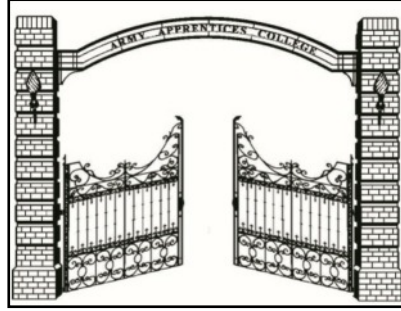
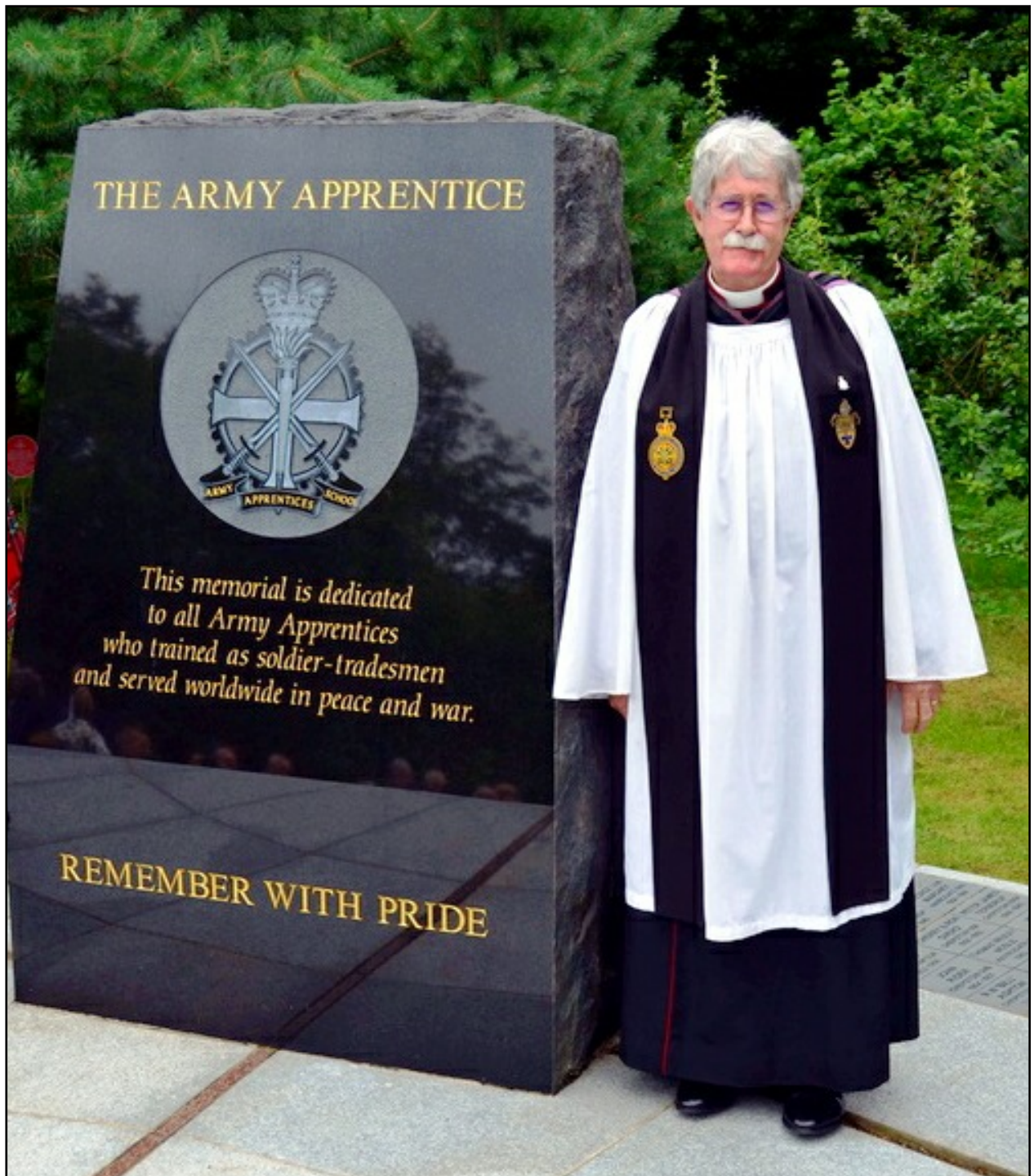


**Jul
2025**



**Issue
91**

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

Vacant

Remembrance Officer

Ian Scurr (68A)

Cenotaph Officer

Steve Thornes (77C)

General Secretary

Nigel Canning (77C)

Vice Chairman

Mike Tizard
CEng, FIET, (76B2)

Webmaster

Zeb Mansfield (77C)

Data Protection Officer

Jeff Baker (65C)

Membership Officer

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: Rev Bev

Rear Cover: Rev Bev

Members Passed since OBAN 90

NAME	INTAKE	DOD	INFORMANT
Ray Hurley	47C	N/K	Facebook
Mark Lowry	75B	N/K	Facebook
Lewis Dickinson	45B	N/K	
Richard Ivel	90B	N/K	Kris Murphy
Clive Wagstaff	65C	N/K	
Phillip Kay		N/K	Commandant 88-91
DW Sutherland	42B	N/K	
Fred Mills	52B	27-Mar-25	Dave Mills
Barry Wolstencroft MBE	59A	N/K	
Ken Stephen	76A	23-Apr-25	Gordon Stephen
Phil Dale	76C	N/K	
Reverend Bev H John	66A	N/K	Andy Dickson
Glen Hamilton	89C	N/K	Keith Davies
Keith Skinner	50B	03-Mar-25	Peter Skinner
Mike Shepherd	65C	01-Feb-25	Dave Cosway

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 Officer	Robert Cassidy	At AGM	Appointed Feb 2023
OBAN Editor	Andy Dickson	At AGM	Appointed Sep 2016
Webmaster	Zeb Mansfield	At AGM	Appointed 21st June 2025
Data Protection Officer	Jeff Baker	At AGM	Appointed Jul 2022
Recruiting Officer	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
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. Thanks to Zeb Mansfield for stepping up to fill this role. Thanks to Mark Jobes for all your efforts. The website is a better place because of you.

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



Hi All,

I write following a simply spectacular weekend at the Holiday Inn in Birmingham at this year's AOBA reunion. My concerns regarding another new venue were unfounded and the whole event was delivered quite superbly by the team from Isle of Wight Tours and the hotel's home team.

Friday night's buffet was delicious with a few variations on the normal curry theme with pasta and cottage pie being added and very well received by all. Saturday's visit to the NMA saw in excess of 100 old boys forming up on parade in front of a similar number of seated onlookers. The drill spectacle which rivalled Trooping of the Colour, was ably commanded and administered by Ex-AT RSM Gary 'Mitch' Mitchell (75C) while Tim Marsden accompanied Col REME for the inspection and on the dais taking the salute (no rain this year!).

The Drumhead Service at the Apprentice Memorial followed where we bade farewell to those 45 old boys who departed for their final postings over the last year. Unfortunately, Rev Gary couldn't make it as he took a nasty fall a couple of days before and was rushed to hospital with a punctured lung – we all wish him well in his recovery. Back to the hotel shortly afterwards and after a spirited AGM we dispersed to prepare for the Gala Dinner. The 75ers turned out en masse, filling 6 of the 21 tables, and in all 209 of us were treated to a wonderful meal accompanied by our very own Pipes and Drums of TAAPAD. During the evening, we received a Corps update from Col REME and ex-Apprentice Maj Gen (Retd) Darren Crook CBE (87A) reflected on what being an ex-Apprentice means to him. John Griffiths (75C) stole the show however, with a wonderful speech, on behalf of the 75ers, which resonated with everyone in attendance.

Feedback on the event and the venue has been very positive and we have been able to secure an excellent deal for the next 2 years - dates for your diaries:

Where: Conference Hotel: Holiday Inn Birmingham M6, Junction 7

When: Fri 12 – Sun 14 June 2026 (76ers) and Fri 11 – Sun 13 June 2027 (77ers)

If you haven't been to a reunion before then please consider giving it a go – I'm confident you won't be disappointed! 66ers are promising to arrive in force in 2026 and outnumber the 76ers!

As you are all aware, our Arborfield Old Boys' Association cannot survive without the committee who I once again thank for the time and effort they give of freely throughout the year. Sadly though, we must say farewell to Mark Jobes and Bruce Leslie whose tenures have long since expired and they move on. Zeb Mansfield has kindly volunteered to replace Mark as the Webmaster and now wishes to be known as 'Zeb the Web' but we are still actively seeking a replacement for Bruce as Recruitment Member – volunteers for this or any of the committee posts are very welcome! And talking of thanking our committee, Jeff Baker, our GDPR Officer, was unanimously voted as this year's winner of the Sancto Award – well done Jeff and thank you for your hard work keeping us compliant.

Have a great summer folks and please keep recruiting - the more the merrier!

Arte et Marte,

Geordie Wright-Rivers 77C

Chair - Arborfield Old Boys Association



Secretary's Report



Summer Greetings (Lowena an Hav) from Cornwall.

I'm encouraged to see the social media reports after a very successful reunion. I know that Geordie and the Isle of Wight team were extremely busy sorting out all the issues, seen and unseen and ensuring that it was a fabulous event.

You will have heard by now that the dates and venue are fixed for 2026 and 2027 so with a healthy dose of semper flexus in mind let us hope so.

I am writing this on my return from Clydach near Swansea where myself and four others; Egon Taska, David Cosway, Tony Moogan and Don McCulloch said a sad farewell to our de facto padre The Reverend Canon Beverley Hayes John, more easily named as Rev Bev. It was a wonderful (if that's the right word) and emotional service commemorating the life of an extraordinary man.

I helped him arrange our drumhead services for a couple of years when we moved to the NMA and enjoyed his company and wise counsel.

I confess I did not know his backstory though which, as the eulogy went on left me very contemplative about what might (or might not) be said at mine. What impact, hopefully positive will I have left? What would my legacy be? Even as we said goodbye, Bev has left his legacy to me. Meur ras Bev.

Wishing you all a peaceful and reflective summer.

Nigel Canning 77C

Recruitment Officers Report



A full report on the 2025 reunion written by Bruce and his Div mates is on pages 10, 11 & 12.

Thanks Bruce. An excellent report.

Bruce Leslie - 75C



Webmaster Report



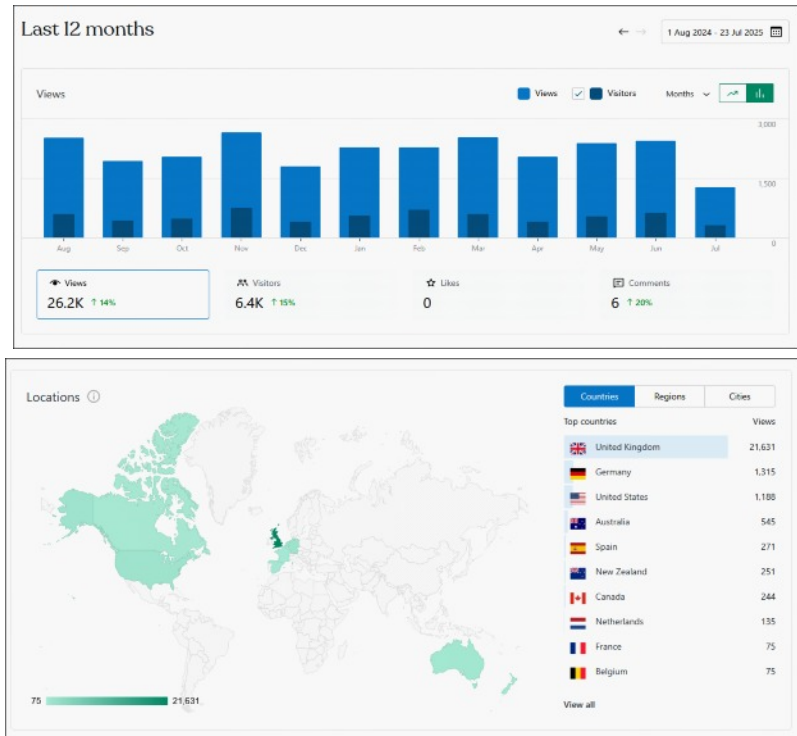
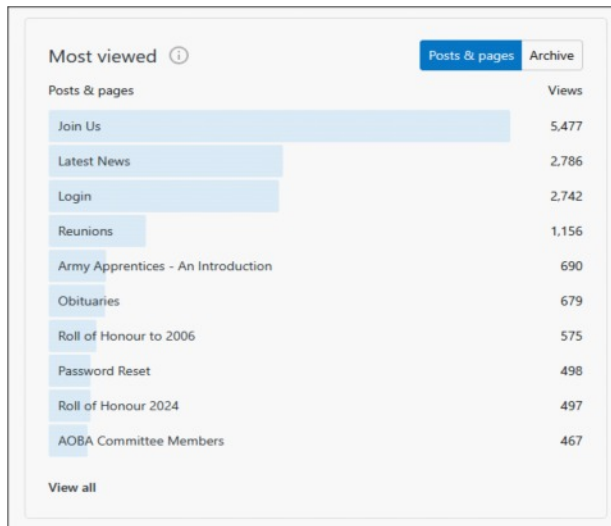
Hello, All.

