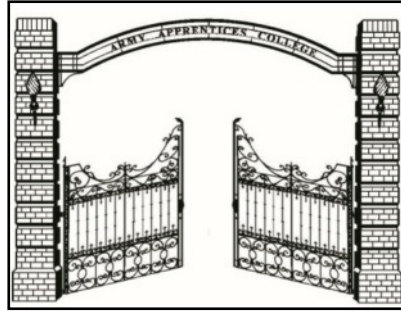


**Apr
2025**



**Issue
90**

Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter



www.arborfieldoldboys.co.uk

ARBORFIELD OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION



President

Colonel Iain Wallace OBE 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)

Recruiting Officer

Bruce Leslie (75C)

Remembrance Officer

Ian Scurr (68A)

Cenotaph Officer

Steve Thornes (77C)

General Secretary

Nigel Canning (77C)

Vice Chairman

Mike Tizard
CEng, FIET, (76B2)

Webmaster

Mark Jobes (77C)

Data Base 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: Lt Gen Simon Hamilton - 88C

Rear Cover: Veevan from Bohunt School

Members Passed since OBAN 89

Name	Div	DoD	Info From
Peter Gaynor Armstrong	51B	23.11.24	Son Mark
Anthony(Tony)Strong	53A	21.11.24	Brother John Strong
Michael Kemsley	57B		Roger Traves
Duncan Graham	57A	09,07.24	Roger Traves
Dave (Jock)Carse	64A	05.01.24	Rob Castell
Michael Heslop	57B	26.1.25	Daughter Tracey
Peter Jenkins	80C	23.12.24	Jim Lesser
Ronald Daykin	56B		Bernie Mills
Barry Edwin Cussens	57A	15.05.24	Wife Patricia via Roger Traves
Neil Maxwell Tomlinsom	64C	31.12.24	Daughter Natasha Williams
Frank Bradley	57B	14.01.25	Wife Judy via Roger Traves
Geoff Jones	72c	23.12.24	Brother Richard
John Stewart	56B	19.07.24	Wife Margerite
Chris O Connor	58B	22.09,24	Royal Hospital Chelsea
Joseph Alfred Frederick Kinson	50A	28.02.25	Son Tony
Keith Skinner	50B	03,03,25	Brother Peter

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	Remarks	Appointment Date
Chairman	Geordie Wright-Rivers	At AGM	Appointed July 9th 2022
Vice Chairman	Mike Tizard	At AGM	Appointed July 9th 2022
Committee Advisor	Bill Cleasby	At AGM	Ages ago
Secretary	Nigel Canning	At AGM	Appointed June 2022
Treasurer	Bob McKeegan-Brown	ASAP	Appointed Jul 2019
Membership Secretary	Robert Cassidy	At AGM	Appointed Feb 2023
OBAN Editor	Andy Dickson	At AGM	Appointed Sep 2016
Webmaster	Mark Jobes	ASAP	Appointed 2020
Database Manager	Jeff Baker	At AGM	Appointed Jul 2022
Recruiting Officer	Bruce Leslie	At AGM	After 2025 Reunion
Bereavement Officer	Ian Scurr	At AGM	Appointed Jun 2023
Standard Bearer	Dave Merrick	At AGM	Appointed Nov 2019
Cenotaph Officer	Steve Thornes	At AGM	Appointed July 2021

The Constitution states:

12.0 Officers of the Committee

12.1 The Chairman shall be an Active Member and be elected by the Membership of the Association and confirmed by those Members eligible to vote at the next AGM.

12.2 The Chairman shall nominate Active Members for the Committee and whose appointments shall be confirmed by those Members eligible to vote at the next 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 or in person.

We urgently have to find a new Treasurer and Webmaster. Bob McKeegan - Brown has been in post for almost 5 years now and it is time we relived him of these duties.

Mark Jobes has had two stints as Webmaster and has given over 6 years to the Association. He plans to do some travelling in the near future and will not have the ability to continue in this role. If we can't find a replacement the website will stagnate and eventually die. There must be someone in our ranks that could take on this role!

Please give this some thought and contact me or any committee member if you would like further information or clarity on what these roles entail.

Geordie Wright-Rivers - AOBA Chairman

AOBA Chairman's Report



Chairman's Report – Spring 2025

Greetings all,

Hi All,

Apologies for what will be a short Spring report as once again, I have missed the Editor's deadline!

I'm literally just back from the REME Reunion which took place at Walton Hall following the loss of our regular venue in Warwick. I know that many of you were there too and will agree that it was a great weekend though the venue would not suit our larger

attendance.

You will all now be aware that we too are moving the AOBA reunion to the Holiday Inn at Birmingham M6, Junction 7. I am yet to do a recce, but all looks well so far and I'm assured that the venue has capacity to look after 200+ ex-apprentices in full flow!

Bookings have already exceeded 175 and rising given the huge interest from the 75 intake who are turning up in force to celebrate their Golden anniversary!

Looking forward, please be aware that I am in the early stages of planning the Freedom of Wokingham parade which will take place in October.

This event will also commemorate the 10th anniversary of our departure from Arborfield. Suffice to say it will be a significant event in which there will be an opportunity for those interested to march as part of the REME Veteran/Association contingent – more to follow in due course.

That's all for now folks.

Please keep spreading the good word and encouraging those ex-apprentices you meet to get on board and join the AOBA.

Please also be aware that many of your committee have reached or approaching the end of their tenures and need to be replaced this year. The roles are not over-taxing but are essential in allowing the AOBA, and particularly the charity, to exist and provide support to this wonderful community of 800 ex-apprentices. Please seriously consider whether you could commit a few hours to playing a part in our future success. If you can, please drop any one of the committee members or give me a call for a chat. Any committee member can be contacted via the AOBA web page 'Contacts Page'.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the reunion.

Arte et Marte

Geordie Wright-Rivers 77C
Chair - Arborfield Old Boys Association

Secretary's Report



Spring Greetings (Gwenton Lowen) from Cornwall.

I'm sure that there will be other commentary to read regarding the situation with our 2025 Reunion venue and weekend. Suffice to say that Geoff and his team at Isle of Wight Tours have been working tirelessly (as is the common expression) to secure a suitable establishment that meets the needs of the AOBA in a short period of time and I am grateful for their efforts.

Sadly, for me the change of weekend means for the first time in a long while I am unable to attend. Sad to miss seeing you all and enjoying the company of such an amazing group of people but I'm sure it will be a fabulous weekend.

Spoiler alert but at the AGM there will be some challenges to agree (or otherwise) to ensure the longevity of the AOBA and I feel confident in the membership and committee making the right choices.

In readying for the reunion and particularly the AGM I would be grateful if anyone has an agenda item, please e-mail me via the AOBA website then whoever is Secretary in my stead will be well prepared. Thank you.

I look forward to hearing all about it!

Wishing you all a Happy Easter (Pask Lowen)

Nigel Canning 77C

Recruitment Officers Report



Fellow members,

This is my final report as Recruitment Officer.

75ers

With only a couple of months to go until the reunion, our recruitment figures are encouraging for this year with 38 new members joining since the last reunion. 23 of our new members are 75ers.

Planning is now full steam ahead for the 75ers contingent with, hopefully, more new members joining over the coming weeks. The number of new members from the 1975 intakes means that there are lots of comms going out to those intakes to ensure that everyone understands the programme for the weekend etc. Due to the uncertainty of the venue, this has been even more important this year and as an intake year we are all very grateful for the efforts of our Chairman, Secretary and Geoff Holt from IoW Tours, all of whom have worked extremely hard to arrange a new venue in difficult circumstances.

Final Message:

It has been a real pleasure and honour to have been a member of the AOBA committee for the last 10 years or so. We are blessed that the Association is still thriving, a situation that I hope will continue for many years to come, it is certainly a big part of our annual calendar.

I would urge any members, especially from the 1980's and 90's to consider stepping forward and become members of our committee. It is not an onerous task, but it is one that will help to keep our Association going for the next few decades.

Bruce Leslie - 75C

Webmaster Report



Hello, All.

There are no current issues with the website.

We have just hit the 700 online membership mark!

After discussions with the Committee and having found a willing volunteer, there will be a new Webmaster due to take up post at the end of 2025. I have therefore opted to continue in post until the transition is completed.

With the Reunion only a couple of months away I would be grateful if any photos and videos taken at the event could be sent to me to use on the website. You can use the 'Contacts Page' on the AOBA website to contact me.

Details of the Reunion and booking forms are available from the AOBA website.

I am keen to keep the website dynamic and am constantly looking for information we can post. If you are aware of any news please get in touch so I can display it.

Similarly, If you find errors with the data I post please let me know. I try and make sure all the information I have is accurate but I am only human and mistakes happen.

As always – Company ties are available to order via the website order form!

Mark Jobes - 77C
Webmaster

Membership Secretary's Report



Greetings.

The start of the year is always a busy time at the membership desk. This is largely due to the activities surrounding the up-and-coming reunion. New members wanting to join and existing members enquiring about their membership numbers are the main queries. This is so that they can make arrangements to come to the reunion for the weekend. As always, I try to respond to these as soon as possible. There was a bit of a delay in February as I took myself off to Tenerife for a bit of warmth.

All very good when you are there but unfortunately you still have to return to cold in the UK at some point. Especially when you arrive at 1AM to minus temperatures and a car that needs de-icing!!

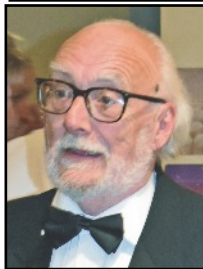
On the subject of de-icing, my dear wife volunteered to do this while I secured the suitcases into the boot. An event that backfired somewhat when she decided to trip over, hurting her hands and breaking her glasses. Welcome home!! Fortunately, no serious damage was done and I got us home without a visit to the dreaded A&E. Next morning her face was a right picture of ill health with black eyes and a bruised chin. Not so well rested after our holiday.

If you are attending the reunion this year I hope all goes well for you and let's hope the weather this year is kinder than it was last year. Not wanted to put a hex on it!!

Belated best wishes to all members for 2025.

Bob Cassidy 65B

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report



Hello, to all members.

All our spreadsheets are up to date and operating properly.
There is a new data protection bill currently going through parliament.
This will make changes to both DPA2018 and UKGDPR.

I'm working through the draft 261 pages of the Data (use and access) Bill 179.
I've not found anything yet that would require any changes for AOBA.

One of the things I like about being the DBO, is the chance to look at the records.
We currently know at least the names of over 20,000 Ex-Apprentices. (40,000 Estimated)
This figure grows with each search of the available records.

On a recent visit to the REME museum to increase these numbers, I was puzzled.
Most 1943 and 1944 apprentice cards had a place name scrawled across them in blue.
Further research showed that between 17th of April 1944 & 5th of September 1944, Arborfield had 0 apprentices.
They had been dispersed to 11 different locations around the UK.

Where their apprentice training continued, some never returned to Arborfield.
The Arborfield garrison was part of the build-up for the D Day landings.

I don't know who occupied the school site during this period.
But most of the garrison was used by Royal Artillery units.

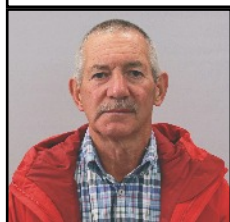
There is an article on the 49er's website "History of Army Technical Foundation College."
This gives more information on the Apprentice dispersal.

The 49er's website comes under the AOBA umbrella, with our OBAN editor as the website editor.
It was Andy Dickson's hard work and perseverance that saved the site from disappearing.
I for one, am very glad that he did.

Have a look at the 49er's site when you can, I find it very interesting and informative.

Jeff Baker 65C
DBO/DPO

Treasurer's Report



Hello, Fellow Members

The finances remain in a reasonable state and as of the beginning of April the accounts are as follows:

Current account £8677.86
Business Account £49114.46

Given that we spent £8112 on the 2024 Reunion, it would seem safe to assume that by the time this year's Reunion has been paid for the Current account will be nearly empty. This will mean that funds will have to be moved from the Business Account to cover normal running costs.

This can continue for the next few years but eventually we will run out of money and so additional income will be required. I am aware that an increase in annual subscriptions will be proposed at this year's AGM and an increase from £15 to £20 will give us around £3000 per year in additional funds. This will make up for the loss of income that we used to receive from the REME Charity and will ensure that we remain in a good financial state for the next decade.

Finally, and as usual, a plea for someone to take over the position of Treasurer; I have been doing it for six years now and would be pleased if some kind person would volunteer.

Bob McKeegan-Brown - 69A

OBAN Editors Report



Hello, Gents.

Well, it is getting close to the reunion already. I don't think I am mobile enough to make it again this year. Its not just getting around, I have a wheelchair for that. It is more the practicalities of dealing with my lack of movement. Each morning just getting up, washed and dressed takes my wife an hour. This is so frustrating for us both but, there are no shortcuts. Imagining what this would be like in a hotel just doesn't fill me with confidence. I will have to get myself sorted for next year as it will be the 66ers 60th anniversary, hard to believe.

The website has been updated, (Thanks Mark) with the details of this years event. If you haven't already booked please take a look. Also, Peter Marsh asked me a question recently about non members attending the reunion. This question comes up regularly. Suffice to say all ex Apprentices are welcome to attend. However, we do ask they pay an additional £15 to cover the membership fees and subsidies the AOBA has in place. IoW Tours will request your membership number when you book. If you don't have one then the extra £15 gets applied. At least I think that is how it should works, from next year I understand.

OBAN remains the biggest single cost to The Association. Mailing cost have gone up, again, and the Printer we use is not immune to the rising costs related to the decisions made by the Chancellor. (This is not a political statement, just a statement of fact). To help reduce costs those of you that would like to switch to the electronic version, let me know via the AOBA website contact page or e-mail if you have my address. As my mum used to say, "Every mickle makes a muckle".

If you do take this option you will have to either read it on-line on the AOBA website or download the .pdf version also from the AOBA website.

It looks like the Reunion will be well attended again this year. Dave Cosway tells me that the 65 Divs will be well represented this year, It is their 60th anniversary. It does take some effort tracking down long lost Div members and those that do undertake it do get rewarded. Chalky White - 66C and a few helpers did an amazing job for the 66ers 50th a few years ago. It is fun to catch up with guys you might not have seen for 10, 20 or 30- years or more.

I know the 66ers are already working on their contacts to gather at next years reunion.

I won't be attending this year, again. The logistics would be too much for my wife. We struggle enough here at home from first thing in the morning to last thing at night. I can only imagine what it would be like in an hotel. I have been offered transport back an forth by several guys but that is not my biggest problem. Thanks anyway to those that offered.

We are still short of volunteers for the committee. It would be nice to get some people from the 80's or even the 90's to join us. It is not hard work and is very rewarding. I know some newish members came to us with limited computer skills but they have done a remarkable job learning what is needed and getting on with the job at hand. There is always help at hand. Just contact any committee member via the AOBA website.

It is a welcome relief that the sun has finally shown up. On the downside, the garden is sprouting and I can't get out there to keep it looking tidy. My wife and her sister do a pretty good job on keeping things under control. I missed getting the hedges trimmed earlier in the year and now they will have to wait until bird nesting season is over. Ho hum.

