfield. So he joined the Arborfield Old Boys Association and in the early 1990's became the AOBA Standard Bearer a duty he was to perform for almost twenty years.

As well as marching bravely at the head of each Reunion parade he would be found associating freely with members of all intakes in the Mess on the social occasions. He and I spent many happy hours chatting freely and quite often members would approach him and ask if he would be carrying the banner on parade next day to which he always responded briskly "It's a Standard not a Banner."

Ken Anderson - 58A

Soldier First

Soldier first before all else, that is the REME way,
And there's a price – a tragic price – that some are called to pay.
It's not enough to use those skills as artisans to work
In maintenance and technicalities, and hope to shirk
The overriding reason why our soldiers pledge their all,
To fight, defending country and obeying duty's call.

And where the British Army serves, at home, or distantly,
Then REME soldiers will be there, and by necessity
Will fight as equals, help, assist to bear their comrade's load,
Share any deprivation or discomfort that affords.
And should they fall and ultimately be called on to pay
The highest price, then as always, that is the REME way.

Courtesy of TC

MAJOR AWARDS
ARMY APPRENTICES SCHOOL
ARBORFIELD

“ ARBORFIELD ”

CHIEF INSTRUCTORS CUP COMDTS. SPECIAL AWARD

WINTER 1992 ATICSM M G ROYLE
SPRING 1993 ATICSM P M BROWNE
SPRING 1993 ATISgt J N NICHOLL
SUMMER 1993 ATICSM A MORTIMORE
WINTER 1993 ATICSM D O'CONNELL
WINTER 1994 ATISgt W A TATUM
SPRING 1995 ATICSM M J PHILLIPS
SUMMER 1995 ATICSM ST JAYS
SUMMER 1995 ATICSM A LAWLEY
WINTER 1995 ATICSM C J RAWDEN
SPRING 1996 ATICPol S J WHITELY
SPRING 1996 ATISgt R J MORAN
SPRING 1996 ATICSM G S WARDLE
SUMMER 1996 AT P KYLE
WINTER 1996 ATICPol M G GRUNDY

JUL 1966 AT/CSM D BARNFIELD
DEC 1966 AT/CSM M A HOCKING

AUG 1969 AT/CSM L DALTON
AUG 1970 AT/RSM R WHITE

SPRING 1981	AT/CSM	DDDD
SPRING 1982	AT/CSM	HASNIP

SUMMER 1982 AT/SS&t I D PETERS
WINTER 1982 AT/SS&t C M GRIFFITHS
SUMMER 1983 AT/SS&t I R WILLIAMS

WINTER 1983 AT/Sgt A B GAZZARD
SPRING 1984 AT/Sgt S J COWAN
SUMMER 1984 AT/CSM M O BARSTOW

WINTER 1984 AT/SS&t B E BUNCE
SPRING 1985 AT/CSM A R MURRAY

SUMMER 1985 AT/ISS&t D RICHARDS
WINTER 1985 AT/ISS&t G FRASER
SUMMER 1986 AT/CSM G CLARKE

WINTER 1986 AT/CSM HUGHES
SPRING 1987 AT/SS&t P M PATRICK

SPRING 1989 AT/CSM M J KEEN
SUMMER 1989 AT/CSM M S PLATUPS
WINTER 1989 AT/CSM M J KEEN

SPRING 1990 AT/CSM A TINNISWOOD
SUMMER 1990 AT/CSM C CHAPMAN
WINTER 1990 AT/CSM M B FERTOUT

SPRING 1991 AT/CSM L A BANKS
 SUMMER 1991 AT/CSM S A MORDAUNT
 WINTER 1991 AT/CSM B I BARNWELL

SPRING 1992 AT/CSM G A SCOTT
SPRING 1992 AT/CSM I S GRAMAM

SUMMER 1992 AT S J McCONNELL

WINTER 1992 AT/CSM M G ROYLE
SPRING 1993 AT/CSM P M BROWNE
SPRING 1993 AT/Sgt I N NICHOLL

SUMMER 1993	AT/CSM	A MORTIMORE
WINTER 1993	AT/CSM	D O'CONNELL
WINTER 1994	AT/S&T	W A TATUM

SPRING 1995 AT/CSM M J PHILLIPS
SUMMER 1995 AT/CSM S T JAYS
SUMMER 1995 AT/CSM A LAWLEY

WINTER 1995 AT/CSM C J RAWDEN
SPRING 1996 AT/Col S J WHITELY

PRING 1996 AT/S&t R J MORAN
PRING 1996 AT/CSM G S WARDLE

SUMMER 1996 AT A P KYLE
WINTER 1996 AT/LCpl M L GRUNDY

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