A new webmaster will be taking over towards the end of this year. Please support him as much as you have supported me over my tenure.

There are no current known issues with the website.

A few Stats:

Best regards,



Membership Secretary's Report



Greetings.

For the AGM I was pleased to report that the AOBA Membership had increased over the previous 12 Months. Good news indeed given that we are, sadly, an aging population and no new apprentices since 2004, over 20 years ago!

If you are a member, young or old'ish, and you enjoy what the association does, why don't you encourage them to join. Let them know that it is fair to say it is not a major outlay to join and it will give them a peek into the past during what would have been their formative years and also a look at what ex apprentices are doing today. A warm welcome awaits.

As for me this is a quiet period helping out with new membership. There is always a flurry of activity during the winter months and leading up to the AGM. Mainly owing to the fantastic work of the Recruitment Officer to get the 50-year anniversary intake celebrating at the AGM. For those who did not pass their GEC maths, that was 1975 this year. And for those of a certain age who cannot even remember their GEC maths next year will be 1976!!!! So where did all that time go?

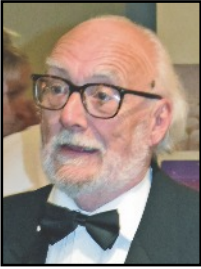
Sadly, my intake is not very well represented in the association and I have to admit I did not keep in touch with any of my ex-apprentices. Maybe not many did as once our time was over at the college, we were posted to the four points of the compass, invariably seconded to larger corps or regiments in small groups of maintenance teams.

Well, that's it from me this time round. Have a great Summer and I think, in this time of drought, it is appropriate to advise that you should save water.....Bath with a Friend. Or perhaps, don't bath at all. Not sure which is the most palatable???

Cheers.

Bob Cassidy 65B

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report



Hello, to all members.

If you had been at the last AGM, you would have heard me say:

This is the boring part of my report:

As DBO/DPO I expect and hope to have nothing to report. Everything is up to date and functioning correctly. That's great. If I had anything interesting to say, AOBA would probably be in serious trouble.

Our OBAN editor pre plans space for our reports in his editorial layouts.

I have to fill that space and try to make it interesting.

As I did at the AGM, I want to fill the void talking about a small book. Purchased from the REME museum shop during a recent visit. (£2, I think)

It is a reprint of an original booklet printed in APRIL 1940. Titled "Joining up- A handy guide for every recruit".

It reflects both the time and world situation that existed. I'm sure it's comforting content was 6d well spent by recruits. They would have been much relieved to know. They could still get their copy of the "Daily Mail" printed in Paris. Everywhere behind the front lines.

Personal information supplied at "registration" would be noted.

A recognised principle is that men shall go to the branch of service they choose whenever possible; but service needs etc. Musketry is the jolliest course in the army.

It is safe to say that the bully has been eliminated from the modern 1940 army.

In April 1940 your starting pay as a private III class would be 2s and 3d per day (11np).

With time and perseverance, you could achieve the following high rates of pay.

WO 1 tradesman – 14s per day (70np) WO 1 RSM -12s per day (60np).

I would recommend anyone going to the REME museum buy a copy. It's style and purpose will bring a smile to your face as well as an historical insight.

Having read it, I have one question. Where was this army when I joined in 1965??

Jeff Baker 65C
DBO/DPO

Treasurer's Report



Hello, Fellow Members.

As of today 23 July 25, the accounts stand as follows:

Current Account: £ 5,600

Business account: £37,000

After the reunion I transferred £12,000 from the business account to the current account but that was wiped out by the Reunion costs of £9,865 and the two annual charity donations of £1,000 each.

The next major expenditure will be the newest edition of OBAN which will cost about £3,200 to print and distribute and the following edition will mean more funding transferred from the business account.

You will all be aware that the annual subscriptions are due to increase to £25 as of Jan 26 and we will provide information on what needs to be done prior to that date.

I urge members to switch to the digital version of OBAN which will help us reduce costs. You can do this by letting the editor know your preference. Andy can be contacted at AndyD@arborfield.onmicrosoft.com.

Finally and as usual, a new Treasurer is required. Please step forward if this is of interest to you.

Bob McKeegan-Brown - 69A

OBAN Editors Report



Hello, Gents.

By all accounts I missed an excellent reunion. I have had verbal reports from a few 66ers who said it was one of the best yet, barring our 50th of course.

It was so good that Geordie and IOW tours have booked up for the next two years at the same location at the same venue. You need to make a note of these dates:

- Friday June 12th to Sunday June 14th 2026 (76ers 50th)
- Friday June 11th to Sunday June 13th 2027 (77ers 50th)

I expect a large contingent from the 66ers who will be celebrating their 66th anniversary too.

Attention will be paid and given to the physically challenged of us to get a ground floor room and I suspect this will be on the booking form when it is released.

Another major issue this week. Back in January I got a visitor from Wessex Internet who were selling fibre optic connections. Sounds like a good idea I thought. It will be all installed before the end of March they said. March came and went and April and May. We finally got it installed in June. All this time I was paying out of contract costs to Sky. Wessex came to the party and waived the first 2 months of their charges.

When the installer did his work he put the router somewhere I didn't want it. He explained that the WiFi would easily cover the property from its location. Everything was connected and seemed to be working, although a bit slower. Then on Saturday afternoon I had no Internet connection so I called the help line and was told they couldn't do anything until Monday. No amount of coaxing on my behalf would get them to budge.

By this time, with slow speeds, incorrect installation and now no service I decided to cancel. I talked to Sky and got my costs reduced and assumed we were all done. On Tuesday our broadband dropped out again. Sky told me that Wessex had taken my phone number, even though I had cancelled the contract. Effectively, I now had no Sky connection or contract and no Wessex fibre connection and no land line. Sky said they could reconnect me but with a new phone number, and it would take two weeks. Wessex were equally unhelpful and said reversing the 'porting' would take some time.

So here I am two weeks with no Internet access. On top of it all Sky are sending me a new router, (Nothing wrong with the old one), which arrives tomorrow and hopefully we will be connected again on the 16th. (Internet was back on as promised. Life returns to normal).

I am not sure I have learned any lessons in all of this. My 'happy pills' certainly earned their keep this week. It is amazing how much you rely on the Internet these days. TV, computer, iPad's, iPhones etc. Luckily, I can still work on OBAN off-line.

I got this on e-mail from Rob Castell - 64A:

At the drumhead service at this year's reunion crosses were placed on the Apprentice Memorial in memory of all those we have recently lost, and their names were then read out.

Among them was Jock Carse, whose obituary was in the last edition of OBAN. I took the cross and, along with the Order of Service, posted it to Jock's widow, Susan.

This is the reply I received from his daughter, Heather.

Hi Rob

Thank you very much for commemorating my dad and for his obituary, he would have really appreciated it.

My mum received the cross and order of service in the post today. On behalf of my mum and myself we would like to thank you for all your kindness and the commemoration of my dad, we would like to place the cross at his graveside.

My dad would have been very humbled by all your support, he was a very private man and don't think he really knew how important he was to a lot of people.

Thank you again

Kind regards

Heather

It is nice to see actions taken by an AOBA member, (Thanks Rob Castell), have such a positive result. I also had a nice message from Sher John, (Wife of Rev Bev), regarding the scroll sent to her by Ian Scurr and the support given to her and particularly Egon Taska who read the College Collect at the funeral. Thanks also to Nigel Canning, Egon Taska, Don McCulloch, Dave Cosway and Tony Moogan, who all made the long trek to Clydach near Swansea.

Andy Dickson 66B

Editor of the Association Newsletter

75ers 50th Anniversary AOBA Reunion

Introduction - Bruce Leslie 75C



During our 40th and 45th anniversary reunions in 2015 and 2020 much was discussed re our 50th anniversary celebrations. At an early stage we decided to piggyback onto the AOBA reunion in 2025, and what a fantastic weekend it proved to be. The 75ers who we approached to take on the three major roles of Parade RSM, Reviewing Officer and After Dinner Speaker all stepped up to the mark and did us all proud. In addition, a few 75ers also worked quietly behind the scenes to ensure that as many 75ers as possible attended the event, in the end we managed to have 58 75ers and their ladies sitting down to dinner on Saturday evening, a credit to the hard work put in by Phil Bex 75C and his small team of helpers. The remainder of this article has been created by numerous 75ers, whose names have been included.

Parade RSM - Garry Mitchell 75C



On Sat 21 Jun 25, I had the honour of commanding the AOBA reunion parade, held at the National Memorial Arboretum. In March I received a message from Phil Bex (75C) saying that as it was our 50th anniversary our intake had been asked to supply 3 key personnel for the reunion, one being the parade commander; would I mind doing it?

Memories of being the AT RSM and commanding the April 1978 POP came flooding back so I jumped at the chance and said, "yes". Almost immediately I purchased a drill cane, "thinking I may as well go the whole hog and look the part": I was expecting a lot of p**s taking about it, but remarkably I didn't hear any - very strange. The next move was to track down a drill manual online and revise all the possible words of command and more importantly which foot they should be given on. Unlike the college POP, where it was numerous briefings by the RSM, a script stretching to 20 or so pages and multiple practices on the square: 5 minutes before the off, Geordie Wright-Rivers said, "March them up to the Dias, put them in open order and follow the reviewing officer round during the inspection. This was followed by the Pipe Major saying, keep the pace down, we've got a few old guys. The old adage Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS) was definitely the order of the day.

Plan A was 75C in the first platoon, every one else in the 2nd, that quickly changed to 75C in the Front rank of one Company. Then we were off; Right Turn, Right Wheel and down the road to the Dias. For a bunch of REME veterans with an average age well over 70, it was impressive; the years of drill at the college, honed under the watchful eye of the Guards Division Sergeant Majors was well and truly ingrained and came flooding back to all those on parade. For that short period, it felt like we were all living as our 18 year old selves, straight backs, heads held high, heels digging in, arms swinging and with that hint of "Swagger". Every man on parade had shared



the experience of the college POP, with drill as complex as the trooping of the colour, and it showed. There may not have been the familiar tossing of hats at the end but the sense of pride was overwhelming. Despite being a member for many years, this was my first experience of the AOBA, mainly because the dates always clashed with work; professional swim coaches get 2 weeks off in August, if they're lucky, most of my weekends are spent as 20 hours in hot, humid swimming pools. This year, as it was our 50th anniversary, work came 2nd. I would whole heartedly recommend all AOBA to attend, the organisation is excellent, there was the right balance of activities and downtime. It's the perfect opportunity to renew old friendships,

spend time with people who have a shared experience. The Dinner on the Saturday night was perfect, formally dressed but a relaxed atmosphere, with like minded people.

Reviewing Officer - Tim Marsden 75B

It was great honour to be asked to represent the '75ers' as their reviewing officer alongside the Corps Colonel, Colonel Iain Wallace OBE ADC (ex 'crunchie' and radar tech but we won't hold that against him) at our 50th Anniversary, part of the 2025 AOBA Reunion. The chance to reacquaint with so many old classmates (noting I had been hiding in NZ for 27 years) made for a fantastic day. In particular it was great to see Roly Langer, Gary Mitchell, Bruce Leslie, Soop Cooper and Richard Betts. It was also a time to reflect and remember those of our classmates who had passed over the years. Overall, the members of 75a, 75b and 75c on parade showed they had lost none of their Saturday Drill Parade prowess and along with other old boys put on a great show. Again it was both humbling and a great honour to be part of parade.

Kim Walker – Including comments from Debbie Bex, Elaine Thomas & Caroline DwyerSeddon - On behalf of the 75ers' Ladies

This was only our 2nd time of attending the AOBA annual re-union and even though it was such a special occasion for the intake of 75C which is my husbands, I can honestly say I felt welcomed and included by everyone throughout the whole weekend. From the time we arrived at the hotel until it was time to say farewell before embarking on our homeward journeys.

The hotel perfectly suited the requirements needed for the numbers that attended, plenty of seating areas both inside and out. The food from breakfast to bar snacks for lunch etc and the Gala meal was enjoyable and plentiful and they catered for everyone even the fussy eaters (myself). The rooms very comfortable, although did hear a few did have issues but where possible were resolved immediately.



The weather was on our side as well, mild heat wave which made it a pleasant time chatting outside on the patio area whilst having a few drinks, meeting new friends I made last year and making even more. I didn't feel uncomfortable at all, quite the opposite, we all had something in common. *It was also nice to see the men catch up with old acquaintances and reminisce over their Army days together.*

Saturday morning was the usual visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, this is optional and not everyone goes along. We chose to drive ourselves this year instead of going on the coach provided. Must admit I shamed hubby into marching, if you could call it that, its not as formal as some might think. Just a smart walk in formation, again only if you wanted to. For some it's a proud moment being beside those who joined up at the same time and some who served together must be an immense pleasure. Us ladies watched, took photo's/videos, chatted and enjoyed seeing the happiness on our partners faces. Then again if you wanted to it's a walk over to the AOBA Memorial where they hold a short service. There's also café at the Arboretum for lunch afterwards or you can just do your own thing, we took a short walk around, it's an incredible place to visit.