It is good to keep in touch with ex Boys from all persuasions. I recently came across a post on Facebook by John Oakley who was of Harrogate 63B vintage. I am currently in negotiation with John about serialising the Facebook stories he posted, some years ago. I just have to work out how to download it all. John is helping me with this. It is remarkable how similar his recollections are to my own from my time at Arborfield. I expect ex Chepstow boys will say the same.

There is no doubt there is a common bond between us all.

All ex Apprentices are welcome to join the AOBA no matter where they served their apprenticeship.

My very best wishes to you all and I hope you all enjoy the reunion.

Andy Dickson - 66B

My Experience in Cyprus working with the UN Multi National Force (MNF) Lebanon 1983 - 84 (Bob Cownie 66B)

In 1983 the UN Multinational Force (MNF) was sent to the Lebanon in 1983 to support the Lebanese Government. The MNF consisted of a combined US, UK, French and Italian forces which was located in the area of Beirut. The British element included all three forces, the army consisted of a Squadron from the Queens Dragoon Guards (QDG). Whilst the MNF was in Beirut it's British Army contingent was supported by various units in Cyprus.



My limited involvement was as a WO II working in REME Tech Services in HQ REME responsible for the PRE Team and the Equipment Management of the reserve Light Armoured Vehicle Fleet pool held by the local Vehicle Supply Depot (VSD).

The reserve fleet consisted of only three types of light A vehicles: Saladin, Saracen and Ferrets. These were maintained by a small number of Local Employed Civilians (LEC's). The fleet was used to replace unserviceable vehicles from the local armoured squadron whilst their vehicles were being repaired and they would eventually be returned to the reserve pool. The number of vehicles used by the armoured squadron were limited as it was a Squadron strength and not a complete Regiment.

The large majority of vehicles were fairly old ferrets, which were fitted with old Larkspur radio harness and were in the process of being refitted with Clansman harnesses and radio fits. My old friend WO1 (ASM) Jim Bacon from the Clansman Installation and Advisory Team (CIAT) had recently replaced the Larkspur installation system and radios with Clansman.

However, I had been advised that the whole Ferret fleet was to be replaced by refurbished ones from UK, it was assumed that they would already be Clansman fitted, only the radios and ancillaries would need to be swapped over, if only! Managing a fleet of very aged vehicles was a new experience, with its own issues, including an armoured squadron who were not accustomed to using such old vehicle types which did tend to breakdown often in the heat of Cyprus.

At last, the replacement ferrets arrived, they were unloaded at Limassol Docks and delivered to the VSD based in RAF Akrotiri. This was where the transfer was to take place, from both the local recce squadron and the reserve pool of ferrets held at the VSD.

Unbeknown to me there were other issues in the Near East that were going to rock my working life in a way that was totally unexpected. There were issues in the southern part of the Mediterranean in the country of Lebanon and particularly in the Beirut area. So much so that the UN determined that they had to intervene in an effort to ensure peace in the area. To that effect the UN assembled a large Multi-National Force (MNF) consisting of armed forces from the US, UK, France and Italy. The UK contingent comprised of a Recce Squadron of approximately 100 soldiers from the Queen's Dragoon Guards (QDG's) who would provide support using a number of Ferret Armoured Cars. Can you see where this is going!

The UK contingent would have at its disposal the Armed Forces support stationed in Cyprus, this included the pool of vehicles that I was the equipment manager for, and someone had their eyes on 16 ferrets of my newly arrived refurbished ferret fleet! I could understand the reasoning as Ferrets were considered a much safer vehicle to be in rather than open top Land Rovers with no protection, even with large round roll bars in case of rollovers.

It did not take long for the order to reach me that the ferrets were to be issued to the QDG's, how they were to be prepared for battle readiness and be shipped to Beirut was a logistic question yet to be made clear. In the meantime, I was kept busy arranging for the vehicles to be released from



the VSD. Eventually it was agreed that the services of a number of Units especially the Resident Armoured Car Squadron based in Dhekelia in the Eastern Sovereign Based Area (ESBA) were to be employed in preparing the ferrets for their journey to Beirut.

In order to deliver the fleet safely a number of options were being considered, the obvious being by sea across the short journey between Cyprus and the coast of Lebanon, as close to Beirut as possible. For some unknown reason that I was not made aware of it was decided that the safest method would be that the fleet would travel by air, by Chinook!

Again, I was involved in how best to deliver a large number of vehicles by air, large transporter planes were considered to be too valuable and too dangerous to land at the civilian Airport in Beirut. It would appear that the RAF were in a position to deliver them by Chinook, however there were no Chinooks in Cyprus. Eventually a number were flown from our troops in West Germany, which in itself was a challenge as at this time we were fighting a war in the Falklands. A plan of sorts was coming together and we needed to determine the logistics of moving a number of ferrets by Chinook to a safe area in the Beirut area.

It's quite surprising how fast things could be done in such a short space of days, rather than in weeks or months. Putting into place the logistics of a successfully achieving a complex set of events went surprisingly easy; particularly when working from a Headquarters and being able to manage things from a distance liaising with a mixed bag of Army and RAF Units and particularly those at a distance from the MNF.

Question, how do you move a large number of ferrets from Cyprus to Beirut, Answer, with difficulty and a good sense of humour!

I was advised, by the RAF experts in the know, that the easiest way was to under-sling two ferrets from a Chinook and fly them suspended to wherever they needed to be delivered, easier said than done. The Chinooks pilots wanted to practice how best to arrange the pick-up, obviously pick up one then pick up another, both hanging from the Chinooks are different heights, one assumed that once they had mastered the pickup the drop down would be easy., at this point we were not aware of the intricacies involved in carrying out this exercise above the sea, all others had been carried out in Germany, on land!

As I was the equipment manager responsible for the ferrets I was required to organise and manage a practice session, using two ferrets and TWO Chinooks, each having to practice pick up and drop down and a short trip around the coast of RAF Akrotiri. Initially all went well, we were allocated a quiet spot on the airfield, I was introduced to the pilots and aircrew of both Chinooks and we discussed how best to load each Chinook, having been assured that this was a regular exercise carried out during extensive training on exercises in Germany. It was lucky I decided to use two unserviceable ferrets loaded with sand ballast to make up the weight of a fully fitted out vehicle.

The two ferrets were placed the correct distances apart, the RAF air loaders sorted out the various differing length of strops and determined how best vehicles were to be connected and how to lift one and then the other. Both pilots and aircrew were to practice this for the rest of the day. Confident that this had been done previously, it was simply a matter of going through the motions and having established what, where and how to accomplish this task, we began.

The first ferret was put in position, the load-masters sorted and connected the three shackles, the Chinook pilot and co-pilot had got the aircraft into the air, the loader signalled for the aircraft to come forward at the correct height above the ferret and signalled to lower it so that the other end of the shackles could be connected to the aircraft. Things were going OK until the aircraft continued to get lower and lower over the ferret and despite lots of signalling by the loader it continued until it was sitting on the turret and continued to drop lower until all the aircraft's weight was on the ferret. Something had to give and it was the ferret suspension as its wheels started to splay outwards.

Too late the aircraft had done its damage and it lifted until it was well above the ferret, the damage was fairly obvious as the wheels did not return to their original straight position. This one was not drivable and had to be recovered to the local Workshop, which took a bit of time and whilst this was happening, I managed to arrange for another replacement, a bit embarrassing all round.

One down and better luck with the next ferret, after the embarrassment things went a bit better, we had to transfer the sand ballast and once that was completed the replacement ferret was connected to the shackles of the first one and the aircraft lifted it up to a sufficient height whilst the second one was prepared. This time there were no problems as the aircraft had to be much higher above although connecting the two together to the Chinook was interesting whilst a ferret was swinging very slowly above the loader when he connected them together was breathtaking to watch.

The pilot now confident with his load turned out to sea in a big loop to see what effects it would cause, seeing two ferrets under slung from a Chinook was a sight to behold particularly when meeting a sea breeze, however things went well and it landed both vehicles safely which allowed us to continue the exercise with the other Chinook. By the end of the practice

run both pilots and their crews seemed to be satisfied, all we needed now was to be informed of when the transfer was to be carried out.

It was then a case of ensuring that all the ferrets were finally prepared and held in a secure area until we were told when to arrange delivery. This all happened very quickly and, in a few days, we were ordered to start delivery, this was the easy part as we did not yet have a safe area where the landings could take place and be met with the soldiers who were to man the ferrets. In the meantime, there was a certain amount of pressure to get the vehicles located as closely as possible to a final landing area. In order to achieve this, it was decided to deliver them to the deck of the USS Nimitz that was located somewhere between RAF Akrotiri and Beirut. Although this was possible the pilots of the Chinooks would have to land on the deck of an aircraft carrier rather than on land. Adding to the difficulty was that it was a busy deck where jets were taking off fully armed and returning to land in between sorties.

Things happened, all of the vehicles were successfully moved, and moved again, once things on the ground were organised and made safe. For me it was an unusual achievement carried out in the safety of RAF Akrotiri. Life carried on as normal broken by the odd request for spares to keep the fleet serviceable.



One strange request came from the RAF Forward Observation Officer (FOO) who was directing the jets to various targets on the ground in the Beirut area, working from Land Rover he had been fired on a few times and wanted something with a bit more protection, he flew back to Akrotiri to try out a number of armoured options that would give him and his team a bit of cover. Open topped Land Rover's were too vulnerable, Saladins and Saracens were too cumbersome and difficult to transfer to Beirut. With so many ferrets available a few modifications were made to the turret so that the RAF FOO team could work safely behind armour. When the practical aspects were explained and it appeared that they could work from ferrets the FOO and his team were allocated two drivers and two ferrets and he was satisfied, albeit reluctantly, job done!

Things for me were returning to normal as could expected and after a number of months everything went well until I was tasked with advising on the best way to destroy a number of ferrets! To my astonishment there are very clear instructions on how best to do this. Simply place an anti-tank mine inside connected to an amount of PE with a detonator and fuse cord that could be initiated from the outside, close all the hatches securely and light the fuse, and run! I then had to arrange enough mines etc. and have it all moved to the QDG Squadron in Beirut, and await a number of big bangs.

It appeared that there was a high risk of returning the ferrets in the same manner as delivered, however a secure sight was found and all of the ferrets, and the unused mines, were returned safely back to RAF Akrotiri.

The MNF were to withdraw and this occurred early the following year, it was reassuring to discover that all of the UK contingent were withdrawn after nearly a year without any casualties, unfortunately the same could not be said for the US, French or Italian forces.

When I was originally made aware of my two-year posting to HQ REME in Cyprus it was a dream come true for me and my family, especially when the Falkland Island invasion was in full swing, however duty in REME can change and I was to experience two extremes in one posting. A number of other different experiences happened during my two-year tour and possibly I might get round to recording them, particularly if Andy needs more articles for the AOBA newsletter!

Bob Cownie 66B

CONSEQUENCES

By Adrian Lacamp, B Coy, 64A

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Thank you for your support.

Acknowledgements

I really do have to thank Hazel, my long-suffering wife, for putting up with my little (and many) idiosyncrasies, and even my bigger ones, too. This story was started during a transitional time in our lives, between my retiring early, due to the increasing severity of my tinnitus and Hazel's retirement problems, due mainly to governmental 'age-of-retirement' shuffling (putting hers back) and stress (helping to bring mine forward).

My thanks also to Julia, you know who you are, and your contribution is very much appreciated.

Adrian Lacamp 2017

Chapter 1 Morning - In The Beginning

To say that, by the time his mid-morning break came around, Davey Hepscott was in a bad mood would have been more than just a slight understatement.

In fact, to put it a bit more accurately, he was just about spitting feathers! He was, to put it mildly, in a fuming, steam-coming-out-his-ears, blood-vessel-bursting, incoherently-mad, raging fury.

And, yes, he knew exactly what state he was in, and he did not like it one little bit; but he couldn't help it, that was just the way it was that particular morning.

The morning had not started like one of his normal mornings at all, in fact it had started quite badly and had just gone downhill from there. And, of course, it just happened to be the thirteenth of the month, but at least it was a Monday. If it had been a Friday, he may well have been tempted to pull the first duvet day of his working life.

That morning had built itself up into one of those utterly frustrating beginnings. you know the ones! The ones where, if something can go wrong, it will, and usually in the most inconvenient manner, and at the most inconvenient time, too.

Yep! That's right, Murphy's Laws (often referred to by us minions as Sod's Law), the first three of them at least, all together, had kicked in with a vengeance

For those of you who may not know of the first three of Murphy's Laws, let me remind you of them:

Murphy's 1st Law states that if something CAN go wrong, it probably WILL go wrong.

Murphy's 2nd Law states that when something goes wrong, it will happen at the most INCONVENIENT TIME.

Murphy's 3rd Law states that when it does happen, it will happen in the WORST possible PLACE.

Oh, and... **Murphy's 4th Law states that it will also happen in FRONT of other people, thus embarrassing you to the max!** (just thought I'd throw that one in for your edification!)

But, back to our subject, the unhappy Mr Davey Hepscott. No, that's Davey not David, or Davy, his birth certificate shows his name as **Davey**, thank you very much.

Our subject, Davey, is twenty-six years old. He is physically quite fit, and mentally quite resilient (usually). He is single, but that state of affairs is definitely by design and not because of any bad relationships, though he has had one or two of those as well. And he is a school teacher, which he considers is more of a privilege than a job. He teaches his two favourite subjects, English and Geography, to six- to twelve-year-olds at one of the few elementary schools still under Council control in the County.

He often feels that, if he could only get a teaching position at one of those new Academies that are springing up all over the place, he would probably leave a dust cloud a mile high behind him getting there. Davey has ambitions. It wasn't that he hates being a teacher, just the opposite in fact, all he had ever wanted to do, and still wants to do, was teach, he loves to teach, he lives to teach.

But his present school just seemed to be full of the off-spring of *Commuters from the Big Cities* (in italics and capitals, even).

The school felt like a dumping ground for the sons and daughters of penny-pinching, pound-wasting Yuppies and

Nimbys who just sent the brats, er children, to school to get them out of the way.

Kids from all of the local new housing estates, though they call them Granges or Groves or something equally silly nowadays, filled with the newly rich families, with their newly rich credit cards, their new must-have gadgets and super-toys, and their phony airs and graces. All mixed in with the local kids, all in the one, the only, local elementary school

This particular morning fate was not looking kindly on Davey, she probably wasn't looking at all. Davey's faithful radio alarm clock had failed to rouse him from the depths of a deep and dreamless sleep. His trusty old mains electric alarm clock had somehow reset itself, it showed a flashing, green '12:00' display, probably as a result one of the power outages that had occurred during the thunderstorm that Davey had slept right through.

Having realised just how late he really was, Davey had had a very quick scrape with a wet razor, while he was in the shower, before throwing his clothes on for the day.

He had managed to throw a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of peach nectar down his neck before dashing out of his end of terrace, two-up two-down humble home, ready to drive to work.

Only to find that fate had further stacked the deck against him. Eric, the yuppie nerd from next door to the right, had left his car parked right across Davey's driveway.

Therefore, Davey's old and battered, rust-n-red coloured Morris Mini, affectionately nicknamed 'hunka-junka', was very firmly blocked in by Eric's beautifully restored, immaculate, and equally old, E Type Jaguar.