Back to the hotel, time to get ready for the Gala Dinner. It does sound grand and it is in its own right. A Three Course Meal, a bit like in the mess but without the pomp and circumstance. Yes there's a kind of top table and yes a dress code, Smart! There were long evening dresses, cocktail dresses, skirts and blouses and trousers and tops. I wore long, it was lovely to dress up, I don't get the chance to nowadays and I must admit I do like to feel special occasionally. It's also lovely to see the guys dressed smart, by this I mean even the guy with Chino's, shirt and waistcoat looked really smart, not everyone owns or wants to wear a dinner jacket. Yes there were the usual toasts with the port by tradition being passed but must admit even that touched the table! Everyone could come and go as they pleased, comfort breaks weren't an issue, mind you we're not getting any younger and some need more than others. The whole room was buzzing, wherever you looked everyone was chatting. The speeches were interesting, funny and informative. There just wasn't a dull moment throughout the whole evening. The chat continued into the bar after the meal even when it started thinning out as people were retiring after such a lovely sociable weekend of events.

If there's anyone reading this who's thinking its all about being back in the Mess, and having to wear a dinner jacket, being inspected to make sure your trousers and shirts are pressed and your shoes bulled to within an inch of their life and the wife of having to do as she's told and behave! Well think again, it's a sociable weekend with like minded people in comfortable surroundings, and if you don't want to do something you don't have to.

People travel for miles to attend these reunions, the Midlands is the most central place for the UK, we have families who have settled in Germany and further afield who regularly attend. It must be enjoyable otherwise they wouldn't make such a long journey.

We would all like to extend our thanks to the IOW Tours and *special thanks to the committee, for all their hard work and dedication.*

I've already put next years date in my diary and am really looking forward to attending, although I don't think I'll be wearing a long dress next year if it's as hot as it was this year.

I have added some comments from other ladies who also attended and have given their permission to use them, these are highlighted in *italics*.

Looking forward to seeing all the old acquaintances and making many more new ones at the next event on 12th-14th June 2026.

Just one thing left and that was to celebrate the birthday of one of 75Cers invited guest, Laura Ellis, the partner of Graham Horne (75C). Geordie wishing her a happy birthday on behalf of all those present and a birthday cake being bought to her table

Graham Horne 75C – Remembrance Table



..... As part of the activities on the Saturday evening, a “Remembrance Table” was set to honour absent friends.

The table consisted of a photograph of all of those brothers from 1975ers that, sadly are no longer with us. Three mirrors etched with the gates and 75A, 75B and 75C to represent the intakes of 1975. A place setting and a glass of port in an engraved glass purchased especially for the occasion.

During the after-dinner speech from John Griffiths (75C), a toast was made to absent friends. Graham Horne (75C) had the honour of accepting the toast on behalf of the fallen and to raise said glass of port in reply to the toast. A very solemn moment in an otherwise joyous evening.



Final Words – Bruce Leslie

The general feedback from the 75ers was that the weekend was a huge success, yes, there were a few points that have been fed back to the committee, but these were relatively minor and the IOW Tours Team are already working on solutions ready for the 2026 event.

As I have mentioned on social media, for me the 2025 AOBA Reunion was the best that I have attended, I may be biased, but from start to finish it was a polished performance and I look forward to many of the 75ers and their ladies attending the 2026 AOBA Weekend.

Bruce Leslie and others

The Frame - Courtesy of Chalky White - 66C

Andy,

Bev told me the following...

When in Jeepland Feb '66 his Squad Drill Sgt came into their room and asked "Who likes music?" a few of us put up our hand and the Drill Sgt said "Right you four, we've got to shift a piano to the Officers Mess!"

Also the photo here is a photo of Bev's photo that I took when visiting him once at his home at that time near Swansea (if I recall correctly)



The Frame:

left to right - Dave Mercer, Gerry Casey (drums), Bev John, John Steer

Courtesy of Rev Bev - photocopy of a photograph]

The Frame, covering many of the hits of the 60's playing every Wednesday at the NAAFI & WRVS, and in/around Arborfield. Gerry wanted to name the band, and he was serious, "Doctor Foster's East Cheltenham Water Cooperation Band". He was out voted...

[Above text courtesy of Rev Bev]

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/>

Op Crown - John Swarbrick - 62A

Continued from OBAN 89

Situation and Security. My tour at Crown was from April to October 1966. At that time the Vietnam war was in full swing. Crown was situated close to the Mekong River which is the border with Laos, and Laos was only about 100 miles wide at that point sandwiched between Thailand and Vietnam, so as the crow flies, Crown was only about 130 miles from the DMZ (demilitarised zone) in Vietnam. There were several facilities in Thailand being used by the US to prosecute that war, not least two air bases at Ubon and Korat. It was not unusual to see flights of F4 Phantoms flying toward North Vietnam. More than once, we would see four going out and three coming back, and high above the vapour trails of other aircraft (B52's ?) could often be seen. It was rumoured that Crown was used as a 'waypoint,' for them but I doubt that. The RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) had a squadron of F86 Sabres based at Ubon. As far as I know they were not directly involved in the Vietnam war but used to patrol the Thai borders. They had an infuriating habit of flying at tree top height over the camp early on a Sunday morning, waking all and sundry from their alcoholic merriment of the night before.

Personal weapons were not issued, although some were kept in the guardroom, part of the diplomatic niceties. In 1966 however, terrorist activity in NE Thailand increased with Pathet Lao infiltrating to spread the furtherance of communist influence. It was not deemed politically correct that British troops could defend themselves should the base be attacked, so a detachment of Royal Thai Air Force guards (equivalent to our RAF Regiment) were stationed on the camp, and were armed by us, with shot guns! One of the REME VM Sgts, a gentleman of advancing years and known to all as 'Gramps' was the proud owner of a Mauser P08 pistol, more commonly known as a Luger. He arranged for a 'shoot', and being interested in anything ballistic I went along with a couple of other lads. We found a safe area and erected a target. Shooting commenced. The weapon was a joy to fire, but would fall apart after three rounds, no doubt due to using modern 9mm ammunition. A Thai guard appeared attracted by the sound of gunfire. He couldn't speak any English and we couldn't speak any Thai, but he rightly assumed this was a bit of fun and raised his shotgun. "No Thai guard, no Thai guard," shouted Gramps waving his arms. Too late. Boom, and our target disintegrated. Thai guard wandered off grinning, and not at all concerned as to how he would have to account for the use of one cartridge!

A vehicle road test was an excuse to get out of the camp. We used to leave the camp and travel about five miles north up Route 212 towards Mukdahan. There we would stop at a roadside shop and buy a cold drink. On one occasion we arrived to find a company of Thai infantry dug in. It was quite bizarre, us drinking our orange pop dressed in OG (olive green) shirt and shorts with floppy hat, of course, and Thai soldiers all 'tooled up' and looking at us with envy! I assume they were on some kind of exercise, as if there had been a real threat we would have been forewarned, wouldn't we?

The Convoy. During my tour I was assigned to the heavy 'B' vehicle section, which amongst other things meant looking after 20-ton Scammell Constructor vehicles (a tractor unit with arctic low loader). From time to time, it was necessary to travel to Bangkok docks to collect plant and stores. To do this required a convoy to travel between Crown and Bangkok through places like Nakorn Phanom, Korat, and Roi Et, a trip taking three days – there and back. That road, as already mentioned, was a nightmare, especially in the wet season. Our convoy was not unsubstantial, and any blockage 'en route' caused a problem. We would frequently come across civilian vehicles stuck in the mud mainly buses and trucks. Consequently, we had to clear a way forward, and this meant the need to winch, shunt, pull or whatever these civilian vehicles to clear a path. At the time I was a young Craftsman and so had no say in the matter, but certain recovery mechanics would seek payment for this, which necessitated a 'whip round' from bus passengers. I couldn't condone this, but who was I to voice an objection?



We stayed overnight where we could, government buildings, schools and the like, anywhere that was reasonably secure, but once we laagered up in a logging camp where our neighbours for the night were huge logging elephants. We were also self-catering, compo of course, but if I remember correctly, we had an ACC cook on board to do the necessary. In Bangkok we parked the vehicles at the docks and over three to five days would unload equipment to be back-loaded and load up with new vehicles, equipment and stores. We stayed at the Grand Hotel, the top floor of which was occupied by a Royal Signals unit known as 'Golden Arrow.' They facilitated the comms between Crown and the outside world, but rumour had it that their remit was a little more 'clandestine.' Enough said.

R&R. Whilst at Crown I got pally with Ian Matyear, not an ex-boy, but I didn't hold that against him! He had come to Crown direct from the UK, and with me up from Malaysia we were entitled to R&R (Rest and Recuperation or as the Americans para phrased it I&I – Intoxication and Intercourse). The RE had a bungalow at Pattaya Beach which is on the Gulf of Thailand, SE of Bangkok. It was looked after by a RE corporal who had to pick up and return 'guests' from Bangkok airport. Anyone who has been to Pattaya will know it as a thriving tourist centre with high rise hotels and all that goes with that. In 1966 it was just a fishing village but beginning to attract US servicemen on R&R or I&I from Vietnam.



JS & Ian Matyear - A lighter moment

Our journey started with a flight from Crown to Bangkok courtesy of the US Army. Whilst the RAF would not entertain landing at Crown, the US had no qualms, and frequently flew in a de Havilland Canada DH4 Caribou, which looked like a C130 Hercules but was smaller and with only two engines. It had amazing STOL (Short Take Off and Landing) characteristics and would land easily on the Crown parking area. Ian and I boarded via the rear ramp to be greeted by a contingent of Thai paras, fully armed. The load master instructed all to strap in, where upon a grenade fell from a Thai paras webbing into the centre aisle. I looked at Ian and Ian looked at me and we both looked at the grenade! It wasn't smoking and the 'pin' was intact. Relief. The Thai para picked it up and clipped it back onto his webbing, smiling from ear to ear! Not the way you want to start a holiday. On arrival at Bangkok, we were duly picked up and transported to Pattaya where we immediately 'hit the town' or rather the solitary bar called Barbos. We met a couple of Americans called Tim and Marvin. They were USAF and claimed to be working for Air America (think Mel Gibson in the film of the same name), but I had my doubts. There wasn't much to do in Pattaya, so we all decided to go to Bangkok. I can't remember how we got there but we did brief the RE corporal to pick us up and make sure we caught the flight back to Crown.

Bangkok is a fantastic city, or at least it was in 1966. We did the usual tourist thing; the temples, floating market and a visit to a private zoo, full of every nasty thing you can imagine.



Pete the Python



The Kwai Bridge

It belonged to a wealthy businessman who was only too keen to show us his photo album with him standing in a sentry box outside Buckingham Palace. (Sentry boxes used to be outside the railings). He offered us a photo opportunity and that's where I got to meet Pete the Python (see the picture). We hired a taxi for a day and travelled to Kanchanaburi, the real bridge on the river Kwai (or more correctly river Khwae Noi). Forget the film, it's total fiction. The bridge is of steel construction on concrete pillars, and a single track, but we could see the original railway sleepers carved with badges, names and regimental numbers. In 1966 it was literally a bridge across a river. Go there

now and you will find the usual tourist development, sad. A visit to the nearby Kanchanaburi war cemetery was moving, as a visit to all war cemeteries is. Found some REME grave markers.

Bangkok would be nothing without the night life. We visited a night club called 'The Garden Café', and whilst behaving ourselves who should walk in but Sean Connery, with his first wife Diane Cilento.

Sean had his protection, so we didn't bother to introduce ourselves! Our hotel was modest but adequate. Marvin complained about a sore foot, and it transpired that he had stepped on coral whilst swimming at Pattaya. A quick inebriated examination by yours truly decided that an operation was necessary, and with needle from one's trusty housewife (sterilised of course) and several slugs from a bottle of spirits, for Marvin that is, I performed my only operation carefully 'digging out' the offending coral. Marvin put up with that but hit the roof when I poured the spirit into the wound, well, I'd seen it in the movies! It worked however, and Marvin made a full recovery!



Marvin, Tim & Ian

All too soon it was time to depart. We bade our farewells and somehow got to the airport, where once again the US Army took off in a Caribou. An eventless flight except for the last leg when the load master asked if anyone knew where Crown was! Unbelievable. Don't they teach map reading or navigation skills to US Army pilots? A RE corporal volunteered his services, went forward into the cockpit, and by visually following roads and other features, guided the aircraft to Crown.