Eric was married to Hannalora, another typical yuppie, and also a complete nerdette. He had come into his money through an inheritance shortly before their marriage, and Hannalora just had to try to spend it all, on herself of course.

Together they owned the sparkling new detached mansion that sat next to the end of Davey's terrace, and Hannalora just loved to rub Eric's money in everybody else's nose.

Not long after building their manse and moving in, Eric, for some inexplicable reason, had become a complete workaholic, he was also fast turning into an alcoholic. It seems that he used work to get away from Hannalora during the day, and the drink to do the same when not at work. But he was completely under Hannalora's thumb, so much so that he dared not block his own driveway, oh no, he didn't dare block in Hannalora's equally beautifully VeeDub Karmann Ghia, his life would almost certainly be complete hell if he did.

Therefore, that morning, Eric, knowing that he was still well over the drink-drive limit, had taken the early bus to work that morning. The fact that his only set of car keys were with him was completely deliberate. Or so Hannalora claimed as she drove, unhindered, out of her drive, waving two fingers at Davey as she disappeared up the road in the opposite direction to Eric's bus.

Davey's problem, however, remained the same, how to get to work on time.

There was no way that Davey was going to take a taxi to work, not again. The last time he had done so it had cost him a staggering twenty-seven quid, and that was just to get *to work*. And the only bus that would have got him to work on time was currently being overtaken by Hannalora's car up the road, and out of the village. Its next stop was nearly five miles away, in the next village. Which left Davey to consider his somewhat limited options; a) bus, gone; b) next bus, not soon enough; c) taxi, too costly; d) bicycle, ain't got one; e) walk, no way Jose, it's nearly twenty miles. So, what next?

With a shake of his head a sudden memory popped into his head, and a smirk starting to grow on his lips, Davey began to consider option f) a game of street chess!

His neighbours on the other side, the lovely Sarah and her partner, Adam, had been in a similar situation a couple of months ago. Eric had left his Jag parked right across their drive that time, blocking Sarah's Skoda Favia, but they had possessed both the means and the opportunity to solve the problem. Ergo, similar situation, similar solution.

It only had only taken a minute for Adam to walk down the street to get Loony-bot, his battered old ex-army, camouflage painted, Mark I Land Rover out of their rented garage. Sarah had then helped Adam hook it up to the Jaguar's rear tow point and they literally dragged it, but very gently of course, backwards away from their drive.

This time, however, they were right next to Eric's own, now totally empty, drive, so that's exactly where they left it, right across the front gates of Eric and Hannalora's drive.

The co-conspirators shared a brief moment of joy at the knowledge that Hannalora would, as usual, be home long before Eric. However, that slight moment of joy did very little to lighten Davey's mood. That morning's traffic on the way to school did its very best to further increase the depth of his already worsening mood.

So, you can understand that it had certainly not been the best of starts to the day for Mr Davey Hepscott

Could the day get it any worse? Davey really and sincerely hoped not, because he could feel a tight knot of anger building up in his chest, and he knew that it would take very little more to make that knot become unravelled, and dangerously so at that.

Meeting Missed

Despite all that had happened that morning, Davey actually made it to school in time for the first bell, in time for morning Assembly, but only just. However, he did miss the now mandatory Monday morning meeting, where the latest updates to the school's 'Policy' document had been handed out by the headmaster.

This large and ever-expanding set of rules and regulations was not just this school's Policy, but the County Council's Policy for all the schools under its strict and some would say over-powering control.

School Policy, (yes, that's with a capital 'P'), was never to be disobeyed, never to be contradicted, and, quite probably, would never even to be read in full by most teachers. But the Council's Education Department considered their Policy to be the 'Law'! Breaking, or even slightly bending, any of the sections of the Policy was deemed to be an offence worthy of, at least, an official written reprimand, as far as County were concerned.

It was very much doubted that the authors of Policy had ever even been parents, let alone teachers.

Plus, it was also quite evident that Policy was the work of several different authors because, as a whole, Policy was obviously uncoordinated at best and peppered with contradictions at worst.

Policy went far beyond setting the curriculum, it not only set out each year group's timetable, but it also detailed the subjects, or 'themes', to be taught each and every half term. Many teachers wondered what the next step would be; issuing individual lesson plans, reading lists, or even scripts of what to say in each lesson?

Policies also went so far as to lay down very strict prescribed rules of conduct and punishment. It itemised what to do when dealing with each and every type of mishap, misdemeanour, local catastrophe or international disaster that the authors could imagine might happen in one of its schools.

Policy also listed who should, or could, do what in each and every case or scenario listed. Even to what could and could not be told to the parents or guardian of any child or children involved in such situations.

It also laid down that the newly instituted, and recently appointed, school counsellors where to be involved, or at the least consulted, in every single case itemised.

The brand-new post of Counsellor at Davey's school, was currently held by someone who worshipped Policy. Someone who considered it the single, most wonderful and politically correct document in the whole wide world: Ms Angela Jones, a recently graduated Peace Studies student. Unfortunately, Ms Jones couldn't understand why the teachers shunned her. It was almost as if they saw her as a spy for County which was, of course, exactly what she was!

To anyone with an ounce of common sense, there was no doubt about it, Policy was micro-management gone completely crazy, yet Ms Jones was totally oblivious to this.

Davey had eventually found his copies of that day's Policy updates, another dozen or so sheets of A4, shoved deep in his pigeonhole in the staff room. Of course, he hadn't had time to even glance at the subject headings, he just left them where they were, and would do the necessary updates at the weekend.

1st Lesson

Davey's first lesson that Monday morning had been a double period of Geography with Class 4C, the lower stream of fourth years, mainly nine-year-olds.

He doubted that any child in 4C could even point out the location of their own county on a blank UK map. So, you can understand his frustration at having to try to explain why certain areas of the UK were better suited to certain industries than others.

The curriculum, as laid down in School Policy, said that this was just one of the 'themes' for this half term, at least for this year group. And who was he to argue? County knew best!

That particular lesson actually had gone reasonably well. Only two minor swear words heard and three pulled ponytails - all easily ignored. Policy mentioned somewhere in its depths that teachers may allow some 'individualistic expression', well, didn't it?

Davey was still wound up pretty tight, but managing to hide it, just, when he went to take his break prior to the next lesson of the morning. That little knot of anger that had built up in his chest was not quite so hot and tight by now, but it was still there.

But his next lesson was the one lesson of the week that Davey dreaded the most; English with the infamous 6C.

Those forgiving, do-good types, would probably classify 6C as the most 'academically challenged' class of the sixth year, if not the whole of the school.

To Davey they weren't just rich kids who didn't want to learn, they were brats (spelt m-o-n-s-t-e-r-s) who knew that their parents wouldn't care if they didn't learn, wouldn't give a damn. They were also the group who seemed to know their human rights better than any lawyer; and they certainly knew how to best exploit them!

His mid-morning caffeine-booster break over, self-preservation routine began to take over.

He took three deep breaths, each held for a count of 'don't make me cough or laugh'. He set his mind to Defcon level 5, just short of starting a nuclear holocaust.

He unclenched his fists then shook them out and tried to relax his arms.

Finally, with dogged determination that this would be a better day, he left the staff room and headed off in the general direction of Room Seven.

It was exactly two seconds before the half past ten bell when he entered the mayhem and cacophony that was class 6C in full spate.

To be continued....

REME Breakfast Club Listing

REME COUNTY DURHAM BREAKFAST CLUB

The REME BREAKFAST CLUB FOR COUNTY DURHAM

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/f1L3GzbqeH42enrz/>

REME GLOUCESTERSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB

The REME Breakfast Club for the Gloucestershire area

Website https://www.facebook.com/groups/8051262654937765/?ref=share_group_link&rdid=5jek3KQJbyw0tz8H

REME LANCASHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB

The REME Breakfast Club for Lancashire

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/stJ8kkoNfLmK7Zi7/>

REME LINCOLNSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB

The REME Breakfast Club for the Lincs area

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/ToFTPoVzbXCsjDG3/>

REME MERSEYSIDE BREAKFAST CLUB

Merseyside's REME Breakfast Club

Website https://www.facebook.com/groups/711028933816823/?ref=share_group_link&rdid=cyGlcNIMjWwqEqOV

REME NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

The REME Breakfast Club for N Staffs

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/19w6a9RbZj/>

REME NORTH WEST NORFOLK BREAKFAST CLUB

The Breakfast Club for the NW Norfolk area

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/qECFrZx8g58Dqfce/>

REME NORTH WILTSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB

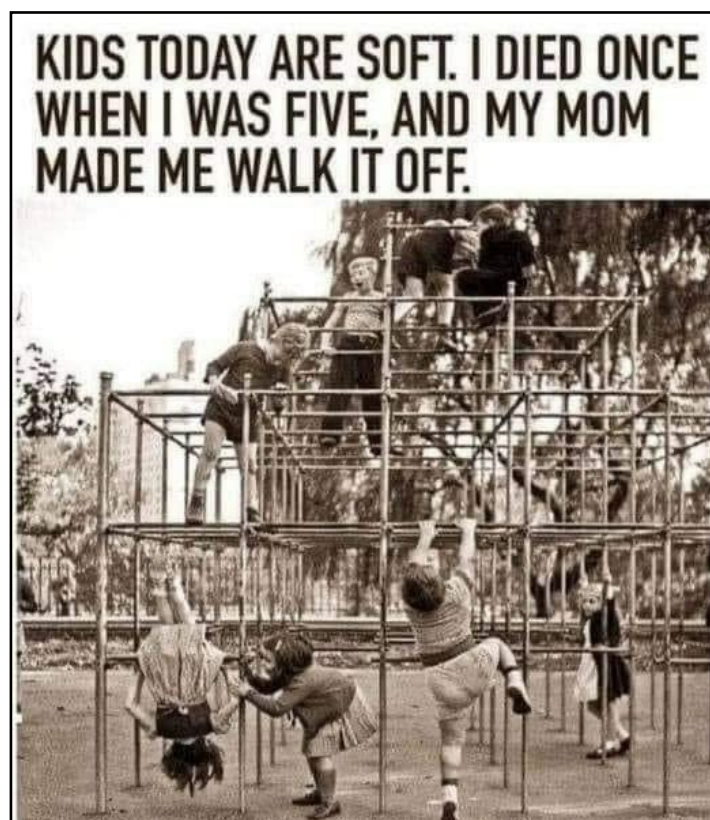
The REME Breakfast Club for the North Wiltshire area

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/mMCn9QeZZ9hntLD9/>

REME RUTLAND BREAKFAST CLUB

The REME Breakfast Club for Rutland

Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1btjDnHmWHQf2Fkm/>



From Scotland with Love - Eddie Crossan

Eddie Crossan



The AOBA donated to this charity and it is always good to see how the money is being spent. Well done Eddie and thanks for all you do.

How the Arborfield Old Boys Association helped 'From Scotland With Love' Support Children in Ukraine

At the heart of every community lies the desire to support one another, especially in times of hardship. That's precisely what the AOBA demonstrated when they raised £750 for the Hearts and Minds Project's initiative, *From Scotland With Love*, which is dedicated to helping children impacted by the war in Ukraine.

The Hearts and Minds Project, spearheaded by Eddie Crossan and his colleague Alex, is a non-profit initiative aimed at bringing joy and support to children in Ukraine through the

power of football. The project is especially important in these difficult times when many children in Ukraine are enduring the harsh realities of war, with families torn apart and futures uncertain. The project's mission is to provide these children with football equipment, offering them a much-needed sense of normalcy and hope.

Why Football?

Football is much more than a sport; it's a unifying force, a way for young people to escape the stress and trauma of their daily lives. Growing up in the West of Scotland, Eddie knows firsthand the profound impact that football can have on children, both physically and mentally. In Ukraine, where the conflict has left deep scars on the community, football can serve as a much-needed outlet for these young people, helping them feel a sense of belonging, accomplishment, and happiness during difficult times.



Unfortunately, due to the ongoing war, acquiring basic football equipment has been an immense challenge for local teams. Many children have fathers who are actively fighting in the war, and tragically, some have already lost their lives. With 25% of the local district already impacted, the need for support has never been greater. The mission of *From Scotland With Love* is to provide children with much-needed football kits and equipment, from jerseys and shorts to footballs. This equipment will not only lift their spirits but also allow them to maintain a sense of normalcy and enjoy the game they love.

A Life-Changing Contribution from AOBA

The AOBA played a crucial role in this initiative by raising £750, which has already made a significant impact. This generous donation has provided enough football kits to support five teams of children in Ukraine. In addition to the initial five teams, £250 of the funds will go towards another budget, which will enable the Hearts and Minds Project to support eight more teams.

The AOBA commitment to giving back to the community aligns perfectly with From Scotland With Love's values, and the partnership has been an invaluable contribution to the success of the project.

The funds raised by the AOBA will go toward acquiring:

- Full football kits for children between the ages of 6-16
- Footballs
- Tops and shorts for the local football teams

Your Support Makes a Real Difference

The impact of the support from the AOBA is immeasurable. By contributing to From Scotland With Love, they have helped bring hope and joy to children who are facing unimaginable hardships. The partnership between AOBA and the Hearts and Minds Project serves as a reminder of the profound difference that compassion and generosity can make in the world.

As a thank you for their support, Eddie and Alex have committed to sharing stories, videos, and pictures showing how the football equipment has brightened the lives of the children in Ukraine. They will offer a glimpse into how these young athletes, who have been through so much, are rediscovering joy through the game.

Looking Forward

With the support of the AOBA and other generous donors, From Scotland With Love is hopeful that they can continue making a positive impact on the children of Ukraine. Football is a universal language that transcends borders and can heal



even the deepest wounds. Together, with the help of individuals and organizations like Arborfield, they are bringing a sense of hope, community, and joy to children in need.

In Conclusion

A big thank you to the AOBA for their incredible generosity and for making a meaningful contribution to From Scotland With Love. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of the children who need it most.

Warm regards,

Eddie Crossan

Founder, From Scotland With Love

A collection of photos of some of the teams and the uniforms being handed out.



Left to right rear row: Vasyl Director Football
Also owns Schklo Lviv Oblast football team,
Volodymyr (admin to the Mayor, Eddie,
Steve, David & George donators and
colleague of Eddie.

8 MONTHS' DETENTION FOR TROOPER

Bid To Cross Channel

Trooper Robin Wilfred Painter, aged 20, from Bristol, who tried to cross the English Channel in an Army five-ton amphibious vehicle, was sentenced to eight months detention at Hohne, West Germany, to-day.

He was found guilty of being absent without leave and three other charges. Finding and sentence are subject to confirmation.

A district court martial was told that Trooper Painter, of the 11th Hussars, had planned to cross to England after a 400-mile drive from his barracks at Hohne.

He then intended to cross the Irish Sea from Liverpool to Ireland, where he had planned to abandon the vehicle.

UNDER ARREST

In a statement he was alleged to have made to military police, which was read to the court to-day, Painter said he took the vehicle on September 22 and set off to drive to Belgium.

At the time he was under open arrest after a similar escape in August, when he drove a Landrover to a Belgian base, where he surrendered after being absent for 24 days.