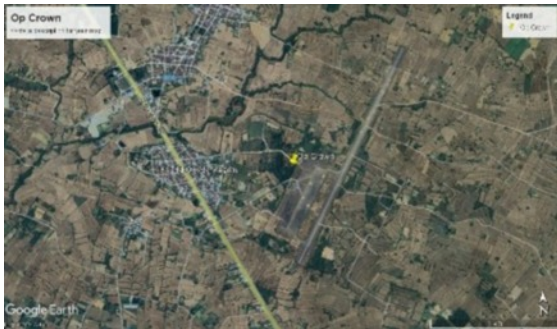
Medical memories. In the early days one of the ACC cooks suffered horrific burns whilst re-filling a pressure cooker. So severe were his injuries that he spent the night in the back of an ambulance, which at the time was considered the most sterile place to be. He obviously needed urgent medical care. Medivac via road was not an option and at that time there was no facility to land an aircraft. During the night in the space of about 10 hours, the Royal Engineers with their bulldozers, scrapers and other heavy earth moving equipment, built a landing strip of dirt long enough to enable a light aircraft to land and evacuate the casualty. It just goes to show the camaraderie of soldiers pulling out all the stops to provide for the welfare needs for a comrade, regardless of cap badge.

Being in a hot climate, it was not unexpected that I contracted a painful rash in my nether regions. Now, I have never been one to report sick for anything that isn't life threatening (and I still don't). However, after staggering around for two days like a cowboy who had lost his horse, I was ordered to report sick. After dropping my draws the Aussie doctor diagnosed a case of Tinea and prescribed some ointment as the cure. His nursing orderly (also Australian) duly supplied the goods, and to my relief said, "I think you can apply this yourself." And so, I did, and all was fine until half an hour later when I was leaping

about like a cat on a hot tin roof trying to extinguish the 'fire' that engulfed my most private areas! It cured the problem though, but I wouldn't recommend it.

The Journey South. My tour over, it was time to return to my unit. The last night in the NAAFI saying farewells accompanied of course by the obligatory Tiger beers! The RAF still wouldn't land at Crown, so that road journey to Ubon had to be endured again and was just as rough as it had been the first time. At Ubon, avoiding the press again, we were delighted to see a Blackburn Beverly awaiting our presence. I had flown in one of these before as 3 Sqn RCT was 'air portable' and had exercised with the RAF in that role flying vehicles and personnel from RAF Seletar to RAF Changi - all of a fifteen-minute flight. That is all I remember, as I must have travelled back to Tampin on the train and thence to Terendak. Time for someone else to 'go north'!

Op Crown – The Movie. After I had left Crown (October of 1966), Julian Pettifer, a well-known BBC reporter of the time, was returning from assignment in Vietnam via Laos and crossing the Mekong border into Thailand via Savannakhet and Mukdahan. Travelling down Route 212 he and his cameraman came across a roadside sign displaying 'Loeng Nok Tha Airfield Under Construction by The British Army.' Thinking they had uncovered a secret involvement by Britain in the Vietnam war, and a scoop of a lifetime, they investigated. However, they were granted full access and freedom to film and interview, which resulted in a program being televised in the UK during 1967. It's well worth a look, and the Sergeant in the opening sequences happens to be REME. Just go to 'You Tube' and enter 'Op Crown'.



Google Earth Screenshot

Finale. My tour was for six months, but this article covers some three years, so inevitably I have 'poached' photos, information, stories and events from other sources, so I apologise to any original copyright holders. The airstrip is still there as can be seen on the Google Earth screen shot, still officially under the control of the Royal Thai Airforce it remains unused. In 1986 as an ASM, I visited a TA unit in Manchester (PRE-Examination). The RSM was RE, and I mentioned my exploits at Op Crown. "Ah!" he said, "that's one we would rather forget." Well, I can understand that statement from an RE perspective given the engineering blunder first time round, but for me it was six months that

I will never forget. Hard work in spartan conditions, good mates, unforgettable trips to Bangkok and a wonderful country and people. One gripe however is that no recognition was forthcoming. A case was presented that a 'Thailand' bar be awarded to the GSM seeing as all Australian and New Zealand forces serving in Thailand were awarded their equivalent. Not to be. So, as usual, all we Brits got was the handshake, pat on the back and "Well, thanks for all you've done!" The story of British military involvement in Thailand did not end with the completion of the Crown airstrip. It continued for another two years when the RE constructed some forty kilometres of road under the banner of Op Post Crown, but that's another story for someone else to tell.

John Swarbrick 62A

Ed's comments: I started this story in OBAN 89 and intended to continue it in OBAN 90. Several things occurred all at once and I missed publishing the second element in OBAN 90. This can also be seen by some of the photos I have used in this section that also appear at the end of the first section in OBAN 89. My apologies to John Swarbrick. Just when I get an interesting story I messed up the publication of it. Andy 66B

Understanding Engineers

Two Engineers???

Two engineers were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking at its top. A Woman walked by and asked what they were doing.

"We're supposed to find the height of this flagpole," said one, "but we don't have a ladder."

The woman took a wrench from her purse, loosened a couple of bolts, and laid the pole down on the ground. Then she took a tape measure from her pocketbook, took a measurement, and announced, "Twenty one feet, six inches," and walked away.

One engineer shook his head and laughed, "A lot of good that does us. We ask for the height and she gives us the length!"

Both engineers have since quit their engineering jobs and are currently serving parliament.

90A reunion - Andrew Quigg - 90A



The weekend 11/13 April saw the third official reunion of Intake 90A. We had been very lucky to have our first reunion at Arborfield 25 years after walking through those magnificent gates which very soon afterwards were removed and closed.

Since then, we as a group have decided to keep the momentum up and meet every five years. The draw to Lichfield is that we can visit the National Memorial Arboretum remembering our 'youth' and those that are no longer with us. The plaque at the centre of Apprentice Memorial is very poignant and the words ring true for the journey we trod.

The weekend is organised via our private Facebook page, our members are now spread all over the world and the effort of those that made the journey is fantastic. From the North of Scotland to the cliffs of Dover and the valleys of Wales, we were impressed by the journey from Vancouver just to catch-up and have a few beers. Unfortunately, a few couldn't make it but the technology of Face Time allowed us to reconnect on the night as stories started to flow.

The talk has already turned to the 40th Anniversary and a few gatherings in between. AeM.

Andrew Quigg - 90A

85B Reunion - Gary Everett - 85B



Over the weekend, 85B held a 40th reunion in Reading. For a first up gathering, 17 attended which is brilliant. We had a great few days and it was great to see everyone and catch up. Starting on the left, seated are Paul Fletcher and Liam Jones, Jim Barry, Taff Thorburn, Big Woody and Little Woody(just Woody now as he's not little anymore), Martin Whitehouse, Taff Morris, Steve Williams, Adrian Smith, Gary 'Kenny' Everett, Jim Watt, Ian Booth, Phil Sweetland and seated is Andy Williams. Not in the photo Stew Fowler and John Tom's. I think it's fair to say, meeting people you haven't seen since leaving PMC was a little daunting but it was well worth it and I can't wait until the 41st reunion.

Gentlemen it was a pleasure. **Gary Everett 85B**

It was ideal if you needed to pop home for a week or so for some rejuvenating mum's cooking.

Greg James 62 B

Bob Hambly

Rob Castell





Duke of Yorks & AAS Harrogate - John Oakley 63B



My thanks to Chad (Webmaster) for his sterling work so far in arranging & organising the unofficial DYRMS website. Certainly, if I hadn't found it myself the other day, I would have gone on thinking that most ex-Dukies have gradually 'faded away' rather than ever surface into mine and others' lives again. I have also gradually become more and more 'fed up' of others of my family, civilian work (I was in the Education Dept of our Local Council for some 18 years! "What's a co-ed, Technical/Secondary/Grammar School?!" -- starting off at somewhat of a disadvantage as regards the educational experience of my civilian peers!!) & Other acquaintances over the years saying such as "well you went to a DIFFERENT type of school to all of us." Yep! we sure did and I, for one, have always been grateful for that!

"Sound the 'Advance' Mr. Halsey!" (The RSM's famous stentorian command to 'F' Co who kept a watchful eye over our Corps of Drums).

Amazing how half dead memories can flood back, isn't it?! There are people like Mike Ridlington (who I once met up with again years ago, when he was a Captain, outside the SKC Cinema in Herford, BAOR! -- I also remember watching him training [back in DY] to pass his RLSS 'Distinction' award!) mentioning folk I remember such as our then Headmaster, Lt Col Mullen RAEC, boys Eldridge, Nunn, Alfie Crabbe, Pete Scarlett, O'Hara, Ron Silk, Swift, Geoff Stopford (& his brother Pete, I think/assume?) as well as his good self who, along with others of his era such as Al Larman,??? Smith et al 'terrorised'/disciplined(!) us younger 'ites' (of 'Bony' Tritton's Marlborough House) as was the way of the School at that time! It did us no great harm and we learnt a helluva lot from them such as how to survive a dorm 'Blitz' and how to accumulate 'swag', for instance Mike, & its storing/accounting thereof, you may recall??! [I often wonder too whether the author of "Lord of the Flies" had ever been a 'Dukie'?!] Great stuff, in retrospect; worthy of the training given by such as Fagin and Mr. Dawkins (Dickens' 'Artful Dodger'), surely!!

Somebody mentioned boy Harrington along the way; I remember him as an Old Boy. I wonder: does he still wear luminous socks?!

Then there's Bill Dickens (no relation to he mentioned above?!), who I vaguely remember from when we sat so 'below the salt' in 1955 at those Haig Dining Hall tables adjacent to those of Roberts & opposite the Kitch. 'ites' ... when suddenly he appeared at (probably) dinner without his 'pips' and, yes, "Granny" Watling was the new boss! We 'newchies' sat upright, shoulders straight & arms down behind our backs .. waiting for the CSP to say 'Grace' ... in awe and tried to comprehend it all! I often, in later years, used to tell my daughters (now with families of their own) of the then Adj [after explaining what an Adjutant did for a living!] one Major Sandal, of the King's Royal Rifle Corps - if memory serves me right - in his green uniform with black buttons & facings, striding up and down the Dining Hall with his faithful dog, 'Slipper', at his side! The tin mugs & plates of those early days that the orderlies laid out, the 'barkers' (sausages with really 'slitproof' skins!), the queuing in the 'cookhouse' with the giant teapots and the raucous shout of the Cook Sgt to us all in his strident (I think Yorkshire) accent: "QUIET! .. or tha'll get na tea!"

These days my eldest grandson (a) takes ages to rise from his slumbers and (b) like his mother, isn't fully awake anyway until around 11am. I wonder how many of you have similarly tried to explain to your kin that the Clock Tower chimed in distinctive ways, four times every hour, throughout the night ... and we hardly heard any of them BUT the 0645hrs chime galvanized the whole school into instant wide-awake action --- how we shot out of beds, to save being 'tipped out', Fatigues or (far worse) Dorm Fatigues where the whole Dorm would be punished for the 'slackness' of just one wretched boy! How, in far less than 40 minutes, every dorm would be swept thoroughly, all morning fatigues done by the allotted boy to his allotted task, all would be washed, shaved (if and where necessary), dressed & paraded outside the front lawn all ready to be marched to Breakfast. I used to love relating how all this happened 6 times per week but --- relief 'cos on Sundays we all had a lay-in till 0715hrs!! --- and although WE DIDN'T HAVE TO MARCH TO BREAKFAST! -- woe betide you if you weren't ready for Church Parade on time after it!!

Random thoughts: Whatever happened to 'B' Co Lowrie, 'F' Co Halsey? ... and ... don't we all miss 'G' Co Fry?! I DO wish he could have, one day, "Won the Pools" which was always his fervent wish so that he wouldn't have to conduct us young 'wannabe' Bandsmen in 'B' Division any longer!! We know he didn't but it would have been fitting! I remember Swimming for Kent Schools in London and, later, being one of the Guinea-pigs for the now standard RLSS Survival Awards.

We could all surely 'write a book' and, if I'm not careful, I soon will so --- on with MY later life! :-)

Although eventually gaining 6 'O' Levels, I was hardly likely to shine much more academically & anyway, the outside world beckoned: Myself and one John Lord (son of the famous WOI John Lord who was ASM at Sandhurst) 'Signed on' at Chatham ... and I went to attend AAS (Army Apprentices' School) Harrogate (Intake 63B) for the next three years. I don't know for sure what happened to John but I think he went to AAS Arborfield?

I had to laugh within the first couple of days; 'God' i.e., the A/T RSM was due to visit the huts of Recruit Coy in which I was billeted along with my fellow new recruits. Everyone stood in awe awaiting the 'great man'. Eventually, who should 'slope' in but ex-Dukie David 'Goatie' Gardiner (ex Wolfe House) with whom I used to be in the same Swimming Team(s) & the atmosphere soon degenerated into general bonhomie --- although the other recruits wondered from that day forth what was so special about being a fellow 'Dukie'!! Not surprisingly perhaps, as any 'small fish in a large pond' often learns, that same fish usually does particularly well in a small pond. Whilst my poor 'oppos (or as dear old 'Jankers' Fry would undoubtedly have called 'em, "muckers"!)) struggled with the intricacies of trying to put together a set of 1937 pattern webbing for instance, 8 years of such 'natural' behaviour meant that it was hardly difficult for me to eventually win Best Recruit of the Platoon as well as Best Recruit of the Coy and thereby be solemnly presented on the Passing Out Parade at the end of our first 14 weeks with the ten shillings allotted for each! Incidentally, back to Mike Ridlington earlier; reminds me that for the whole of my time at DY our 'working' dress was open neck Battledress blouse, short trs, eventually long trs (once you'd attained the dizzy height of 5 foot 9, I think! --- or alternatively reached about 11 yrs of age.) When we arrived at Harrogate we were presented with: closed neck Service Dress (from WWI) complete with all the brass buttons! It took about a year before we went 'modern' ... into BD!!