In an alleged statement, Painter described how he bluffed his way across Germany and Belgium to the Channel coast by saying he was going to demonstrate the uses of the amphibian vehicle, drawing hundreds of gallons of petrol from German, American, Canadian and Belgian depots along the road.

At the Belgian coastal town of De Panne he drove straight on to the beach, stopped, put up the splash boards and then drove into the sea. But he got into difficulties steering the craft, which normally has a crew of two, and after about two and a half hours he turned back, landing near Calais, where he was detained by French police.

ATTEMPT TO DRIVE ACROSS CHANNEL

Hohne, Nov. 23.—A Rhine Army trooper from Bristol who tried to cross the English Channel in an Army five-ton amphibious vehicle was sentenced to eight months' detention here today. He was found Guilty of being absent without leave and three other charges. He entered the water from Belgium but had to land near Calais, where he was detained.

A district court martial was told that trooper Robin Wilfred Painter, 20, of the 11th Hussars, had planned to cross to England after a 400-mile drive from his barracks at **Hohne**. He then planned to cross the Irish Sea from Liverpool to Ireland, where he had planned to ditch the stolen vehicle.

In a statement he was alleged to have made to the military police, Painter said he took the vehicle on September 22 and set off to drive to Belgium. At the time he was under open arrest after a similar escapade in August when he drove a car to a Belgian base, where he surrendered after being absent for 24 days.

Painter was found Guilty on a charge of being absent without leave, two charges of improperly using Army vehicles and one of losing equipment. He was found Not Guilty on a charge of desertion. Sentence is subject to confirmation.—*Reuter*.

ull Text: Copyright 1965, The Times



E-mail from Peter Skinner:

Morning Andy,

I hope you're well? How is the long road to recovery?

I've been composing this one in a corner of my mind for some time. I now finally get around to putting it on paper/email! I hope it fills a space for you!

Peter Skinner 68B

Tall Tales from Long Ago

I'm not a big Facebook user. I can generally resist the urge to tell the world what I had for breakfast or where I am on holiday. Having said that, I do look at various car related sites and am in one or two FB "Groups" of local (and not so local) car enthusiasts. This led me inexorably to notice the sites which are related to REME and the couple of units I served in during my brief and inglorious military career. Through this, it has been great to be again in contact with guys I last saw 50 years ago. (How Long??) I've even mastered, albeit inexpertly, the art of "posting" If readers haven't discovered "BAOR Memories" I'd recommend it. It features many humorous, pictures and stories – occasionally rude - mostly involving the medicinal benefits of Herforder Pils and Asbach brandy. These are usually followed by a plethora of comments, questions and answers which can occasionally lead down fascinating "rabbit holes".

An entry caught my eye a while ago, asking who remembered driving, maintaining or being transported in the "Stalwart" military vehicle. I knew very little about these vehicles, but I vividly remember them driving about the garrison towns. My main memory was of the extraordinary noise they made! This was apparently because each of the six wheels had a reduction gearbox in the hub with straight cut gears, thus ensuring that any progress would inevitably be accompanied by a high-pitched shrieking whine. Not a vehicle for a stealthy approach toward the enemy!! I also knew that they were manufactured by Alvis Vehicles Ltd of Coventry so, as a lifelong car nut, my interest was piqued – but there it rested. As we all know, military life is riddled with stories - some tall, some ridiculous and all "improving with the telling". Often reeled out and mulled over whilst indulging in the well-known military pastime of "waiting". They were told by older guys, who had seen a thing or two, or recounted as gospel by some callow youth from the cavalry regiments encountered in their supporting role to the AAC squadrons. Over the years I have often wondered about the truth of some of them.....

One of the stories that had stuck in my mind all these years, concerned the Stalwart and the tale of a young soldier stationed "somewhere in Germany" who, feeling a little homesick, and no doubt under the influence of the aforementioned Herforder Pils decided that he really wanted to go home to the UK. The main problem was the English Channel and the transport to get to the channel before crossing it. What better solution than an amphibious vehicle which could perform both roles?

So, the tale went, he duly borrowed a Stalwart from the MT Pool, drove it to the Belgian coast and set off across the channel. At this stage the Stalwart suffered a mechanical failure, and the young soldier turned back to coast where he was apprehended. Following a court martial he was dismissed from the services, but Alvis contacted him to offer him the job of test driver on the basis that "No one has ever broken one of these!"

What a great story! Wouldn't it be great if at least some of it were true?? Later in my civilian career, I worked with a contemporary who had been an apprentice at Alvis and reached a fairly senior level. I asked him whether he had ever heard this story? His answer was in the negative and that was many years ago. I don't suppose I thought about it much from that day on, until I saw a post on "BAOR Memories" extolling the virtues of the Stalwart. This of course triggered the usual round of reminiscences from former soldiers and their encounters with the vehicle.

I posted a question on the thread asking whether anyone else remembered the story, concluding with "I've always wondered whether there was any truth in it". There I thought the matter would rest – surely it was too ridiculous a story to be true....

To my surprise I received a reply from a "Will Scarlett" telling me that not only was the basis of the story true but that he had known one trooper Robin Painter when they were soldiers in the 11th Hussars at Hohne in the mid 1960's. Over the course of the next few days, he sent me the attached newspaper cuttings and told me that Trooper Painter was not actually dismissed from the army but had actually stayed on and eventually reached "Senior Rank". There was no "mechanical failure" rather an underestimation of the difficulty of piloting an amphibious vehicle in the open sea....

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS

So at least part of the story was true – if the not the fanciful part about Alvis offering him a job as a test driver! I suppose that really would have been too good to be true!

STALWART PIC

I've looked online for information about Stalwarts – there's a lot of it! Surely some of our readership will have their own first-hand memories and could drop Andy Dickson a paragraph or two??

Peter Skinner - 68B

Berlin - - Craftsmans Cup - Peter Marsh - 65C

E-mail from Peter Marsh:

Hi Andy,

I hope this finds you well and in good spirits.

I had a chat with Ian Scott and we got talking about "old times" in Celle, then I realised that I had some old photos on my computer. So here they are, they were taken in late 1968 through to summer 1970. The winter ones were 1968-1969. There are a few from the town of Celle and also Berlin, the football team had a semi-final of the Craftsmans Cup to play in Berlin, travelling by train from Hannover through the DDR was an experience as was the tour of the berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie.

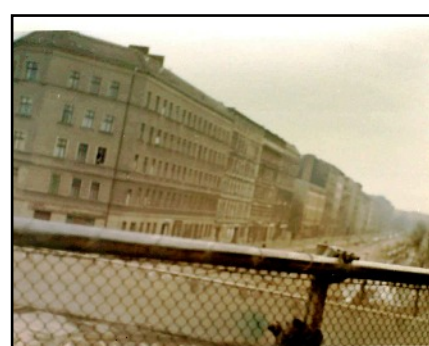
Anyway I won't go on too much if you want to use them in the magazine please be my guest or if any further description of the pictures is wanted just let me know.

take care and hope to see you at the reunion,

All the best,

Peter

Ed's comments: The photo's below are obviously of Berlin. I might fit the ones from Celle into the next OBAN.



Lesson in Life – 3 - Tony Moogan 66B

What a Difference an Education Makes!

I'm back in Kenya on Ex Larch Pole with 50 (Constr) Sqn RE. We have now settled into our individual team regimes to get the project completed on time and in budget.

My fitter section is doing a great job while the "earthworks" are in progress, working a day and night shift to maintain the plant equipment on-site during the day and completing any repairs during the night! Not an easy job, but it's going well so far....fingers all crossed.

It's at this point that the Garrison Engineer (GE) Major WAG Carter, decided to allow most of the sections – fitter section included – to apply to him for authority to employ Local Employed civilians (LECs) within their respective section to carry low level housekeeping and equipment maintenance tasks to keep each section ticking over efficiently and not have to use its own manpower. I duly made case to the GE to employ 1 LEC in the fitter section workspace located in the aircraft hangar detailed in my "Lesson in Life – 1" in an earlier edition of the AOBA rag! Thankfully good ol' "WAG" accepted my submission and shortly afterward Thomas reported to me for duty.

Thomas was a tall, medium build and well spoken chap about the same stamp and age as me. I detailed his duties in a job spec (of sorts) which he duly agreed to and signed! I passed a duplicate to the GE for his (the GE's) personnel file.

Thomas settled in well, got on with the fitter section blokes and I patted him on the back a couple of times for the standard of his work so that he should feel part of the team! All was going swimmingly.

Now I want to tell you dear reader, (I can't believe there is more than one of you?) that we were located adjacent to the Nakuru Flying Club, light aircraft in Africa being used like cars in UK because of the sheer size of the country and continent! Because of this the OC Local Resources Section (LRS), Capt Moules RAOC, (I think) had brought with him a glider and ancillary equipment so that he could apply an old maxim...

All work and no play makes Jack a right boring wossname!

He therefore informed the aforementioned good ol' WAG that, subject to the project progress and the individual section Staffies' permission, that he, Capt Moules would be very happy to takes those blokes interested enough, on flights in his glider and, if they showed enough interest and skill, he would give them lessons, with an aim of anyone becoming good enough, to try for a pilot's license!!

So as the project progressed and more time became available to the sqn lads, more and more took the good ol' Capt Moules at his word and tried for their pilots' licenses. One successful chap was LCpl Dave Goodhew REME of the fitter section! Well done David, however there's another story involving our Dai bach in a subsequent OBAN.

I've now arrived at the reason for my penning this very riveting story to you and it is this:

I noticed one day that Thomas was standing in the hangar door way, staring intently at the sky as if he were studying something truly mind- boggling. I duly walked over to him enquired if he was ok and what it was that seemed to have captured his absolute concentration so??

Without flinching, his gaze remained skyward looking intently at the glider circling in a thermal and said

"Sir, Sir how does it fly?"

I have to admit that I was a tad gob smacked by his question, because, in my naivety, I had taken it for granted that he was as educated as me! (That's a freebie for Bill Everett – the air tech!)

So I questioned Thomas a little further and his reply was "but it has no engine?" I replied, "no Thomas because it's a glider" this did not satisfy Thomas at all, in fact he became a little animated! So I pressed further, reiterating what I had said earlier about it being a glider????? His response was, "Please sir, explain to me how it flies?" Hmm!.....from here on in I'm wingin' it (excuse the pun) because as Bill Everett knows, I'm an expert on the "theory of flight" he having explained to me years earlier at Arborfield!

Let's see what I can remember:

"Well, you see Thomas, the aircraft is very light, with wings (aerofoil) which have a large surface area and specific shape which makes the air pass more quickly over the top of the wing than underneath it. This creates a depression on top the wing and an increase in pressure under the wing, therefore lifting the whole aircraft upwards. The faster the aircraft goes the greater the depression on top and greater the pressure underneath, lifting it higher into the air until the pilot can find a "thermal" and then the aircraft can cruise around until it needs to come home!

Now I'm no air tech (A&E) but gave myself an imaginary pat on the back for the explanation, turned to Thomas and said "now do you understand Thomas how it flies with no engine?" guess what the cheeky git said.....he gave a little laugh and said "ha you can't fool me sir!" walked off and went about his duties openly looking back at me, shaking his head and tittering his bloody head off!!! Up to that point I was intending to give Thomas permission to use my Christian name, as a mark of my genuine respect for him.....Ha in his 'effin' dreams boi bach!

So, the lesson I learned that day, thanks to Thomas, and have tried to keep in mind ever since:

We, who are lucky to live in UK, should never take for granted; the education, standard of living and opportunities afforded to us simply because of where we were born....in the good ol' UK!

Moogs 66B

Cyprus Aircraft - Bob Cownie - 66B

I joined Probus after Sue and I moved to Sheffield, and at one of their meetings the Editor of their Newsletter asked if I would provide an article and include some background information of me of what I did in the REME. This is the article I provided; however, it is a bit long and it was reduced in the final article, feel free to do the same!

I was born in July 1949 in Dundee Scotland, I joined the Army in 1966, initially I wanted to be a Vehicle Mechanic but the results of my selection tests were so good I was encouraged to change my career direction and be an Electronic Engineer specializing in Telecommunications. I had to ask what that entailed and I was informed it meant quicker promotion and a better pay scale, no competition I signed up for 22/9 straight away.

I joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and completed my three-year apprentice at the Army Apprentices College at Arborfield, Berkshire from 1966 to 1969 as an Electronic Engineer and was posted to Cyprus for three years. At that time, I was unaware that my initial posting to Cyprus was to be a lifelong connection and I served there again in the early 1980's and where our family visited numerous times and still do. This is where one of my many adventures took place!

Me and my wife, and our two young two boys arrived in Cyprus in early 1982 where I was to work and live there for two years, working with the Army element in the REME Workshop on the base. Once we had landed at RAF Akrotiri, we were informed that we were now at war with Argentina over the Falkland Isles. We were in an island of sun, sea and sand looking forward to an idyllic two years whilst the Armed forces in the UK were planning a war on islands far, far away that were cold and wet. For some unknown reason we were not affected by this for the first year, however different types of trouble came a lot closer as issues in Lebanon were warming up.

The United Nations (UN) coalition forces comprising of the US, UK, France and Italy decided that they would support forces in the Lebanon, particularly in Beirut in order to keep the warring forces apart. This included forces on the ground and in the air where the Army and RAF facilities on Cyprus became a staging point for a wide range of logistic support for the British contingent and support, if required, to the others. Although this was taking place only forty miles away across the Mediterranean our idyllic life in Cyprus was hardly affected.



Well, that was OK until I was on duty one day as the Orderly Officer, responsible to the Station Commander, to ensure that any incidents were dealt with that might happen on the station during my 24-hour tour of duty. Initially the day was very quiet until early in the evening when I was tasked to go to the airfield Conning Tower as there was an incident that might need my attention. On arrival I was briefed by the RAF Flight Operations Officer that there was the possibility that we would have a visit from an aircraft from the US aircraft carrier the USS Nimitz that was stationed off the coast of Beirut and providing air support for troops on the ground. Why they wanted to land at RAF Akrotiri was unusual, however it would appear that two aircraft on staffing runs towards Beirut from the sea were in trouble. I was eventually informed that two Corsair jet aircraft from the Nimitz, whilst flying low above the waves and turning

towards land one of the aircraft, had clipped the sea and lost half of its right-hand wing! (I knew that aircraft on aircraft carriers had folding wings so that they could be stored easily below deck) The pilots had requested an emergency landing at RAF Akrotiri as it was too dangerous to land on the aircraft carrier. At this point nobody was aware that they had not had time to use their weapons, they had bombs and rockets on board which were all primed and live and were ready for delivery to those on the ground!

My comment was "and what am I meant to do", the answer was quite simple, if it landed OK then nothing as it was an RAF Ops responsibility, however if it crashed then I was required to initiate the crash landing procedure along with the emergency fire and rescue crews and to arrange for recovery of the remnants of the aircraft, including the pilot, as the runway had to be cleared of Foreign Object Debris (FOD) as the runway was required next day as a flight was due in next day from UK!

I was totally shocked as it appeared that until the aircraft arrived all that could be done was to warn the emergency services to be prepared, until I realised that both aircraft were on their way and it was only forty miles from the coast of Lebanon and that the aircraft were capable of flying at 300 miles per hour!