I wandered happily through my 9 terms in that Army Apprentices' School, enjoying its absolute luxury in comparison to the regime at Dover! I remember hearing the Brass Band 'murdering' "Sons of the Brave" one evening though ... and so I joined said Band. Since my own father had been an Orchestra Conductor anyway as well as my own 'accomplishment' of being a cornet player from the world of CSM Fry (again!), Bandmaster Stringer & later Captain Ough (Royal Marines) at DY ... it was hardly difficult to 'shine' there either! Consequently, my fast rise in rank eventually & swiftly culminated in my being Harrogate's first ever A/T Band Sergeant! By now, these 'Schools' had risen somewhat in status --- being renamed Army Apprentice Colleges!

Somehow, I graduated out of Harrogate, from the General Service Corps, in 1966 as a Radio Tech (Light), being badged into the Royal Corps of Signals. I've many other happy memories of Pennypot Lane but they are best left for 'another book, another time', I fancy although I'll never forget perhaps the best cutting comment I have ever heard, from one CSM (in this 'PC' day & age of 1999 I'm censoring his name here!) (Brigade of Guards) looking at a squad I was in at one stage, making the comment that "*Hitler had the right idea; he just applied it wrongly!*"! (It surely wasn't because of me 'cos probably, in true style, I would have been "the only one in step"!)

Anyway, away I went to 11 Sig Regt, Catterick OR1 Tp from May - August 1966 -- saw the error (the light?!) & 'returned to the ranks' -- posted to 22 Sig Regt in Lippstadt, West Germany, as a 'Lance Jack' till approx. Feb 67. 1 Sqn then took me to 7 Sig Regt in Herford where the sqn renamed to 4 Sqn of 7SR.

The CO at 7 Sigs was a Lt Col 'Archie' Birtwhistle (not a Dukie but who eventually became Master of Signals). I stayed there until June 1972, variously employed in the Trg Sch, 'Z' Tp, the 'sensitive' T.E.S.T. team, "behind the grill" in RHQ & in CP7!! (I mention the foregoing just in case anyone remembers me there.) I returned to 11 Sig Regt to 'finish my time'. By late 1974 I had formally 'given notice to quit' & this 'Full Screw' T2 Tech/B1 Clerk tried to quietly leave HM Forces ... on the due day inadvertently causing a Bomb Scare that had all of Catterick Garrison on Alert for the whole day! The 'kicker' was that a RMP landrover actually visited my house -- in WEST Yorkshire, before the day was out!!

Overall, then, I hardly had a distinguished military career but I thoroughly enjoyed approx. 98% of it. I DID have the unique honour of wearing Crossed Trumpets above the 'T' Flash on my No 2 Dress sleeve during my final serving months ... bestowed by the then Director of Music of the Royal Signals Corps Band ... making me the official Corps Trumpeter outside Blandford (having 'blown' regularly at umpteen Quarter Guards at 22, 7 & 11 Sig Regts during my adult service).

It's still rather pleasant, by the way, to tell the grandchildren that I've TWICE been in/at the Royal Tournament (once with the DY band and once with our AAS Massed Bands) and how the DYRMS Sports teams nearly caused riots at the Royal Hospital Naval School at Holbrook! (we were NOT going to swim in the nude as their inmates used to!!) ... and how we'd once played our Fanfare Trumpets before no less a personage than the Duke of Plaza er No! ... wrong story! -- the Archbishop of Canterbury. Stories too like how the DYRMS Bandboys were paraded by an overzealous NCO at Pirbright (when/where we were billeted for the Royal Tournament) & how he was so shocked at the high standard of our footdrill --- he marched us into the NAAFI and thence disappeared himself! It also puzzles people how it is that I STILL know every word of "The Gondoliers" (and still fondly remember 'the Brig' with the quote "Work hard: Stick at it! Nothing like Work!") 'Tis great too to emulate Michael Bentine (or perhaps it was Peter Sellers?) who once said he'd been at one of the Oxbridge Universities ... "to clean the drains, mate!" In my case, it's great to say "I've played at Twickenham!" Of course, I have, in the DYRMS Band, at half-time, during a Youth England v Wales Rugby Union match!! (in around 1962!)

Other spurious memories: (1) our Royal Artillery platoon Sgt at AAS Harrogate proudly telling us that the Final Graduation Parade would have "no adult NCOs in command at all"! How would he have reacted had he seen our mammoth Trooping the Colour parade on Grand Days having "no adults in command", performed upon GRASS and using movements such as the Band's "Spin Wheel" and even the (unknown to many soldiers these days) "Beat the Assembly" from the Corps of Drums. (2) Arguably the best Drum Major the Dukies ever had of my day, viz boy "Jack" R.A. (Ron) Hobbs, that charismatic character and born leader (of Marlborough House) who eventually attained the height of being CSP (Chief School Prefect), equivalent to the rank of boy RSM, and who's downfall was so ably supported by nearly every 'Pre' in the Place in the Spring of 1959. "Begad Sir -- Mutiny at the Duke of York's!" sang out the headlines in such as *The Times & Daily Telegraph* newspapers. The amazement of all us boys to find, at one never-to-be-forgotten lunchtime when we all WANDERED (rather than marched) into the Dining Hall because all bar two Prefects/NCOs had resigned their badges of rank! All because of a retaliation raid on Dover College, led by the aforesaid CSP/Boy RSM Ron 'Jack' Hobbs [who was thereby expelled for that 'crime' in March 1959], where the only real casualties of the commando style 'action' were 'No legs' (Bobby) Brookes and 'Eggy' Eggleton (both of Wolfe House) -- who both spent a night in Dover's Police Cells! (I

believe I'm right in reporting that 'Eggy' ended up commanding the Hong Kong Police Force!!) That was the whole ethos of the School though, wasn't it? -- self-regulation/government by the boys and the consequential expected loyalty amongst us. Remember what happened to anyone caught thieving from his peers?! (3) An almost 'equal crisis' was when "Penelope" (the School Prefects' cat!!) disappeared, again in around 1962. I still have a photo of her in my archives!

The next 18 years were spent, rather mundanely in comparison(!), as a Local Govt. Offr ---concurrent with the vastly different job/vocation of some 20 yrs as a Magician specialising in Children's Entertainer!! You see, I had learnt the 'trade' of trickery in 7th Signal Regiment and put it to good use ;-)

I am proud to be a Member of the Magic Circle, London being a performer/writer of Magic since 1969. (Two of my 'illusions' have actually been performed by 'PD' on prime-time TV!) I am now Associate of the Inner Magic Circle with Silver Star. For any prowess I may have at writing I give all credit to my God-Father, Major 'Don' Jackson RAEC, my Housemaster at Haigh ... who later lived in Harrogate with wife Margaret. (No doubt his son David is around somewhere too.)

Regrettably a massive Heart Attack in 1994 cut short my 'flourishing' new Entertaining career. Nowadays I'm still a writer -- and also am learning as much as I can about computers. I am working on an Amiga A1200 with various accoutrements. I am Granddad to 2 boys! I live with my wife, Elaine, in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. My daughters, spouses & their children all live nearby ... but far enough away too!

If any of the above 'drive' "rings any bells" or encourages any questions with/from anyone ... then please contact me direct. Just remember the military field craft acronym, G.R.I.T.!! I seem to remember learning that from one RSM "Whacker" Jones at the 'School' ... and here's a reminiscence about him too: back in 1955 (again!) he taught us the value & significance of our consecrated & unique School & Regimental Colours by looking at the School Cenotaph, calling it a mere "Block of Stone". "THESE are what you should revere!" he said indicating the Colour Party and the Colour itself under which ... I am very proud to say ... I STILL FEEL to this day that I serve i.e. "Oh Lord, thy Banner floateth o'er us..."

Can I dedicate any/all of the above that matters to my late father, Ben Oakley, who also was a Dukie and who served at both Chelsea & Dover at the turn of this Century. It was an honour to follow him.

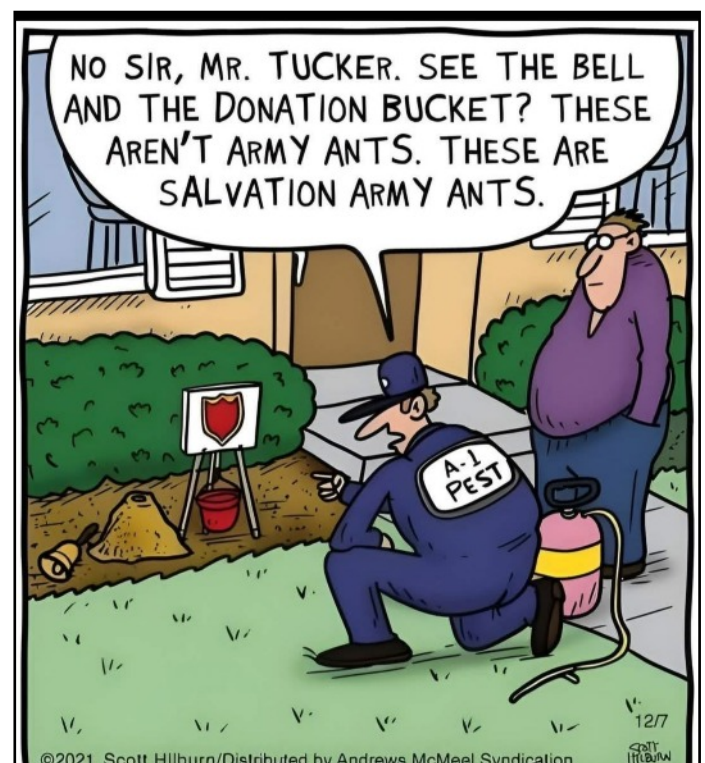
Thanks for reading thus far.

John Oakley – 63B (Harrogate)

'Play Up Dukies'

Ed's comments: I happened on John Oakley on Facebook. He published a link to a web page from some time ago. I took a look and found that his life at AAS Harrogate was not dissimilar to ours at Arborfield. (My dad threatened me with the Duke of Yorks School but for some reason it never happened for me). It turns out John Oakley and our very own Bill Cleasby knew each other at the Duke of Yorks School and I have put them in touch with each other again. A small world indeed.

Andy Dickson 66B



Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson 66B

My progress is as before, slow but I can see small improvements.

My treadmill sessions continue and my times (Stamina) are improving. Speed is getting better too but I have to be careful not to get too confident and end up tripping myself up. These sessions are once a week, Generally on a Monday. In August I am starting a 'gym' session once a week with the treadmill every other week. I can't say I am looking forward to that but the exercise will do me good and there are sure to be improvements.

I had a bit of a changes of scenery mid-month, (May), as Sue had found a venue for a holiday in Warwickshire that catered for disabled people and so we booked it and met our best friends there for a week. We had a lift so I could get upstairs and a full wet-room so I could have a shower. There was a hot tub too but I didn't read the instructions properly prior to going and didn't take a sling with me. They provided the hoist but no sling. Never mind. The change in scenery was good for us both. I do find being out of my familiar surroundings a challenge but getting out to pubs for lunch or dinner was good therapy.

We managed a few outings to National Trust properties locally and they provided Electric Mobility scooters for free which meant I could terrorise the local public on my own. (Note to self - Try and get out on your own electric wheelchair more often).

We have another visit to Lymington hospital this week for a meeting for the Stroke Survivors Group, I do the newsletter. We are also going to Odstock at Salisbury hospital on Monday the 9th of June for a review of my FES progress.

I am also taking a new drug to help with my spasticity, Particularly in my left hand. The dosage starts low and then builds up over a month or so until I get to the level I am comfortable with. Side affects include tiredness and, as if I needed any help, I keep dozing off. On a positive note, My left hand seems to be loosening up.

As I write this, today, the 14th of June, is a special day. My wife and I were married 45 years ago today. I have been running through my memories of that day and the people who attended that are no longer with us, I also have the Trooping of the Colour on my PC so I can watch while doing some AOBA work. Some of the 'marches' are very familiar from my days at Arborfield. I am still uncomfortable with the beards that are visible, (even though I have a beard myself). Even so, it is a magnificent spectacle and one I feel very proud of.

Blood tests seem to the normal just now. I have two lots taken in the last month. I also have to go to Bournemouth hospital for an Ultra Sound Doppler Aorta test. That is a pain getting to Bournemouth Hospital when we could have it done locally at Lymington. We are now between two NHS Trusts and getting them to talk to each other is impossible. I hate to make political statements in OBAN but the state of our hospitals is cause for concern. An elderly neighbour of mine had to go to the local hospital on Sunday last and couldn't get seen by a doctor for 5 hours. She was transferred to Bournemouth for a blood test and had to wait 9 hours there finally getting home at 05.30 on Monday. This isn't what I would call health care. Rant over, for now.

I do find it difficult to express my frustration in a positive, non whining way. The simplest things can really get me gnashing my teeth. I have talked about this before I know but each time something happens I get very close to losing it. Never mind the big things, which I am coming to terms with, (Driving, Getting showered etc.) Just try cleaning a pair of shoes with only one hand! The 'happy pills' I take do keep me calm most of the time but I do, occasionally go off on one. Rant number 2 over.

(I just spilled the shredder contents all over my office floor. Try picking that lot up while sitting in a wheel chair and only one hand to do the picking. Grrrrrrrrrr).

I must admit that the support we have had from the community physio has been outstanding. Apart from getting the service and assistance for nearly two years, (we were only entitled to 6 weeks support. My physio said she would have stopped a long time ago if I had not shown the right attitude.), I am still getting e-mail support from her and she even popped around for a chat and coffee a few days ago. I don't know how she has the time. NHS cuts have overloaded all aspects of patient support. I really do wish somebody with the power could fix the NHS problems. Moving deck chairs on the Titanic comes to mind.

My first gym session is tomorrow and I don't mind admitting I am a little apprehensive. I am sure I will do ok. It can't be as bad as the PT sessions we used to have at Arborfield. Remember the road run in shorts, T shirt and Ammo boots. What I would give to be able to do those training runs again.

The session went well and I worked up quite a sweat. I also learned some new exercises that I can do at home, mostly aimed at arm and leg strengthening.

Onwards and upwards.

Andy Dickson 66B

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

Continued from OBAN 90

Moving to Newcastle upon Tyne

1W MSQ (Married Soldiers Quarters) Fenham Barracks June 1959

At the start of Summer June 59 we moved north over the other side of the Pennines to Newcastle upon Tyne. This would be the twelfth place I had lived and my seventh school. I was nine years old. We would start school immediately but hardly get settled in with summer holidays fast approaching, more about that later.

My first impressions of Newcastle and the camp itself were very good. Fenham Barracks was mostly secured by a surrounding high stone wall. It had a couple of "Guarded Entrances" at the front on Barrack Road and set of solid high wooden vehicle gates at the rear, the rear gates never seemed to be unlocked but access through them was by a picket gate giving access to pedestrians prams and bicycles coming out onto the allotments near Spital Tongues. You could also walk to nearby Leazes Park its rowing boat pond had an island in the middle. More famously Fenham Barracks was close to St James's Park.



Now it goes without saying if you are from Newcastle or have ever lived there you will know the song and tune to "Blaydon Races" It is resounding in my ears as I write:

Oh! me lads, ye shud a' seen us gannin,
Passin' the folks upon the road just as they were stannin'.
Thor wis lots o' lads and lasses there, all wi' smiling faces
Gannin' along the Scotswood Road to see the Blaydon Races

This almost religious chant was based on a road race from Newcastle to Blaydon a small town in Gateshead. I know little of the race itself but the chant was adopted by Newcastle United FC. More importantly it was adopted as the marching tune for the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers based at Fenham Barracks

Sometimes there was a picket guard on the rear gate to make sure only the right people that belonged in Fenham Barracks got in or out. The picket gate was always locked at night to ensure the safety of us lot inside.

Settling into a whole New World

Being a Lancashire Lad going to Newcastle was almost like being in another country, us younger kids had never been further north than Liverpool. The Geordie accent was like a foreign language. The lads and lasses were as tough and rough as they came, no doubt we sounded equally strange to them.

Todd's Nook School New Mills, Darnell Street Arthurs Hill Newcastle upon Tyne

I started at Todd's Nook School which sounds very quaint but it was one of the toughest schools I ever attended. I was nine years old and reasonable fit, for the first few weeks my brother Ivor also went to Todd's Nook although he had passed his eleven-plus exams and was waiting for a placement at Rutherford Grammar School. It was only after Ivor left that the class bully would fancy his chances with me. As bullies do he had his henchmen and was waiting for me "Out of School" school finished at 4pm. I could easily outrun him and his mates and I took off like a rocket with them in pursuit. Not sure which one was nearest but I had slowed down to let him catch up. As soon as he was one my heels I stopped in my tracks and crouched down standing up again as he went over my shoulders and then went over and kicked him in the head. I am not sure where I had learned that from, but the others realized playtime was over; my own thoughts were that I was going to get a good thrashing, but nothing more happened. Fortunately I must have passed some initiation test and from thereon in was left alone.

My younger brother Kenneth was not so lucky. He was in a more junior part of the school and took a couple of beatings before he devised a plan where he could hide in Todds Nook School between the 3:30pm that he finished and 4pm when he could meet up with me for the journey home. Ken was vertically challenged for a lot of years as a boy and didn't sprout upwards and outwards till much later in life. He would eventually join the Royal Engineers and then go into the Police

Force. I asked him in later years if there was anything he was frightened of as a policeman, he replied "A scouser with a Big Stick" but I doubted even that would faze him out.

CAUGHT IN THE NET 69 - POETRY BY CATHERINE GRAHAM

Miss Butterworth

We learned about rhyme
from Miss Butterworth:

(Give us this day
the right to change her name.)
Todd's Nook School, circa 1960.
She was strange.

We learned about the belt
and how to stand in her bin
if we couldn't find the right answers.

John Robson said he hated Mondays,
I dreaded Sunday nights:
Back to the big black building
and railings and sleepless nights.

Miss Butterworth wore tweed skirts,
she was scary. Scratched me
as she grabbed my cardigan -
I think it was accidental:

Said she'd wipe the smile off my face:
Looking back, I think she was mental.

I agree "Blame the Teachers"

Without casting aspersions on individual teaching staff, though I bloody hated getting the strap on my hands for whatever they thought I was doing wrong. They taught me zero nothing, roll on the 11+ and let me get out of there ASAP. It wasn't to be though and I would be at Todds Nook for almost three years. I wouldn't care but later I found I had in fact passed my 11+ and when I moved to Malaya I was placed in the Grammar Stream at Bourne School KL. Maybe mum and dad didn't want the expense of buying me a new school uniform and going to Rutherford Grammar School with Ivor when our posting at Newcastle was near its end. We did have fun in Todds Nook if little else. Once we watched the older boys surround teachers who had locked themselves in a prefabricated classroom for their own protection. The headmaster had to call the Police in to sort it out. After morning playtime groups of us would just disappear down to the flats which had electric lifts and play around till lunchtime. The teachers seemed to have lost any control

The school has now long gone and the street with it. I would have some catching up to do after that fiasco of miss-education.

L/Bdr Eric L. Davies. The Royal Artillery

What would a nine year old boy know about "The Army" well it was quite a lot actually. I was nearly ten and seen almost every last item of equipments the British Army had from Radars down to gaiters, I even knew a left gaiter from a right one which is more than some recruits on basic training did. I knew every last item of 37 pattern webbing, although 58 pattern had come out last year no-one had actually seen any yet. I had watched my dad in battle dress almost every day of my life, even when he came home at night it was all he could do to take ammo boots, tunic and tie off and sometimes his shirt "Hairy Nasty" then spend the evening at home in his BD trousers and vest. Even if he went into the garden he would wear "Fatigues"

Brother Jack had left the railways and joined the 15/19th Hussars, he had "Left Home for Good" he even gave his cherished BSA Bantam which now sported crash bars and leg shields, fog and spot lamps to my brother David. I am sure David jumped at the chance of giving his Dawes Double blue racing bike a rest or at least his own legs a rest. He had cycled all the way down to Chester once to see Margaret his girlfriend, or so he told us. It could have been just to Newcastle Station if the truth were known.

At least David was still at home which kept me safe. I recall one day in the playground in Fenham Barracks when a couple of older "Brats" decided to have a bit of fun when they both picked on me at the same time. Unfortunately for them it was a very bad move for all their extra size and bravado. David just happened to be passing on the way home from work on his racing bike; he caught sight of the event as it was starting to kick off. Dave had a bit of a temper and after a days work as a tailor decided to stitch them both up well and good. They were still sobbing when we left the park. Needless to say they never glanced sideways at me again. David joined the TA Fusilier Band where I think he played the clarinet.

Ivor was old enough to join the Royal Artillery ACF, You had to be 12 to join so I definitely couldn't get in to start with. I was a soldier's son and Ivor had already been promoted to Bdr so after I was ten years old strings were pulled and I got in during 1960.



Ivor (L/Bdr and me with next doors kid.

School was boring but the Royal Artillery made up for those shortfalls. We had an indoor range, Le-Enfield .303 rifles converted to .22s. We shared some 25 Pounder Field Guns with the co-located TA, We had Army Radios not sure exactly which ones, probably Wireless Sets 18 or 19 portable and some that went into vehicles. We had field telephones which we could connect to each other with Don 10.

The uniform that we wore was battle dress, shiny boots, Buff-Blanco on our belt and gaiters and very shiny brasses. We operated out of the oldest "Drill Hall" in Great Britain. On the way home each evening we passed the best fish and chip shop in Great Britain. I can almost taste those beautiful thick cut chips smothered with salt and vinegar wrapped up in old newspapers. We would eat them on the way home while sharing a large bottle of fizzy pop. Walking up along Barrack Road, passing St James's Park, with the noise from nearby pubs and the smell of Newcastle Brown ale became only a short journey with chips. Small chips cost 4 pence large 6 pence, Sgt and L/Bdr Davies would hardly finish a portion of large chips between them before they got home.

I remember the Cadet Camps. I had passed my part one and two, had a marksman badge for .22 shooting and had been promoted to L/Bdr. Ivor was older and had done brilliant and became a Sgt. Ivor was sent off to The National Rifle Association Ranges at Bisley Surrey as part of the Cadet Shooting Team.

We often went on weekend cadet camps up in the Whitley Bay areas. Funny places Tynemouth and Whitley Bay, being on the east coast if you went to the beach you had to sit with your back to the sea to get the sun in your face. We had a rather bigger trip coming up on "The Isle of Man" for our annual Summer Camp I had only ever been to the IOM once before with my dad and brothers and that had been on a school trip from Aldford Chester. We had sailed from Liverpool, that place with the "Liver Birds" dad dropped his Box Camera on the rocks by the seaside in Douglass, it might have got wet so I think the film was ruined.

We set off in uniform by train with all our gear ready for the IOM camp. Absolute luxury the army cooks had prepared a lunch bag which had a tin of fizzy pop in it prior to which the only pop I had ever had was Tizer out of a big bottle and of course the homemade Ginger Beer. I raced round on the train on its way down to Liverpool trying to find someone with a Piercing tool for tin cans so I could open my pop. It was at this point that I noticed some girls were actually quite interested in me? Maybe it was the "Battle Dress" I hadn't thought about "Girls" Ron and Ena Mallet had been posted to Newcastle and along with them my girlfriend Fanny from Warminster. I had just taken up where I left off, so no need to worry about the new Geordie Lasses.

We sailed by ferry to the Isle of Man landing at Douglass we were then bussed to Ramsey. I would have to look for something with three legs on it to bring back for mum maybe a plaque or a tea towel. First stop was at our tented camp, it was a series of Marquee tents already erected and lined up. All we had to do was collect our Palliases and blankets before being directed to our sleeping space. We dumped down our kit there to "Claim the Spot" we took the Palliases to where there was a huge heap of straw to stuff them with. The old hands were telling us youngsters to stuff them as full as we possibly could because after the first night the straw would compress and it would be like sleeping on the bare ground. There would be no chance to repack them later.

We had a sleeping space a mattress so next was food. The dining tent was alive with wasps, it was so hot the cooks had floated the margarine in trays of water on the 6ft tables to try and stop it from melting, the wasps were swimming around in it. You dare hardly take the lids off the Jam Pots. But we survived.

I will spare you the training program as a cadet, needless to say we marched a lot and used maps and compass and counted our steps. More interesting was the "Free Time" the second evening down in Ramsey. I had made my way with a couple of mates down to a small café on the corner of the main street where I noticed a rather nice girl my own age. It must have been the uniform she bought me a tea, we got on really well. It wasn't long before we were out of the café and she was showing me the sights of Ramsey. All good things must come to an end and unfortunately I was on guard the next evening. I saw her once or maybe even twice again and was able to extract her address, her mum or dad actually owned the Café. That was pretty much the highlight of the Ramsey Camp for me.

When I got back I decided to write to the girl and explain how much I enjoyed our escapade, I waited patiently for a return letter and in due course one arrived. There was no great length to the text but she admitted having a wonderful time while we were there. She also asked me which one of the soldiers I was? I didn't bother to reply. The Isle of Man might as well have been on the other side of the world.