Things happened very fast, the two Corsair's were on their way, one leading the damaged one towards the airport! At this time the three of us, the Ops Officer who had a radio to listen to the Controller talking to the planes, the Station Fire and Rescue Officer and I ran to the beginning of the runway to watch what would happen, ensuring that any action would be going away from us rather than towards us.

The fire and rescue vehicles taking up positions on each side of the runway ready to deal with whatever happened. We could all listen in to both the pilots and the RAF Air Controller and were totally unaware of what could happen, either I was going to have an easy time or a very hectic one for the rest of the day and night.

The two aircraft approached from the sea, the good one leading, they both flew low over the approach to the runway, flew along its length and then climbed slowly up into the sky, the leader peeled off as it circled and followed the damaged aircraft which started its landing approach some distance out, above the orange groves and grape vines that were under their approach.



As the damaged aircraft got closer, we could see the arrestor arm on the plane drop down and the arrestor cables sprang up from the concrete on the runway, ready to catch the aircraft. It dropped onto the runway and the arrestor arm caught onto the cables, immediately the aircraft slowed down and stopped in what seemed to be a very short distance, the aircraft rocked back and forth slightly and came to an abrupt stop, it had landed safely!

The other aircraft flew over the successfully landed one, gave a waggle of its wings in acknowledgement and then shot off out to sea for a short journey towards the USS Nimitz and the end of a safe or not successful mission.

That pilot quickly closed the engine down and as we continued to watch, the cockpit shot open and the pilot leapt out and ran along what was left of the damaged wing, he hit the ground still running and made his way towards us, still running, as we watched in awe. He was shouting something but he was too far away to hear what he was saying, it wasn't until he was a lot closer that we heard that the bombs and the rockets hanging from both wings were still armed.

Whilst this was happening, we could see that all of the fire and rescue vehicles with their flashing lights were making their way quickly to the aircraft from both sides, the Ops Officer talked to them on the radio about what the pilot had told us. All of the vehicles suddenly stopped and reversed backwards to get as far away from the damaged aircraft as they could. Although it looked comical at the time, like something from a comedy sketch, it was very serious, especially if the bombs and rockets went off.

A shaking pilot informed us that having primed his weapons on his run towards Beirut he couldn't fire them once he clipped the sea and lost part of his right-hand wing as fuel was now leaking from the wing fuel tanks and would be ignited once he fired his weapons. On landing he noticed that fuel was still flowing from the remnants of the wing and that was the reason for his quick exit from the plane in order to get away from it as far as he could as soon as possible.

The aircraft now had a large number of airport emergency services looking on in bewilderment and us three watching and trying to determine what to do now, why they all looked at me for instructions was a bit disconcerting, no one was prepared to go near and we all kept our distance.

However the cavalry appeared in the shape of a jolly green giant US Navy helicopter that came from the seaward area and landed a distance away from the aircraft, the rear door dropped down and two navy men dressed in full fire protection kit made their way slowly to the plane, after reaching it they made the weapons safe and let us know using hand signals which thankfully the pilot understood.

At the same time a small tractor and trailer emerged from the helicopter with a number of navy aircraft engineers, they had brought equipment to remove the weapons systems and a replacement wing section to repair the aircraft. Once it was made safe it was towed to a nearby hanger, followed by the tractor with the replacement part of the wing, accompanied by a number of navy aircraft engineers.

What was there to do, we were all stood down except your truly, the pilot was taken to the Officers Mess to be fed and watered and to have a few hours sleep before returning to his aircraft and eventually the carrier. It was now late into the night and the navy engineers, along with some RAF ones, were left to carry out the repairs and I asked to be informed when they were finished so that I could watch them leave in their helicopter and hopefully the pilot would be able to fly his aircraft back to the aircraft carrier, the USS Nimitz. In the meantime I took the opportunity to start writing up my duty officer report, before anything else happened.

I was contacted about 4 o'clock to be informed that the repairs had been satisfactorily completed and that the helicopter and its crew and cargo would be flying back to the USS Nimitz shortly, and that the pilot was on his way to the hanger to check his plane. We met in the hanger just off the runway, the pilot checked his plane with the help of a few RAF engineers and when he was happy it was towed out of the hanger. The pilot thanked us for our assistance climbed into the plane started the engine, taxied to the runway waved us goodbye and flew away. He had a lot more guts than I, he seemed to accept that this was part of regular life in the US Navy.

We all left and made our way back to our duties or homes, I had started to write up my Orderly Officers report but it went on and on, much like this article. I dismounted from my duty later in the morning and as I did I was invited to have coffee with the Station Commander who wanted to know in detail what had happened whilst he slept the night away.

Hope you enjoyed reading this article, one of many I experienced during my 30 years of serving in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) as an engineering officer. I might be persuaded to tell more stories of my experiences if Andy is short of articles in our Newsletter!

Bob Cownie - 66B

Bohunt School Awards Night - Geordie Wright-Rivers 77C

Most of you know that the Bohunt School was built on the Arborfield land that used to be our school/college. Each year we, (The AOBA get an invite to attend their awards evening. This year was no different and our Chairman, Geordie Wright-Rivers and Committee Advisor and long time committee member Bill Cleasby, attended on our behalf.

This is the speech Geordie gave and few photos of award winners are below.

Thank you for honouring us with the opportunity to present prizes and say a few words this evening on behalf of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Arborfield Old Boys' Association. My name is Geordie Wright-Rivers and I'm Chairman of those organisations. With me is Lt Col Bill Cleasby MBE, our Honorary Chairman.

For anyone that may not be aware, this very location was the site of the Army Technical School from 1939 until it closed in 2004. Both Bill and I completed 3 year apprenticeships here and for each of its 65 years existence, this Technical School trained 1000's of apprentices in the STEM subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Following graduation, they would go on to provide the engineering management and technical expertise for the Army's fleets of vehicles, aircraft, electronics, communications and weapons systems.

I'm proud to say that many of those individuals would also go on to achieve great things in industry and public life and we can even boast Olympic Gold Medallists in our number! And from what we have heard of your amazing achievements so far this evening, it is clear that this remains a great seat of learning and a perfect platform from which to take your next steps in life.

Congratulations and good luck in whatever you choose to do in the future.



Bill Cleasby at the Lectern



Vevaan Kotipalli

The winner of this year's The Apprentice Cup, celebrating Resilience, was championed by several different members of staff. One colleague said they are absolutely blown away by their continued determination to attend school and keep on top of their studies, always giving their 100% and engaging fully with their education.

In addition to this they also demonstrate the school ethos of enjoy, respect and achieve in all they do. During their first year in the school, they were successful in being selected to be part of the Student Senior Leader team, a role they have fully embraced.

They have shown wonderful perseverance over multiple terms to attend and participate in school life as fully as possible. It's clear that all colleagues who nominated them all agree that they are a determined young person who can achieve anything they want with their hard work and resilience.

This year's winner of The Apprentice Cup, celebrating Resilience, is Vevaan Kotipalli.

This year's winner of the Bluebell Bowl for Collaboration has shown the profound impact one person can have through teamwork, dedication, and an open mind. In a school filled with talented and hardworking students, this individual has stood out not only for their own achievements but for their support and encouragement of others.

Our winner has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to collaboration, especially in Mandarin, where they've consistently supported classmates, helped organise group activities, and shared resources to make learning more accessible and enjoyable for everyone. Their enthusiasm and dedication have fostered a positive and inclusive environment that inspires others to succeed.

Whether working on group projects, assisting peers with challenging topics, or going out of their way to create a sense of community, this student has set an inspiring example of what it means to work together effectively.

We are proud to honour this year's Bluebell Bowl winner for Collaboration, who truly embodies the spirit of teamwork and mutual respect. Congratulations to Chloe Mabil.



Chloe Mabil



Alfie Breckenridge

This year's winner of the Rowcroft Cup for Innovation has truly risen above a remarkable field of candidates in a school that values creativity and forward-thinking across all subjects. Each student here is encouraged to think outside the box, and this year's winner has not only embraced that opportunity but has become a role model in the process.

Our winner has shown exceptional originality, combining creativity with hard work and maturity. Their unique approach to problem-solving, whether through collaborative projects, independent exploration, or leading by example, has set a standard of excellence for their peers.

The nominating teacher highlighted this student's ability to come up with fresh ideas and innovative techniques, which have not only supported their own success but have inspired those around them. This student's work, whether in academic tasks or co-curricular projects, demonstrates a clear passion for learning and a fearless drive to explore new methods.

Their commitment to innovation, resilience, and leadership makes them an outstanding recipient of this award. We are thrilled to see where their creative journey will lead them next.

This year's winner of the Rowcroft Cup, celebrating Innovation, is Alfie Breckenridge.

Lt Gen Simon Hamilton

Tonight, (16 Jan 2025), I had the honour and pleasure of being at the unveiling of this portrait of Lt Gen Simon Hamilton painted by artist David Bryant.

He's only REME's 4th ever Lt Gen and an ex-Apprentice from 88C.

If you look closely at the painting you'll see the old gates - something he insisted upon to remember where he began his journey.

Well done Sir, we're all very proud of you.

Geordie-Wright Rivers - 77C
AOBA Chairman



Ed's comments: What a remarkable achievement. All of the AOBA are very proud of you, sir.

Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson - 66B

Its been over a year now since I left hospital, went back in again when I fell down and broke my shoulder, and then came back home again more cautious and chastised. Does it seem like a year? You can put money on it. Even with as much positivity as I can muster I still find it difficult to come to terms with my situation. Don't get me wrong, Its not at the forefront of my mind but the feelings get woken up from time to time, mostly when I get frustrated doing something that I know I could do easily if I had all my mobility and functionality. The simple things seem to be the trigger like cutting my finger nails. (This may seem innocuous but I can assure you all that the level of concentration needed is huge). So far I have managed this task without cutting myself. You would be surprised how many things that need two hands to accomplish them. I am finding new ways everyday to get around some of these things. I do drop a lot of things though. Only one glass smashed so far. (That was a shame as it was my gin & tonic glass. Luckily my wife has found an identical replacement.

My physio, still visiting every two weeks and supplied by the NHS (Thank you NHS), continues to provide me with tools with which I can torture myself. The latest device is a wooden box with 3 shapes cut into each side. Inside the box are the corresponding wooden shapes that fit through the holes. Well, if you want to see me frustrated just come around after I have had half an hour on this torture device that masquerades as a child's toy.

What prompted this new device was as a result of the FES electrodes I fit to my hand, wrist, forearm, biceps, triceps and shoulder front and back I am starting to get some movement back in my fingers. The new device is supposed to encourage my brain to connect to my fingers and improve me dexterity. I am convinced that my brain is suffering in other ways from this torture. I really do need five minutes peace and quiet when I am finished.

Back to Salisbury hospital to seem my friends at Odstock on Thursday (27 Feb). This time its just a review of the progress, (or lack of it), on my electrode treatment on my arm and hand. Its a bit of a trek through the New Forest but when the weather is nice it is a lovely drive. We see plenty of ponies, cows and donkeys roaming free. I even saw a white deer a while back. That was a surprise.

Seriously, things are getting better but they seem to take so long to manifest into something that I can see as an improvement. I said to someone recently that to see progress I have to look back in periods of weeks. Day to day improvements are impossible to see.

Over last two days, (March 15th and 16th), we have been back to the hospital in Odstock. They ere running some courses on the FES system and wanted guinea pigs for the students to try their new skills on. On Saturday the 15th I was subjected to 4 teams of students trying out their skills on my leg. That was a tiring day as each team wanted me to walk up an down after each application of the electrodes. On Sunday the 16th I just had to sit while 4 teams tried to make my left arm and hand move the way they wanted it to. Surprisingly, to me, I was just as tired when we got home even though I was sat down the whole time. I suppose I was still using energy the whole time. My arm and shoulder were very stiff too. No complaints from us. We are pleased to give back a little of our time after all they have done for us. They did pay us mileage and gave us a gift certificate for our time so it didn't cost us anything and all the students were very grateful to us giving up our weekend.

The weather is starting to brighten up so I will have to get my electric wheel chair sorted out so I can get out and about. I wonder what the range is, not what it tells you in the brochure but what it will actually do. I need to be careful and not go too far so. I don't want to be stranded with no battery power!

That was interesting.

When I left hospital, the physios mention something they called the negative G treadmill in located in Bournemouth. I have had it on the back burner since then but Sue cajoled me into doing something about it this week. I called on Monday and made an appointment for today, April 2nd.

We got there just after 11.00 and was briefed and dressed up in some rather odd plastic shorts. The shorts were attached to a 'skirt' on the treadmill, with me in them and the machine was switched on. It acts like a hovercraft and fills the 'skirt' with air that takes your weight. I was dialled in to allow the machine to take 60% of my body weight. Then, I started to walk without my stick. There is a camera in front of you so you can see what your feet are doing. This is really useful. The coach I had was talking to me about what to expect and make changes to my body position, gait, speed etc. after an initial 2 minutes she stopped the unit and we reviewed what we had achieved.

Switched back on again after a few minutes rest and off I went again. In all I did just short of 10 minutes.

Getting on and off the unit was a bit tricky as there is a step to negotiate but we managed. Sue was by my side helping all the while.

We have booked up for a few more sessions over the coming weeks.

Today cost us nothing but the subsequent session will be charged. At the end of the day, a small price to pay if I get the benefit. Feeling very tired now and will probably have a snooze shortly.

Another bonus of this good weather is that I have finally got out on my electric wheelchair. I must admit these early, short trips around the village are more about me getting used to the controls. On warp factor 3 I can be a definite liability to anyone within 15 yards. Slow and steady is the key.

TBC.....

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

Continued from OBAN 88

We moved to Saighton Camp on Tuesday 1st October 1957. I was seven and three quarter years old and this was a brand new eleventh place to live with a fifth school to start. Already I was a man of the world, I had already seen lots of "Army Spiders" on my travels, but now we were going to live in one of our very own.

I will explain a little how the Army worked back then. Single soldiers lived in accommodations with very limited privilege. There will be many that remember the "Spider" accommodation it consisted of a main bathroom block with a central enclosed grass area at either end. The other sides of the enclosed grass area were "Utility Rooms" Two long corridors ran down each side of the bathroom block, grass areas and those utility rooms. From each of these long corridors extended outwards were three long barrack rooms. Imagine two capital letters E's placed back to back. The single soldier (privilege by 1957) was that the original pot bellied stoves traditionally used to heat such rooms had gone and they now had a central boiler room that would provide sufficient heating via big cast Iron radiators and ample hot water for the washrooms, as long as the boiler man knew his stuff and wasn't drunk.



Each individual leg of the spider would contain a row of beds and lockers along either side and would have hardwood flooring making up the central aisle. The "Hardwood Floor" was fitted because soldiers wore Hobnailed Boots and it was so designed not to wear out too quickly. Unfortunately for the soldiers living in those accommodations the non technical Regimental Sergeant Majors saw this hardwood floor as an item that could be highly polished with bumper and wax for their own personal gratification. Soldiers therefore did not dare walk on the centreboards wearing hobnail boots.

Staying on track those days for spider 121 had long ended, now in order to keep families housed three of the legs had been partitioned off inside and turned into MSQs, another had been turned into a "Dental Centre" The screams and howls from the dental centre were no match for the noise coming from the three MSQ legs. The middle "Leg" next to our front facing 121/1 leg was occupied by the Haws family. The whole Spider complex was at the bottom end of Saighton Camp in a little used area overlooking farmers' fields and nestled beside rows of Air raid shelters and concrete ammunition bunkers with heavy steel doors, this would make any child's dream of

an adventure playground come true.

Aldford School

School came first; the winter term had already started. Our family in the past had been in and out of Chester a number of times and the school of Hobson's choice this time again it would be in the quite remarkable old building in Aldford a few miles down the road. My older brother Jack had gone there in the past he had now left school, so had sister Beryl.

Aldford School was the nicest school that I ever attended or ever would attend. Miss Yellow the infant teacher the best teacher I could ever wish to meet. I loved it there. I loved the journey on the school bus, I loved my classmates, life was wonderful and even if we missed the bus I recall Peter Walton my sister's boyfriend giving us a lift to school in his Big Truck, civilians could then in fact be useful for some things.

My dad had become the most wonderful guy. He was in his element as the sergeants mess caterer; he had a massive garden between the "Spider Legs" He was in the middle of the countryside surrounded by farmers' fields and he had a bicycle. I had by then gotten quite competent at bicycle riding and almost every evening dad would take me out riding along the paths and side roads through the fields along with my little brother Kenneth sitting on a seat attached to his crossbar. Life was absolutely wonderful.

My older brother Jack had bought himself a new BSA Bantam motorcycle and if I helped him clean it I would get a short pillion ride along the side roads of Chester for payment. We had no car and to be sat at the back of my big brother clutching round his waist on his powerful machine with its 125 two stroke engine was an experience never to be missed. I could look sideward but not forwards because Jack was so big. I recall to this day the beautiful blue smoke from the exhaust and the aroma of exhaust fumes; just don't touch the hot pipe with your bare leg!



I recall him once letting dad have a go on his motorbike, unfortunately dad's clutch control and steering wasn't up to much and within yards he had collided with the side of the spider and fell off, I don't think dad was allowed another go.

One day when my brother Albie was reported as being seriously ill following an epileptic fit at the home he was incarcerated in, Jack came to the rescue and was able to give mum a lift on the back of his bike to see him. We had no telephone or other means of communication. Mum found it was a bit of a false alarm Albie was as strong as an Ox and survived most things.

This is what real life and growing up is all about. Jack had gotten a job at the Chester Railway Station and was training to be a "Fireman" on those big steam engines. He must have been important because he was able to bring home tins of explosives from the station. Those tins resembling small boot polish containers could be placed at some distance down a bank on top of a rock and other rocks thrown at it. Should you be lucky enough to score a direct hit there would be a terrific bang.



Jack was on a career with a future and told us stories of stoking up those big steam engines and roaring down railway lines black smoke billowing out of the funnel. He always came home rather grimy and I now have visions of him also having to clean out the fire compartments on engines that had stopped work for the day. Just as long as we stayed in Saighton Camp and he could commute to the Train Station there was no doubt he had visions of becoming a Train Driver

My sister Beryl was starting to get the "Hang of Life" she had boys flitting round her like Honey Bees. My favourite was Peter Walton. I lost track of how many cats Peter brought to our house but we had plenty. He also had a big truck we sometimes got a lift to school in. Peter was a big strapping farmer's lad and I will leave it at that. Beryl would eventually marry Peter but not this time round.

Beryl had gotten herself a job at the most famous of famous shops in England, probably in Wales Scotland and Ireland too. "Woolworth's" We all had a long association with Woolworth's, it's the first name in retail that springs to my mind when I think of Old GB. The sweet counters were my favourite. At that time, our motto could have been "Try before you Buy" and then forget the buy bit. Did you know if you licked your fingers and put them in the sherbets' compartment even after just a one second "dip and lick" the flavours stayed on your thumb and tongue for hours. Normally after a visit to Woolworth's we all had yellow tongues. Even Dad!

If anyone was hard done by it was Beryl. Even though the older boys were sometimes beat rather severely it was Beryl that had the hardest time. She was being brought up in order to become a married woman of some usefulness around a house. Mum had all the kids to look after and rarely did actual housework herself other than the Laundry and ironing, mum had got used to the years spent in India where as Memsahib she had gotten people running round after her. Beryl would have to fill in the now absence of servants as she was the only young woman around, what did us boys know about housework. I reckon Beryl had other ideas to make her life her own and no one was going to stand in her way.

Beryl certainly knew how to handle the lads and any competition, she had long ginger hair and long nails and woe betide the Angela Hawes girl next door falling out with her.

What about Religion? Dad had been an orphan; I am sure the kind people making sure dad wanted for nothing would have liked to see him give praise in the right direction? I don't know if dad had a religion or just took on mum's faith when they got married. Dad had that wonderful old style writing ability and was an excellent speller, he could also belt out old songs written long before our days and would never be lost in a church congregation. He was from a large family I believe dad was the last born of nine children of which six had died before the 1911 Census and the other two Uncles/Aunties? Surviving at that time we would never get to meet or hear about.

Mum on the other hand had a more religious upbringing, Mum up to the day she died was a Methodist and always attended church whenever someone was christened married or died. Her real interest however was hobgoblins witches and the Ouija-Board. Mum would rather go to Spiritualist Churches and talk among the dead.

Who will remember all those horrendous nursery rhymes as kids? If that didn't frighten us the threat of the Bogie Man if we dared stay out playing after dark did. Stories would be told of a woman being dug up from her grave by grave robbers in a Gorton Cemetery only to re-awaken when the thieves chopped her finger off to steal her wedding ring. Then there were the "God-Honest-True" stories mum would hear from "The Other Side"

I was frightened of the dark, if the truth were known I was frightened of my own shadow. If I went to the loo even though it was by now an indoor event and not some pilgrimage down a backyard at my Gran's house in Gorton in the freezing cold or rain with no lights..... I was terrified of the noise of the clanking of the chain and the water flushing down from the cistern above. I would leave the flushing till the very last second and try to race out before that noise of all the devilment noise/action flushing away the evidence of the event. I would even beg mum to leave the lights on until I fell asleep when I went to bed. To this day late at night I hate the noise of flushing the loo during the witching hours, I still quickly exit the bathroom and jump back into bed.

I myself had a sort of "Blanket Religion" I trusted and believed in "My own God and Saviour" probably more than anything else in the world. My God would save me no matter and "Cover Me from All Evil" I put more faith in my God back as a seven years old than I can ever remember doing since. He kept me safe and never once let me down. Of course I won't be the only one that relied on this "Blanket God" to protect them. Once the blanket was pulled over my head the world could blow up and I would still be safe.

There were certain "Rules of the House" I was coming to understand them even if I didn't like them. Swearing was a definite No-No. In fact it was a criminal offence and there would be no way to escape capital punishment should you accidentally use a swear word. We found ways around it of course by saying things like "Polish-it behind the door" It is still amusing to this day to think of my mum's amazement if you swore! "Where did you learn that word" she would say "Have you been mixing with those bad boys I told you to stay away from" Could there possibly be boys worse than us I wondered. We learned most of the bad language from mum and dad in their all too frequent rows when half the neighbourhood could hear a swear word or three being screamed.



Bedrooms were only for sleeping in, they were not to be entered unless you were going to bed or had been sent to bed. You did nothing else but sleep in a bedroom, even brother Jack who was now a fully qualified railway man and 17 years old would not be allowed the lights on in bed. Our bedroom had up to 4 single beds all boys, Beryl as the only big girl was lucky she could have her own room. Jack had devised a contact breaker which he attached to the top of the bedroom door which would break the circuit for the bedroom light whenever the door was opened. This defeated dad on his inspections making sure we were not breaking the rules. He knew the light was on but no matter how quietly he crept to the bedroom door or how quickly he threw it open, the lights were always out. Ivor later told me dad did eventually find the secret "Heath Robinson" contact breaker after accidentally touching it and getting a 240 volt shock for his troubles.

During 1957 we were mainly strangers to "Fizzy Pop" I think at this time we had the choice of a small bottle of Orange Juice or milk at school during morning break time, at home it was "NATO Standard Tea" (tea with milk and two teaspoons of sugar although NATO had only been formed eight years and the Army hadn't started using that term yet. I had heard dad call it "Piss" now and again when he was bollocking some poor cook in the sergeant's mess.

Mum had invented a concoction that she grew on the "Kitchen Windowsill" in a big clear jar..... she fed it with yeast and it would grow in size each week and she would have to split it in half, it was called a "Ginger Plant" before long I think half the Garrison would have ginger plants. I don't recall the whole procedure only that we acquired hundreds of bottles which would eventually be filled with ginger beer corked up and be stored in a room by the back door. I don't know if it was intentional but our ginger beer would ferment. There was no limit on how much Ginger Beer we could drink; apart from the sugar which dad probably got from his ration store the water used to make it was free. We did have some losses every now and again when one or more bottles in that back room would explode due to the pressure caused by further fermentation. This "Ginger Beer" was the best of the best. So now besides the (real stuff from the NAAFI) Yellow Label Tea which we knew dad sometimes termed Piss. we had Ginger Beer that you could "Get Pissed" on.

Guns were the order of the day and the game was Cowboys and Indians I spent many happy hours with my six-gun shooting at Indians coming over the air raid shelters, we had real air-rifles too. The advantage of having bigger brothers was in that their toys were always more advanced than your own.

Huntington Primary School

My lovely school at Aldford with Miss Yellow as my teacher had closed its doors to me. The only thing I didn't like at Aldford was that the school milk was kept outside, at break time the milk monitors brought it inside and it had to be drunk before we ourselves could go outside. I suppose they didn't want the little glass bottles smashed and abandoned everywhere. My problem was I couldn't possibly drink anything that cold so it took me ages sipping and trying to warm it on the radiators before I could get out. This was much to the annoyance of the milk monitors who couldn't go out themselves until every last empty bottle was accounted for and placed back in its crate.

This was the only race I was “Last In” every other spot of bother I was right up there at the front. Strange that my teacher trusted me to go to the washrooms and wash my mouths out with soap and water if I ever swore in class, I dare say she never wanted to leave the rest of kids who would likely break down in fits of laughter if she went with me. Teachers probably knew Army Kids swore a little.

When I moved to Huntington Primary School my sixth school at almost eight years old I was allowed to cycle the three quarter mile trip there alone on my little red bike. I had previously been used to going to the camp gates with my brothers and catching a bus to Aldford School but now I was an “Independent Traveller” Some days depending on the weather I would walk, once or twice I even forget I had cycled to school and walked back home which resulted in a double trip. Now on my own at Huntington School there was no protection from the family hierarchy anymore, I became proficient at fighting my own battles.

David and Ivor moved to Christleton High School. I hadn’t got a clue what went on there but in later years in Malaya someone told me if you wanted to “Take-on” either of my older brothers in a fight you would be facing both of them as a pair, so I assume they looked after each other. David met his wife to be “Margaret Callear” at Christleton School, though I never remember him bringing Margaret home to our house. I know David had somehow managed to claim his own bedroom something to do with him learning to play the Violin maybe. David told me the violin strings were made of “Catgut” I could well believe it with the sound he produced. One day as comeuppance for David’s elevated status Ivor replaced the Violin in Dave’s violin case with a small toy violin just prior to him cycling the miles to his evening lessons. How we all would have liked to see his face when he opened the violin case and discovered the toy violin!

We always celebrated Guy Fawkes Night very well. Army Camps held massive bonfire displays. On camp no one could steal our firewood, the young soldiers probably assisted with its collection more than we would know. Encased in an Army Camp we didn’t have to worry about softy civilian regulations the Army had its own Fire Detail with hand pulled carts. We normally had fireworks at our disposal weeks before the main event. Ivor had a trick of cutting open a “banger” placing a ball bearing in it then closing it. He would then point it towards a target and light the blue touch paper. During one such operation the target was missed, the ball bearing was lost, but later Ivor found two neat holes burnt through the seam in the crease in his trousers leg.

Another close call was the day Ivor tried to light and throw a huge “Jumping Jack” from our bedroom window; it fell back inside and amid the racket set the curtains on fire. He swore blind that it woke us up and someone must have put it through the window from outside. Brother Jack confirmed this when he pointed to foot marks in the flower border under the bedroom window.

A massive event happened on Friday 11th April 1958 while playing in the fields by “The White Path” The path was a well known landmark dividing one area of MSQ from the Officers Quarters on the other side of the small grassed valley. My brother Ivor came running over to tell me that my granddad in Clay Street Gorton had died. I had never heard before about anyone actually dying for real. I must have contemplated it for all of three seconds before continuing whatever I was doing at the time. It had not the slightest effect on me I was neither upset or could be bothered to ask why or from what; after all my granddad was just an old man.



My Granddad Jack Thompson at
Saighton Camp

Strangely enough his death was an event I would never forget. Granddad appeared back then to have had no more effect on my life than the man on the moon, maybe if it had been grandma that had died it might have been different. Looking back it is quite obvious that those having the greatest influence on the course of your life by being the organizer, breadwinner, and provider often get little credit. It’s a bit late now to say sorry granddad, but I do know where I got my engineering abilities, and the knack of standing back and watch everyone else trying to be the “Cock o the Ball” I also know now where my mum got the bottle to up and travel to India during WW2.

Barnum and Bailey had a canary
Whustled The Cock o the North
It whustled for oors
An frichtened the Boors
An they aa fell intae the Forth

To be continued.....

PLUTO - Arthur Ward 50B

It was 1947 and I was to live in Broadlees, a valley behind the Dover Castle. Its exit to the sea contained the large wooden barracks, still full of troops on the Castle slopes. They were still using this area to practise their infantry tactics. On the opposite slopes were the red built Coast guard houses which are still there today. Close to the cliff foot path which was the quickest way down to the paper shop containing the sweets, when they came off the ration, there were two small guns still mounted above that cliff path to overlook the harbour. Later to be removed.

Inland on the high ground was and still is, the large earth mound of Fort Burgoyne Built 1860 to protect the Castle. It is close to the Deal Road near the Dukies School, Duke of York's Royal Military School, which is where at that time, many of our Arborfield Buglers and Band boy A/T's came from.

Some of the underground rooms of this ancient fort, we did not explore as they were too dangerous because of the water and the dampness to the red brick works on and stairs leading below ground.

What didn't help was, that the Moats were then still full of the gathered barbed wire from the local areas being stored there. Today only some areas of this Fort have been made safe for the Tourist visitors.

In 1947 close to our Cliff path and Inland from its edge was one of the two large PLUTO sites.

I should explain this to mean.

"Pipe Line Under the Ocean."

This first area contained a number of oil fuel tanks still hidden by old camouflage netting.

Their oil fuel pipes were still extended to transfer the fuel down to below the cliffs where it had been used to refuel the area activities and from the 1944 time would have the flexible fuel pipe extended across the channel to France to assist the invasion forces.

These very large high fuel tanks would now lay empty and rusting so that they were a curiosity to us youngsters.

At the ground level, their heavy inspection doors were now open to allowed us to walk around inside. Each one had a fixed iron ladder on the outside making it possible for us to climb to the very top.

Attached to each very high tank from ground level was some type of gauge.

Its top cap had been removed to lay unbolted on the roof area where it looked like a giant mushroom.