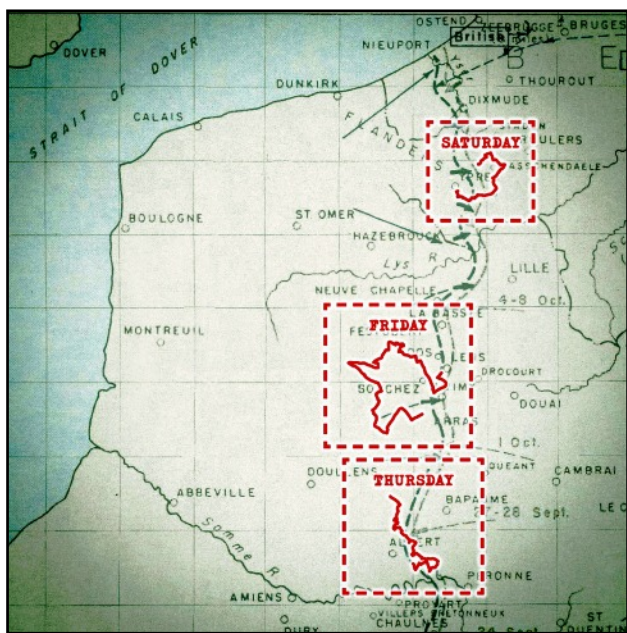
Front Line Walk - Nigel Wickenden 67A

The Army Benevolent Fund

By 1944, the tide of World War Two was beginning to turn but three million British soldiers remained on active service, notably in France, Italy and Burma. The Army Board was determined that these brave service men and women would not face the hardships endured by those who fought in World War One, a generation earlier.

In February, Winston Churchill's War Cabinet discussed the formation of the Army Benevolent Fund, a national charity for the British Army, to ensure support would be available for soldiers, veterans and their families in peacetime.

The Army Benevolent Fund was established on the 15th of August 1944, with HM King George VI as Patron and Field Marshal Lord Cavan as President. A £1.5m gift from the NAAFI enabled it to begin providing a lifetime of support to soldiers, former soldiers and their families.



I have got donations and walked the Army Benevolent Fund's 100kms in three days Front Line Walk twice and driven it once. After the first time in 2021, I swore I would never do it again as I was far too old for this exertion. In 2022, I walked 1,000 miles in 100 days. Actually it was 1,000.43 miles in ninety eight days. I had 12.96 miles to do on the last day and walking along the Vernatt's Drain bank I realised I wasn't going to make it. I therefore dropped off the bank, walked to the Co-Op and bought a bottle of champagne for celebratory purposes and that extra took me to the final total. I am really stupid so had the second go of the walk last year in October 2024.

Setting off at dawn from the Lochnagar Crater, passing the stunning 38th Welsh Division Memorial. After a short tea break and historical talk at Flatiron Copse Cemetery. Then walking on to Thiepval Memorial to the Missing and French stick with various fillings for lunch in the car park. After lunch, visit the Ulster Tower and walk through the preserved trenches at Beaumont Hamel. Passing the crater at Hawthorne Ridge, the site of one of the most famous videos from WWI continuing through the French countryside passing Sheffield Memorial Park before finishing in

the French village of Hébuterne where there's a bar serving beer. The owners always offer nibbles as they know what the walkers are there for. About 34kms for the day.

Day two's start line, again at dawn, is Neuville St Vaast German Military Cemetery which contains the remains of over 44,000 German casualties. Walk French country lanes past La Targette memorial and Ecoivres Military Cemetery before tackling the first major hill of the trip to Mont St Eloi where there's a tea stop. The route then continues uphill to Notre Dame de Lorette and the stunning ring of remembrance, where there's a hot boil in the bag lunch. There's an afternoon tea stop in the middle of nowhere and today's walk finishes by passing through the trenches at Vimy, before finishing at the Canadian Monument at Vimy Ridge. Today's distance is some 35km and it's bloody hard work.

Up really early and drive into Belgium. The start of the third and last day is at the St Julien Canadian Memorial at Vancouver Corner, stop for a tea break at Poelcapelle Cemetery before heading on to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest Commonwealth War Cemetery in the world and breaking for lunch in the grounds of the Zonnebeke Museum. After lunch the route goes through Polygon Wood, taking in Buttes New British Cemetery and the preserved bunkers before passing Black Watch Corner before regrouping outside of Ypres for the finally marching as a group, in threes, to the Menin Gate. Walking is an easier 31km today and we get a commemorative medal when we finish. I've got two as in 2023 I raised money but drove round. The trip ends with attending the 20:00 Menin Gate ceremony before the final dinner in Ieper (Ypres). By October 2024, I had raised over £4,000 with £500 donated by the Arborfield Old Boys Association. So a huge thank you for that which allowed me to be one of the party that laid a wreath during the Menin Gate ceremony. Another of the party was Dave who has received help from the charity. His story is at <https://armybenevolentfund.org/stories/daves-story>, (See page 30).





My Army Benevolent Fund hero is a chap called Terry Whenham who has raised over £50,000 in fourteen years. Terry has a WW1 podcast where he talks to people about their relatives' stories and gives the history of their battles. Our member Bruce Leslie has also been out there more than once.

One other thing, just a reminder that the £500 the AOBA donated last year to my Army Benevolent Fund 100kms in three days Front Line walk helped me raise over £4,000 so I was able to be one of the party placing a wreath at the Menin Gate memorial service on the Saturday the walk finished.

Nigel Wickenden 67A

Dave's Story

Dave grew up in Liverpool and wanted to join the Army from an early age. In 1998, he joined the Irish Guards', serving in Warrior armoured vehicle crews, including in Germany and Kosovo. In 2002, he decided to leave the Regular Army for a more settled family life. Since he was an Army Reserve, he was called to serve in Iraq as a Warrior gunner with the Royal Regiment of Wales (now The Royal Welsh).

In 2006, Dave and his family realised they missed Army life, and he re-joined as a regular with the Royal Welsh, serving again in Iraq and later Afghanistan. Dave joined the Small Arms School Corps in 2015 and, since 2019, has been a Warrant Officer Class Two. He now advises on Armoured Tactics within Brigades.

Until two years ago, Dave and his wife Elaine had been living in Tidworth. They learned that six children were going to be taken into care, so they took them into their home. Dave says: "Our daughter and granddaughter and our son have moved back into the family home to help us." Our partners, SSAFA, assisted the family and our charity awarded £4,000 towards white and brown goods and help with the children's needs.

SSAFA welfare worker, Ron Richardson, praised Dave and Elaine: "I have known the family since September 2022 and initially the children were shy, reserved and needed nurturing. Now I see happy, lively, well-mannered children. The hardest part of my role was to get Dave to ask for anything for his family."

Dave says: "I used all our savings and did not know where to go. Everything we had to buy we needed six of, including car seats, beds and clothes. Without SSAFA and Ron's assistance, ABF and Regimental Associations, I don't know



CONSEQUENCES

By Adrian Lacamp, B Coy, 64A

Continued from OBAN 90

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Mischief Mismanaged

Room Seven was his classroom, Davey's Domain as he liked to think of it, it was also home-room to class 3D, a slow but happy bunch, one of only three classes in the whole school that had more boys than girls, the others being 4E and, yes, 6E...

This was where Davey took some of the D and most of the E streams of the second to sixth year groups, for English and Geography. To say that he was not looking forward to this particular lesson would be a gross understatement. The reason was simple, the Mevagissey twins.

Identical twins, Melisandra and Bethlynda, a.k.a. 'The Mevagissey Brats'.

Those two misbegotten daughters of the Devil just loved to play pranks in class, any class. But Davey was quite convinced that they favoured his classes for their more 'outlandish' deeds.

It was now moments past ten thirty, and there he stood, almost visibly trembling from a mixture of emotions. Emotions that were dominated by the two worst feelings a teacher could have at this time, total abject fear, and steam driven rage. Standing at the front of this particular class of pretentious, obnoxious, belligerent and downright evil mostly twelve-year-old brats, he felt a moment of Deja Vu.

(Somewhere in Policy, he recalled, it said to keep a 'clean thought-set', so he tried not to call them anything worse than 'little brats', even in his mind - oops - failed again).

The thoughts that were queued up and waiting to invade his mind at that point all seemed to end with, 'Why me?' or, more specifically, 'Oh God, why me!?'.

Today's lesson, according to Policy, was English Comprehension and, again according to Policy, they were to discuss a specified word for five to ten minutes. The class would then write a short essay, based on one of the approved definitions of that word. What could go wrong with that, right?

Today's word was Consequence.

The lesson was less than two minutes old and already Davey had almost reached the end of his severely frayed temper, when the 'incident' happened. One of the Mevagissey brats stood up, turned to face Davey and, with an evil grin on her face, pulled a cigarette and lighter out of one of her backpack's side pockets. She then lit the cigarette, in front of the whole class.

At that, a red mist began to form at the periphery of Davey's vision and that old standby, his 'safety' routine, kicked in. He took in a deep, (supposedly) calming breath, held it for a count of, okay not even two, before letting it slowly out, as more of a growl than a sign. Then, as per Policy, he politely asked the little bast... er, child to put the cigarette out, he even noted that he still had enough control left to add a 'please' at the end of the request, again, as per Policy.

In answer to his polite request, the girl let loose with a mouthful of the crudest, foulest abuse he had ever heard from the mouth of any female, let alone a not quite twelve-year-old girl. Again, the deep breath in and, again as per Policy, he repeated his request; the red mist, however, was growing dangerously thicker.

This time, though, he politely reminding the miscreant little bitch (thought it, but did not speak it!) that, not only was it against Policy to smoke in any School building, but that it was, in fact, forbidden to smoke anywhere on the school grounds, and that it just also happened to be a fire hazard, he was about to add something about her also being too young to smoke, when... The perpetrator informed him, very shrilly and very loudly, that that particular Policy could only apply to adults, and rounded her tirade off with a smugly presented "Coz everyone knows that us kids don't smoke, aya stooopid or sumpfink!"

She went on to inform him, and most of the rest of the school, who could probably hear her all too well, that as she was most definitely not one of those “ancient, old, cripple-brained, growned-ups”, that particular Policy could not possibly apply to her.

And then she took an almighty drag on the lit cigarette - and inhaled.

At which point, and now wearing a painfully fixed smile as well as a frown above his glazed, tearful and misty eyes, Davey left the classroom. Of course, he did NOT do it politely or quietly, as per School Policy’s Rules for the Ingress and Egress of Classrooms, the sound of him slamming the door behind him gave ample proof of that.

Moments later saw him storming into an astounded Headmaster’s office, announcing, “That’s it, sod the bloody stupid School Policy, I bloody well quit, no notice. I am damn-well outta here, as of now!”

He then took another deep breath before returning the way he had arrived, and storming back to Room Seven. Once back in his room he deliberately ignored the child with the cigarette, who appeared to be busy throwing up in his wastepaper bin, thinking something wrong the lines of, 'serves her bloody well right'.

He strode purposefully to his desk and began the task of clearing it out.

He set his mind to just that one task, to the exclusion of all else, after that he would do the same to his locker in the staff room, then it was out to the car park, into Hunk-a-Junk and away, for ever!

Two things happened quite quickly just then; firstly, the hair of the smoking and puking Mevagissey twin caught fire as it brushed against the flame of her still lit lighter, and it began to smoulder, secondly, the other Mevagissey twin, seeing what was happening to her sister’s hair, let out an almighty, agonised and terrified scream.

He was just gathering up the first of his meagre personal items, about to stuff them into an old ASDA plastic shopping bag, when the school counsellor stuck her head in the door to see what all the ruckus was about.

The next few seconds became permanently imprinted into Davey’s memory, where they seemed to be drawn out into what felt like hours.

Davey’s subconscious mind seemed to do several things at once.

It appraised the situation with the puking twin, whom he suddenly knew to be Melisandra, and whose hair was starting to sizzle and smoke.

It cleared the knot of anger he had been feeling in his chest, completely.

It also cleared all thoughts of resignation from his mind.

And it took complete control of his subsequent actions.

Looking back later, he would feel as he just went into auto-pilot though

Davey dropped everything he had just collected together back onto his desk.

He grabbed his jacket from the back of his chair.

He leapt over his desk, which separated him from the stricken child.

He landed right beside an obviously panicking Melisandra Mevagissey.

His left arm went around her upper body, pinning her flailing arms to her side as he pulled her away from the waste bin that he had just made her drop.

With his right hand he slapped the lighter from her hand, she had at last thought to shut it off.

He draped his jacket over her head and started to rub it against the burning side of her hair.

Then, with a quick check to make sure that the burning had been smothered effectively, he used both arms to hug her trembling body tight to his chest.

He did not notice the tear that rolled, slowly, down his cheek.

All the while he had been gently talking to her, calling her by her name, saying things like, “S’okay Mellie, I’ve got you safe, It’ll be okay, you’re gonna be okay, I’ve got you Mellie, my dear.” He kept whispering, “Ssh, ssh, it’s okay now, Mell, it’s gonna be alright, I’ve got you safe, now, ssh” and repeating it over and over, as he gently cradled her to his chest.

He then stood up slowly, still with the shaking and now sobbing girl who had curled up into a ball, cradled in his arms, and turned towards the door of the classroom.

It was only then that he noticed that the hard knot of anger that had been hurting in his breast had completely vanished, in its place grew a tiny, bright new spark of compassion.