Inside of that we noticed what we thought was a sort of floating metal which would move to separate then gather in a silver mass. (Used in barometer thermometers).

At that age we all thought that this was great fun, not knowing just how dangerous this could be if handled. We began tipping small amounts into tobacco tins to explore its uses and soon discovered that one of our experiments might make us rich.

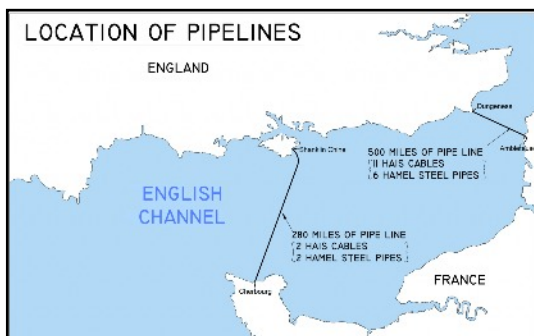
This would be made possible by placing an old 1942 copper penny into it and watching it begin to turn to silver and maybe look like a bright new Half Crown coin. That's 2 and 6 pence in old money, or eight to the pound. One of my friends tried it with a ha'penny hoping to change it into a shilling and another tried six pence just trying to make it look brand new bright and shiny.

We joked that this Quick Silver might work in the sweet shop. Sadly, this was not to be because within a short time, we saw the coins change from silver to be eaten away and looking like gun metal dull. No luck for the forgers.!

In later years, these large fuel tanks were removed along with all the barracks and M.Q. houses at Broadlees to make way for the major road from the cliff top and down to the harbour Cross channel ferry entrance close to the Eastern Arm.

At that time, we did not understand about just how dangerous the handling of Mercury was. A warning to the young.

You may find more official details on "Operation Pluto" on the Internet.



By Original artist is Ashley T. Walker. Drawn in 2009 for Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) VA-132 - The Library of Congress, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57553143>

REME and NDT (Part 1) - Jeff Baker 65C

The background for the vast majority of AOBA and REME personnel is that of being an "Engineer", it's in the name. They will have had a variety of training both practical, technical and educational. They probably have been involved in Lab work carrying out destructive material tests for tensile strength, elasticity, impact strength and hardness etc. They may be far less familiar with NDT (Non-Destructive Testing), although many will have heard about it. What is NDT? As the name implies, it is a group of testing methods which allow the examination of raw material or in service components without affecting their usability.

Way back in 1974 my good friend Tom, who is also a current member of AOBA. Told me what a great time he was having. He was one of the first Air Techs trained at Arborfield being intake 63C, and one of the first Air Techs to carry out NDT while attached to the RAF. When I got the chance to volunteer, I jumped at the opportunity.

Having been accepted for training, I reported to CSDE at RAF Swanton Morley for the start of a 12-week course. We formed a small group consisting of 4/5 RAF Sgts, 2 RN Po's, 2 Overseas airmen and 3 REME Sgt's. All of us aircraft trades with our respective armed forces. Together we would be inducted into the "dark arts" of NDT. Where cracks spoke to you, and invisible defects magically showed their presence. Where cathode tubes and analog meters seemingly acquired a life of their own and where magnetic filings danced to an unheard tune. Such was the effect of this course on me, I was to stay within the bounds of NDT for the rest of my working life. Thank you, TOM.

There are many reasons why formal NDT techniques exist for all aircraft. They can be at the request of component or structure designers, as a possible result of "in service stresses". They can be because of defects found in service. They can be introduced after an aircraft accident investigation, when a particular cause is identified. Lastly, they are introduced to monitor "known" defects that do not affect the aircraft's airworthiness.

Believe it or not. Most large aircraft do have known structural defects. NDT techniques are used to monitor these defects. Either to register "no change", defect propagation (growth rate), or when the acceptable growth limits are exceeded. For the RAF and army aircraft. The techniques were written by CSDE at RAF Swanton Morley, usually with input by the aircraft manufacturer. This is where my mate Tom spent his time on NDT. The teams at CSDE would investigate, develop, test and prove all NDT techniques for use on RAF and army aircraft.

They would then write a detailed procedure for carrying out a specific inspection. Those of us around the world, in the field, would have to comply with the procedure exactly. This produced a consistent result for the inspection, irrespective of the technician doing the work.

What follows is a "Laymans" guide to the different methods of NDT used particularly on Aircraft. It is definitely not a training or a technical document.

Visual – Surface defects.

The most basic of non-destructive inspecting. Both pilots and aircraft techs are doing this carrying out "pre flight" and "after flight" inspections. It is the basis for all inspections of aircraft structure and components. These inspections can be with the "MK 1" eyeball or with the assistance of mirrors and magnifying glasses.

Dye penetrant – Surface defects.

Originally this type of inspection was done with a cold fluid (kerosene) and powdered chalk. We have moved on, but the process is the same. The secret is that the area to be inspected must be scrupulously clean. This applies before starting and after each phase of the inspection. Usually, we used a spray can of red dye and another of white contrast. The process is clean, apply dye liberally, allow appropriate dwell time (Soak), clean, spray developer evenly over test area and wait for results.

The dwell time can be a few minutes or as in one case that we had, 24 hours. It depends on the size and tightness of the crack expected. Cracks would be shown by a thin red line visible in the white contrast coating. This was caused by residual red dye being drawn out of the crack by the contrast coating.

As an alternative to red dye, we had thixotropic dyes which defied gravity, climbing up into overhead cracks. Other dyes could only be seen when the test area was subjected to UV light.

While cleaning the test area after carrying out the test did not affect the results. It would save you from a string of unprintable expletives from the Flt Sgt in charge of the aircraft.

Magnetics – Surface defects.

This can only be used for components that are magnetic, ie Ferrous.

The process relies on being able to introduce a local magnetic field into the test area. The magnetic field created needs to run at right angles to the expected defect. This can be produced either with a permanent magnet or an electromagnet. The process is clean, apply magnetic fluid (a suspension of iron filings), apply magnetic field, view results.

When first applied the iron filings are randomly orientated on the surface. The formation of magnetic flux lines by the applied magnetic field in the test area, usually straight are diverted by a defect. They cannot cross what is effectively an "air gap" in the material. They run along one side of a crack, round the ends and back down the other side before resuming their original straight line. With the application of the magnetic field the iron filings align themselves along these magnetic flux lines. Defects can be seen from both the concentration of filings and their orientation.

Yes, Flt Sgt I know. Clean that mess up.

Eddy Current – Surface defects.

The physics behind how Eddy current inspection works is complex.

It involves AC currents, induced magnetic fields and back EMFs.

The process uses a probe like a fat pencil, an analogue meter and a reference block.

The reference block is made of the same material as that to be tested.

With the probe resting on the reference block, the meter is zeroed. System is balanced.

The probe is moved over the test area, any defect causes an imbalance of the system.

The meter needle moves to a different position. No defect, the needle stays at zero.

Even in my day, the basic idea was being used in far more complex ways.

Look Flt, it's cleaner than when I got here.

Conductivity – Internal composition.

This is a particular variation of the above Eddy current method. We only had 1 inspection using this process (more about this in part 2).

It relies on being able to establish the same fields in the component as above. This time, the resulting meter reading is altered by the chemical and molecular structure of the material.

The process was to set up the test set, apply probe to a reference sample, note the meter reading, apply probe to test component, note meter readings. An acceptable reading from the test area needed to be within a small deviation of the reference reading.

Within the acceptable tolerance level "Pass", outside it "Fail", change the component.

Ultrasonics – Internal and surface defects

Without doubt the most complex, confusing and technical of all NDT techniques. At an extremely "basic" level, you introduce a sound wave into the material. It travels through the material, bounces back from a defect and the "echo" is displayed on an instrument screen. It is similar to sonar used at sea.

The process was smearing the test area with grease, this allowed the sound wave to travel into the component easily. Set up the set and probe using a test block. Position and orientate the probe on the grease in the test area. Slide probe backwards and forwards across the required test area. Defects would be indicated by a discreet peek at a predicted position on the test set screen.

I can hear anybody who has been involved in UT inspection saying, "If only it was that simple" as well as the Flt Sgt saying, "Clean that ### mess up".

Acoustic Emission

This could be considered the oldest form of NDT, if we go back to the early days of steam or indeed bell manufacture. Much like a bell would be tapped with a hammer for tone and defects. For steam, a "Wheel tapper" would walk along the train tapping on each wheel in turn. A clear resonating ding was good, a dull dead dong was bad. We did not have any acoustic emission techniques on our aircraft, although there were some on others. Unlike the audible results above, the modern acoustic emission process uses electronic equipment.

It detects the noise made by defects in materials when under stress. You could say it is listening to the grinding of crack faces against each other although that is probably too simplistic.

No mess Flt.

X-ray – Internal defects and non-visible structure.

This is exactly the same as medical X-rays for broken bones and internal chest organs.

Both systems can be highly dangerous, and great care is needed when using them.

Industrial x-ray sets are more powerful and exposure times much longer than for medical work.

The x-ray head is placed one side of the area to be inspected and the radiographic film on the other.

After the initial exposure, the film is removed for processing.

This is carried out under safe light conditions in a dark room.

A slightly different process is used but it is similar to photo negatives production.

The finished radiograph gives a 2-dimensional picture of a 3D internal structure.

Skill and experience are needed to interpret what you can see. Not just for the presence of a defect but where in the 3D internal structure it is.

No Flt, you don't have to wait for the X-rays to dissipate before you can work on the Ac.

Gamma ray—Internal defects and non-visible structure.

This is an alternative to X-rays but is only used generally for much thicker specimens than normal aircraft structure. It has been used on "in service" engines to look at components such as the flame cans. I never had to use Gamma during my time on REME NDT.

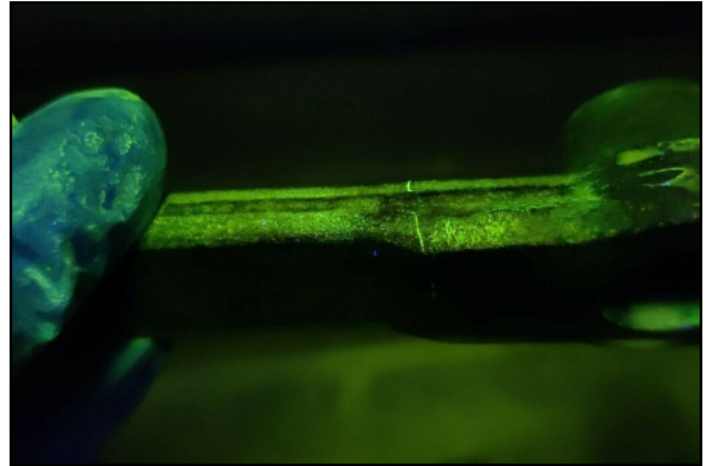
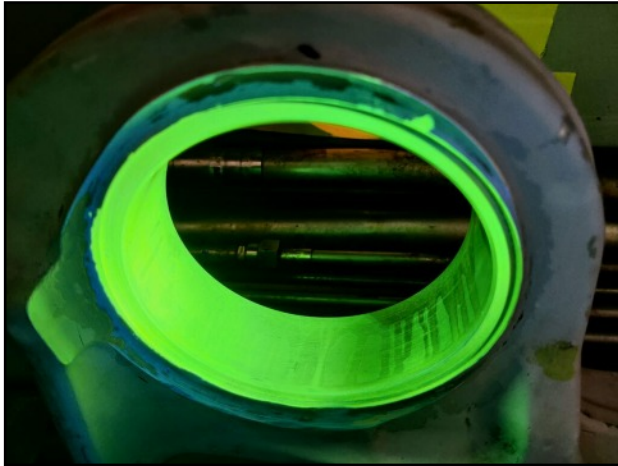
Unlike x-ray equipment, Gamma sources are permanently dangerous. Great care must be taken during storage, transport and particularly in use. There are 3 main radioactive sources used for industrial radiography. The isotope name and max accepted radiography thickness are as shown below.

Ir192	2.5" Steel	Co60	10" Steel	Yb169	0.5" Steel
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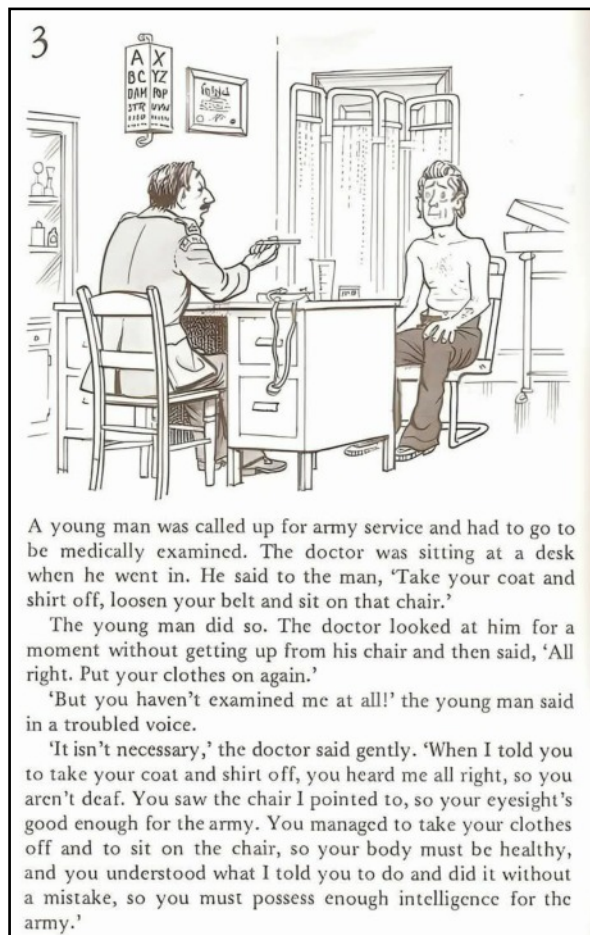
The process of obtaining a Gamma radiography image is essentially the same as X-rays. The resultant radiograph lacks the sharp image of an x-ray one, although Yb169 comes close. Gamma sources are used widely in general engineering. Typical uses, the inspection of raw castings prior to machining and welded joints on pipelines. No Flt. Sgt, we haven't made the aircraft radioactive. Perversely this was the area of NDT, I was involved in until I retired in 2014.

I apologize to those with a deeper knowledge of NDT, if this all seems too simplistic. I also apologize to those NDT technicians who may feel their knowledge, skill and experience is understated. I do know personally how important these traits are in getting good accurate results from all NDT inspections. Finally, it is 45 years since I did any "hands on" NDT. Equipment has moved on; methods have been modified and new inspection methods introduced. If anyone reading this can throw light into current RAF practice or how the army meets, it's need for NDT in 2025. I would love to know. I can be reached via the AOBA website, Contacts and DBO title.

R J Baker - 65C



Photos courtesy of Pierre D Zammit - AIT Malta

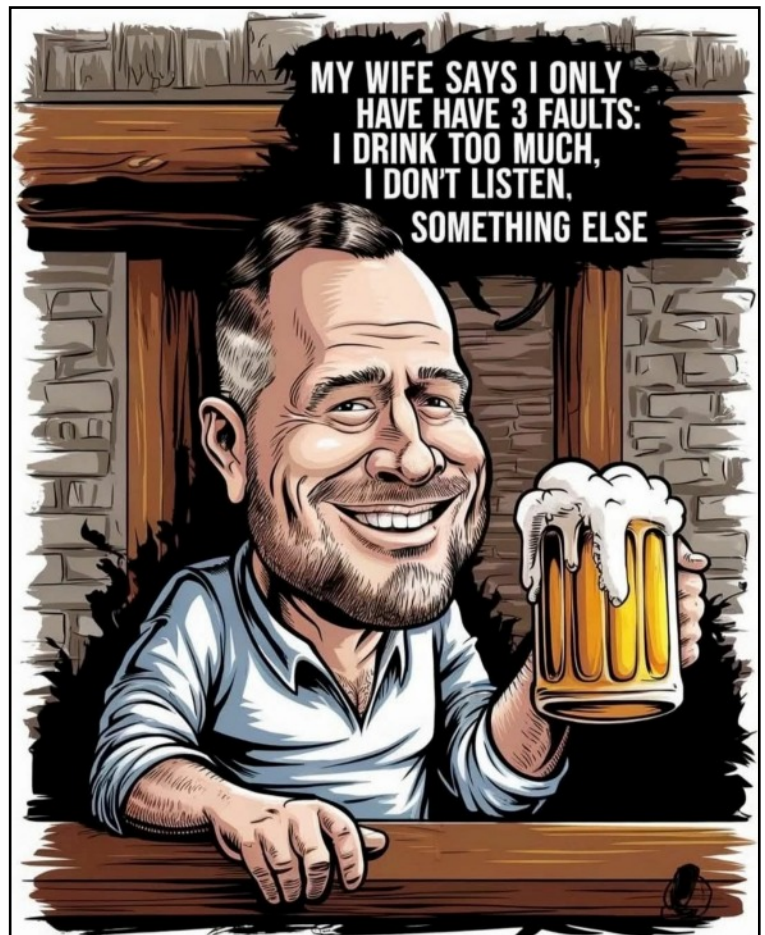


A young man was called up for army service and had to go to be medically examined. The doctor was sitting at a desk when he went in. He said to the man, 'Take your coat and shirt off, loosen your belt and sit on that chair.'

The young man did so. The doctor looked at him for a moment without getting up from his chair and then said, 'All right. Put your clothes on again.'

'But you haven't examined me at all!' the young man said in a troubled voice.

'It isn't necessary,' the doctor said gently. 'When I told you to take your coat and shirt off, you heard me all right, so you aren't deaf. You saw the chair I pointed to, so your eyesight's good enough for the army. You managed to take your clothes off and to sit on the chair, so your body must be healthy, and you understood what I told you to do and did it without a mistake, so you must possess enough intelligence for the army.'



Army Apprentice School Re-Badging Parade 8th October 1966



MEMBERS of "S" Company at the Army Apprentices' College, Arborfield, fixing their new badges at the re-badging ceremony on Saturday. Photo: Studio Carr

Two more important changes took place on 1st September 1966. The School changed its name to the Army Apprentices' College in order to bring it more into line with that of colleges of further education in civilian life, and all apprentices were to wear the REME cap badge. To celebrate the later decision a re-badging ceremony took place on Saturday 8th October.

Eds comments - I remember being on this parade. I was in the rear squad of 'A' company on the parade, (As befitting a Jeep in 2 Div). I must admit I don't remember much of the parade. I still have a full set of AAS buttons and badges. - Andy Dickson 66B (Photo courtesy of Chalky White 66C)



I found this photo in my archive folder. It is also of the re-badging parade. I assume this is Senior company with Colonel Parish. Happy to be corrected if anyone knows differently. I don't know who the senior officer is handing out the REME badges. Andy Dickson 66B

The End of a Remarkable Arborfield Dynasty - Peter Skinner - 68B

In early March 2025, news reached me that my older brother Keith had died after a short fight with cancer. His death closes a chapter in REME and Arborfield history which ought not to go unmarked. Keith was one of four siblings who passed through Arborfield in the years between 1945 and 1952.

Our father was himself a veteran of 28 years' service in Royal Engineers having joined at Dover Castle in 1919. He was demobbed in 1947 in the rank of Captain during which time he had, amongst other things, been responsible for searchlight units in the Portsmouth area at the height of enemy activities in the early part of WWII when invasion was a very real possibility. Later he worked closely with Sir Donald Bailey on the development of the eponymous "Bailey Bridge" at the "Experimental Bridging Establishment" (later to become MEXE in 1946) based in Christchurch. He had married Nell in 1930 and, in fairly short order, four sons arrived to bless the union.

Harry was born in March 1931, Maurice in August 1932 then Keith in August 1935 followed by David in 1937. I arrived much later, in 1952, after my father had remarried, following Nell's untimely death.

Harry became part of Intake 45A and trained as a vehicle mechanic. He stayed on for the full term, reaching the rank of WO1 and leaving the army in about 1970. He died in 2006 having settled in the Reading (Woodley) area. He served, early on in his career, with the occupation forces in Austria, had several postings in Germany and perhaps most memorably served in Thailand where the British Army was (rather clandestinely) engaged in building runways to assist the Americans in the Vietnam conflict. He had married Ellen in 1952(?) and she is now in her 93rd year!

Maurice became a part of Intake 47B and trained as a Tels Tech. He showed early promise and family legend has it was the youngest Staff Sergeant in the REME. I've never been able to verify that. He was stationed in Egypt for some years around the time of the Suez Crisis (1956). Soon after that he left the army and emigrated to Canada where he found work in construction of the "DEWLINE" early-warning system. He returned to the UK in the early 60's but he, and his new wife Claire, found the pull of the Canadian lifestyle too strong and re-emigrated about 1965, never to return. Thereafter he worked in the electronics industry. Contact was always sporadic and was lost altogether during Covid and we assume the worst. If still alive he would be 92.

Keith was in intake 50B training again as a Tels Tech. He was posted to Kenya straight after Arborfield – contriving to arrive in the middle of the "Mau Mau Emergency". I am aware that he stayed there about three years and enjoyed what he called "Python Leave" on his return. This was all his accumulated leave from several years continuous service – a period of several months. Unfortunately (or fortunately perhaps?) he spent most of this stepping in to run the pub our Dad had bought in Hastings, Dad having suffered a heart attack around this time!

From there he spent several years at Woomera in Australia where he was heavily involved in development work on Blue Streak and other Guided Missile Systems. It was in Woomera that he met his wife, Brenda. I treasured, for many years, a real live boomerang which he brought back with him as a present for me! Later he spent many years in Germany (didn't everybody?) and our paths were to cross in 1971 when we both found ourselves stationed in Minden. I had – after a LARGE gap followed the four brothers to Arborfield as part of intake 68B training as a "Aircraft Technician – Airframes and Engines". Keith was at 20(?) Base Workshops and I was on my first posting to the LAD attached to 658 Aviation Squadron. As a young single soldier, I was privileged to sneak out of barracks to enjoy Keith and Brenda's legendary hospitality - and Sunday Lunches! Our paths crossed again in 1973 when we were both in NI. Keith was in Omagh and I was at Ballykelly. Readers will understand that we agreed that we would not try to visit each other, the security situation being a little hairy at the time!

Keith finished his service a WOII and found himself a niche in GEC Defence Systems in Coventry, where his experience was very relevant.

David joined intake 52B and trained as an Instrument Technician – a trade which was, I understand later phased out. I'm not quite sure who looked after things such as rangefinders and binoculars then! David's military career was short lived and after his first posting to Singapore he bought himself out (about 1957 I think). Sadly, he died relatively young in 2012 having settled in the Southampton area

I was very proud to have continued a family tradition even though my own service was lamentably short. That's a story which has been told elsewhere! If any readers have any recollections of any of the Skinner brothers, I'd love to hear about them.....

The Photo below is as far - as I am aware - the only picture of all four "boys" and Dad. It was taken at Harry's wedding in late 1952 (I think). David and Keith are still sporting their "Army Apprentice School" badges and Service Dress, whilst Harry and Maurice have graduated to Battledress – complete with "Shirts, Hair, Purgatory"!

Peter Skinner 68B



Ed's comments: This is a remarkable tale and legacy. I have known Peter since 1968 and this is the first I have heard of all his brothers. I did get introduced to one of them years ago and I have a photo of that somewhere. Thanks Peter for sharing this with us. Andy Dickson 66B

Major D R Prowse REME –7 March 1951-9 June 2024



Dennis grew up on the outskirts of Dartmoor, the eldest of three Brothers. He left school early to attend the Army Apprentice College in Arborfield to become a Telecommunications Technician and was a very proud member of Intake 67B.

His first posting was to 3 QUEENS, which included an operational tour to Belfast at the height of 'The Troubles'. Next, he was posted to

19 Field in Duisburg and played Rugby for the burgeoning Dusseldorf Dragons. Ever one for a challenge Dennis volunteered for P Company and a posting to the Log Regt followed which he loved. Career courses and promotions then led to SEE from where he played Rugby for REME Arborfield, the Corps, Army, Combined Services and Harlequins. In 1979 he broke his ankle which prematurely ended his playing career but began his illustrious coaching career; a highlight of

which was winning the National U20 Cup at Twickenham with Surrey.

On promotion to WO2 in 1981 he was posted to 4 Armoured Workshop in Detmold. After that Dennis was posted to 4 MAG, based in RAF Biggin Hill. Commissioning followed and he was posted to SEE as OC Basic Electronics Wing. Keen to keep up with developments in technology, he enrolled at the Open University to study for a degree. It was off to Germany next, in 1989, to Bielefeld as OC 10 Corps Transport Regiment Workshop. With them he was deployed on Op Granby knowing that it would be curtailed because of a posting to HQNI as SO3 Electronics and OC NIEW.

Just over two years later in spring 1993, he was posted back to Arborfield as SO2 G1/G4 in HQ REME. Next came a posting to the MOD's Procurement Executive in Adastral House, London, working with the RAF on Project ASTOR. Dennis' final Army posting was as Senior Instructor, Land Systems in the newly formed SEAE, Arborfield.

At the end of 1999, Dennis went to work for Logica, an IT services company whom he dealt with when he worked at 4 MAG. His first major project was bidding to win the replacement for BATES contract, which was called FC BISA. His domain then expanded to cover all Battlespace Systems and subsequently Electronic Warfare systems. In 2012 Logica was acquired by CGI, a Canadian company, who sponsor REME Rugby to this day. Trips to Canada were frequent and his team won a support contract for Project SHEPHERD, a tri service EW capability which is still running in 2024.

Throughout his time with CGI, Dennis was a valued member of the Niteworks Partnership Board, an initiative whereby the MoD, alongside industry, could let small packages of work to explore concepts and prototype rapidly. Before Dennis retired from CGI as a Vice President, he developed and implemented a strategy to merge consultancy, STEM, client support and learning services into one business unit.

In retirement Dennis became a member of ATR Pirbright's Independent Advisory Panel. This he undertook with enthusiasm and professionalism. He loved chatting to recruits and staff and was the natural choice to take over as Chair. He also became a school volunteer and was roped into many roles, orienteering helper, trip accompanist, theatre Technician and online lesson producer. Teachers, parents and pupils very much appreciated his contribution to school life.

Dennis was diagnosed with Amyloidosis, a rare incurable heart disease after a surprise episode of VT in early 2022. He is survived by his Wife Gill and two Sons, Ian and Neal. A fitting funeral took place in a packed Pirbright Parish Church with numerous friends and family gathered to pay their respects.

Supplied by the Craftsman Magazine - Scribe Gill Prowse

Dave (Jock) Carse 64A - by Rob Castell 64A



It is with great sadness that I'm reporting the death of Dave (Jock) Carse of 'A' Company, 64A

Dave was one of the first people I met when we joined Arborfield in January '64 and his bed space was next to mine in our barrack room in Jeepland. There were eight of us in there altogether, and our room corporal, John Swarbrick, and room mate Jeff Bendall regularly attend the Reunion. Dave, of course, was immediately nicknamed 'Jock'. Although not very tall he was a tough Scottish lad and I remember he once told me that his nickname at home was 'Wee Reb'.

Because of their youth and inexperience few of the English boys could

understand Dave's strong Scottish accent, but luckily, I had spent the two years before I joined Arborfield in Malta, where my father was stationed, and we were in married quarters in a block of flats along with families from the RHF. So having played with and gone to school with their children I could easily understand Dave. Through this we became great friends as I quite often had to explain to the others what he was saying. This changed of course as the other boys soon became used to his accent.



In December '66, when we all left Arborfield after our apprenticeship had finished, we lost touch, as we all did with a lot of our friends. After managing to trace him in 2014, the 50th anniversary of our joining Arborfield, I invited him to join us at that year's reunion. He told me then that he was in very poor & declining health and as a consequence was unable to travel. I never asked him how this had come about as I thought the question intrusive and he in turn never volunteered the information. We had exchanged Christmas cards since then, usually with short notes on our past year's news. However, the card I received this last Christmas, from his wife Susan, contained a one-line note giving the news of his death. I wrote to Susan giving my condolences and asking for details of Jock's life and career so that I may write this obituary. In turn I've had an email correspondence with his daughter, Heather, and she has kindly given this information on Jock: -

Hi Rob

Thank you for your email.

When he left Arborfield he was posted to Bunde in Germany and was there until 1969, he was then posted to Gibraltar until 1971, from there he went to Munster in Germany until 1974. He was then posted to the Outer Hebrides, where I was born, until he left the army in 1977. He held the rank of Sergeant when he left, my mum cannot remember all the dates of his promotions.

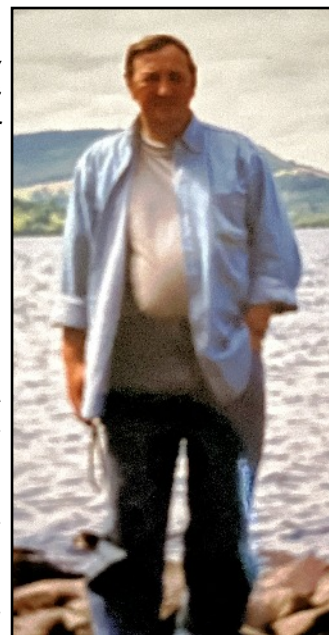
He also held the rank of Sergeant in the T.A and completed his artificer course in 1985, I have attached a photo of him at this course, unfortunately this is the only photo we could find of him in his uniform.

I have attached some other photos of my dad throughout the years if they are any good, again unfortunately we do not have that many of them as my dad was always the photographer. He had various jobs when he left the army including foreman/mechanic in garages, recovery company then YTS instructor teaching motor mechanics. it was during this time that he had an accident and hurt his back and was unfortunately unable to work again, this then led to various other health issues and gradually his health deteriorated. He was also involved in various roles within the High School, such as chairperson of the P.T.A and vice-chairperson of the school board.

My dad was a keen fisherman and was a member of a fishing club and enjoyed fly tying and teaching others to do it. Before his accident he was also heavily involved with the T.A.

Unfortunately, in July 2023 my dad was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and sadly passed away at home on 5th January 2024 aged 76.

We would be honoured to accept the commemorative scroll.



RiP Wee Reb, God bless, AeM

Rob Castell

Arboretum Old Boys' Association