Counsellor Caught

Angela Jones, the recently appointed school’s counsellor, had just opened the door to Room Seven, Mr Hepscott’s class, and was ready to step into the classroom to investigate the shouting, when she heard the most awful screeching sound coming from within.

Startled, she poked her head in, to look for the child responsible for that hideous noise.

She was all set to give him, or more likely her, one of her withering stares, when she caught sight of a child, a girl, bending over a waste bin and, apparently, being violently sick. At the same time, she realised that the girl's hair was on fire, and, catching the acrid smell of burning hair, and she almost gagged as well.

Ms Jones just froze on the spot, her mind suddenly completely blank, she seemed unable to think or do anything. Then, when her mind had finally re-booted, all she could think of in that first moment was, that this was definitely not covered by Policy, but it was her job to see that Policy was strictly adhered to.

Before her panic could set back in, Ms Jones forced herself to start thinking coherently. 'What am I supposed to do? No, think like Policies, what am I allowed to do?' She told herself, sternly. She knew only too well that the County's Schools Policy only allowed for certain actions, and reactions, and those only to specified incidents. But she just knew that nothing like this was supposed to be able to happen in a school, because there was no laid down Policy in place for this sort of incident!

A stray thought crossed her mind at that point, 'Hmph! If Policy doesn't cover it, it should not, could not, happen, full stop!'

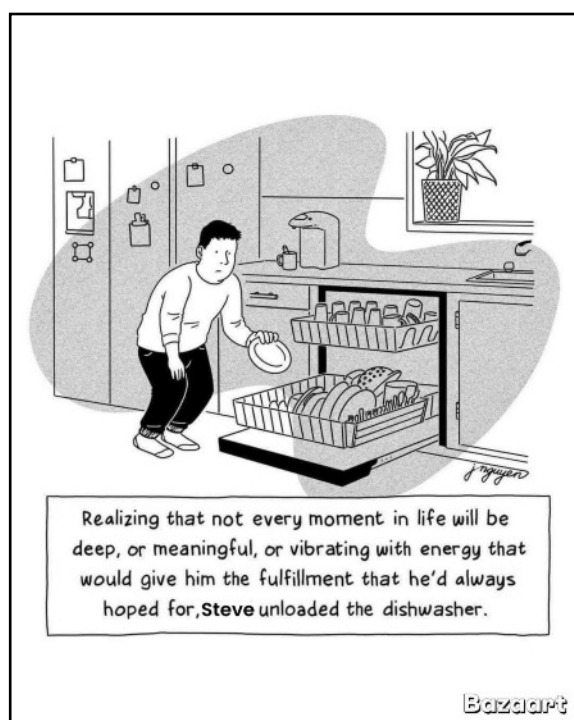
Her next thought was to go and, 'Get help, yes, that's what I could do,' she thought, but the smells and the sight that she had encountered set off a far more primal reactive instinct; she actually panicked at that point. Primal instinct takes precedence over rational thought and action when panic sets in, so Angela Jones, in her panic, did almost everything that Policy forbade.

She ran, not walked, back down the corridor to where she knew there was an emergency alarm switch. All the cautions and warnings of Policy were now completely banished from her mind by the wave of panic washing over her, and she grabbed at alarm switch's handle and pulled it, hard, instantly setting off the school's alarm sirens. She then ran on further, to the reception desk, where she grabbed up the public address microphone, and... and... And her mind blanked out, again, she could not think of what she was, or wasn't, supposed to say? She knew, somewhere deep in her memory, that there were code phrases to use, but they just would not come to mind at that moment, so she just pressed the button and said the first thing that came into her head.

"Urgent! Medical emergency in Room Seven", she repeated it a couple of times, the panic making her voice creep higher and more strident with each word. Suddenly, the Headmaster burst from his office, hit the alarm cut-off button, and snatched the microphone from Angela's shaking hands. He then steered her gently, yet firmly, into his office before she could say another word.

In the back of her still panicked mind, she understood that her actions had been an intolerable breach of Policy, and that she was the one person who should have been able to keep calm and not panic. And she was that one person who should have been able to follow the procedures laid down in Policy, to the letter. The headmaster had just seated her on the chair directly in front of his desk, and was waiting for her to resume some form of normality and, from the look on his face, was about to give her some counselling of his own when... Mr Hepscott stepped, calmly in on them, a child in his arms, with her head wrapped in a coat of some sort.

To be continued



Old age is just walking around
all day muttering things like:

What was I going to say?

Why did I come here?

Did I take my pills already??

How did I get this bruise?

Why am I sore?

Where did I leave my phone?

A Greek Tragedy with Turkish Delight - by John Swarbrick (62A)

Artificer Vehicle course 275 were overjoyed when we received our postings in June 1974. Firstly, it was a good indication that we had passed the course and were going to become 'Tiffies,' and secondly a realisation that after eighteen-months of being a 'student', we would soon be leaving SEME for pastures new. I was especially pleased to find myself destined for the 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers, which after numerous amalgamations is now the Royal Lancers (Queen Elizabeths' Own). I had previously served four and half years with 1st Royal Tank Regiment, and although being a VM 'B' Mech, I had resisted all efforts for me to convert to 'A' Mech. Even so, I just liked being with armour, so a posting to calvary with associated history and somewhat elitist persona was for me!

The regiment at that time was scattered to the winds, 'C' Sqn being in Hong Kong, 'B' in Cyprus and 'A' along with 'HQ' Sqn and RHQ in Tidworth. Guess which Squadron I was destined for! You guessed it, but before my eagerly awaiting departure from Bordon, I found that my new 'EME' had loaded me onto a CVR(T) Auto course which was to start a few days after completing 'Tiffy.' So, I couldn't escape Bordon just yet, but on completion of the course, I loaded my beat-up old VW Beetle and headed for my new home at Aliwal Barracks on the edge of Salisbury Plain. (CVR(T) for those who don't know, or can't remember, is Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked), a family of light tracked armoured vehicles names of which all begin with 'S', a variant of which was Scorpion, which had a 76mm gun and a crew of three.)

A new posting is the same wherever you go, 'booking in,' finding your way around, meeting people and, being single, settling into the WO and Sgt's Mess. The RSM was a formidable character of 'the old school' but affectionately known throughout the Regiment as 'Father,' but not to his face! He was shortly to retire from the service and so was living in the mess, making the atmosphere a little constrained, especially as one was required to wear collar and tie for evening meals (silver service) and expected to remain in the bar afterwards for drinks! I was going to enjoy this posting!

The EME informed me that the Regiment wouldn't be split up for long, as it would shortly be re-united and posted to Wolfenbüttel in W. Germany, taking over from the 17th/21st Lancers. He lamented that unfortunately he, and the ASM, would not be going, as they were to remain in Tidworth, and we were to 'inherit' the incumbents already in post in Germany. I would however be taking the whole of my newly acquired fitters' section, a mix of trades, ranks and experience chief of whom was my 2 i/c, Sgt George Zammit. As his name implies George was Maltese, but what he didn't know about CVR(T) wasn't worth knowing! The immediate priority was to prepare for the upcoming PRE (Periodic REME Examination), but with limited track mileage permitted at that time, the vehicles were in pretty good order.

On learning of our imminent departure from the UK, I decided that a new tax-free car was the order of the day. I opted for a Volvo 144 and duly presented the customs forms to my boss to certify the validity. "You can't buy that" was his response. "Why not?" was mine. "Because that is a better car than that owned by the Colonel." That's cavalry for you! Nevertheless, the forms were duly signed and sent off. Word travels fast in a 'family' regiment, and it wasn't long before the Colonel appeared in the LAD, not specifically about the car, but conducting a pre-PRE inspection. "Staff." "Colonel," I replied. The CO liked to be addressed as such by his senior ranks as opposed to 'Sir', another cavalry thing and a formality I continued for the rest of my service, much to the bewilderment of some future senior officers! "I understand you are buying a new car. Do you realize that I'm now going to have to change mine?" And he did, as when we arrived in Germany, he was the proud owner of a Volvo 244, a newer model than mine! But I digress.

Tensions had been bubbling up in Cyprus for some time, indeed, the animosity between Greek and Turk goes back centuries, a history too long to relate here. On 15th July 1974 there was a coup d'état ordered by the Greek military junta in Athens. In short, the Cypriot Greek National Guard supported by EOKA B (a Greek nationalist terrorist organisation) deposed the President, Archbishop Makarios and replaced him with the ultra-Greek nationalist, Nicos Sampson. This raised fears in Turkey that Cyprus was about to be governed totally by Greece to the detriment of the Turkish population, a situation not acceptable to Ankara. Subsequently, despite diplomatic efforts by third parties, the only solution open to Turkey was to physically take control of territory to protect Turkish Cypriot interests. All of this did not affect the British stationed in the two Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) the western one being at Akrotiri and the eastern at Dhekelia, but of course close monitoring of the situation appraised the UK government of developments, which resulted in the UK based elements of the 16th/5th Lancers being placed on 72 hrs notice to move at 0845 hrs on Friday 19th July. The Turkish invasion of the island commenced on 20th July.

Frantic activity ensued, and by that Friday afternoon the 72 hrs notice had been reduced to 24. Telephone calls to people on leave for recall, loading of vehicles, checking kit, all that you would expect of a unit about to be deployed 'for real.' Before the 24 hrs notice had expired, we had been deployed to South Cerney, (Joint Air Mounting Centre) in preparation for movement to Cyprus. I would have liked to see the faces of the PRE Team who turned up the next day to find a near deserted barracks and a unit otherwise deployed on 'operational commitments'!

Scorpion is a relatively light vehicle and powered by a 4.2 litre Jaguar petrol engine (later replaced by diesel during a vehicle upgrade program). This gave it a good power to weight ratio, and it was a delight to see the faces of truckers and car drivers alike when finding themselves in a convoy of tracked vehicles travelling at speeds of up to 50 mph! South Cerney didn't last long, and we were soon on our way to RAF Lyneham, where our Hercules C130 chariots awaited. In

total the RAF transported some 7 officers, 87 OR's, 15 Scorpion, 4 Land Rovers (2 with trailers), 7 Ferret scout cars and Bedford trucks, all in 17 aircraft.



The first Scorpion in Cyprus

The flight to Cyprus was non-stop taking some six hours. On arrival at Akrotiri, we disembarked and took pleasure in basking in the warm Cypriot sunshine, until that is an RAF load master instructed us to offload our vehicles and reload them onto other C130s. "Why," we asked. Apparently, we were to fly onward to the eastern SBA to an airstrip deemed to be 'short and tactical' for which the UK crews were not cleared/qualified to land on. "Why not just change the crews?" Not that simple, as it would appear that RAF bureaucracy can be as bewildering as that in the Army!

The ensuing flight took less than 30 minutes, south out over the Mediterranean, so as not to confuse the Turks, and then turning north to approach Kingsfield airstrip in the eastern SBA. On landing, with full reverse propeller pitch and clouds of dust, we quickly disembarked and viewed, with some realisation that this was no

exercise, a corrugated iron hanger style shelter (the only building at Kingfield) full of civilians, men, women and children from numerous nations, dressed only in what they had been wearing on the beach at Famagusta, and carrying towels and other beach paraphernalia. Everything else, including passports, had been abandoned in hotels, such was the urgency to evacuate Famagusta as the Turks advanced upon it. These people quickly boarded the aircraft which then made the return flight to Akrotiri, where there was a massive operation in progress by international airlines to repatriate their citizens to their respective countries.

We were to be based at Pergamos camp (now demolished) which was situated to the north of the SBA and adjacent to a Turkish village of the same name, which was just outside the SBA boundary. The camp was the base for 'B' Sqn 16th/5th, but after helping with the ongoing evacuation of Famagusta, they had been deployed north to Nicosia only then to be 'transferred' to come under command of the United Nations, and they spent the rest of the emergency based at Nicosia airport, thereby preventing the Turks from including it in their territorial acquisitions. It remains in the UN monitored 'buffer zone' to this day. Another reason for their deployment was that they were still equipped with Saladin, Saracen and Ferret, and being wheeled, albeit aging vehicles, were deemed to be more politically acceptable than the tracked Scorpion.

On our arrival, the camp was being guarded by a company from 41 Commando RM and was also occupied by some 200 civilian refugees. We soon settled in, and the Lancers began patrols of the SBA boundaries and making Turkish troops fully aware of their international responsibilities. The refugees soon departed, and the Marines were eventually replaced by a platoon from the 10th Queen's Gurkha Rifles (Princess Mary's Own) who not only protected the camp but also manned observation posts. With them came a CQMS, a certain Rambahadur Limbu VC. It was indeed an honour to meet a VC holder, but what happened one morning is something I suspect very few serving soldiers have had the privilege of doing. There is an unwritten military tradition that ALL ranks salute the holder of a Victoria Cross. Nothing is written in Queen's/King's regulations that this should be done, it's just one of those traditions in the army passed down over the years, after all, the late Queen when passing VC and GC holders during parades, used to recognise them by nodding her head. I was stood with my SSM outside the Sergeant's Mess when Limbu appeared. The SSM snapped to attention and saluted. Not to be outdone I followed suit, to which Limbu replied along the lines of "Thank you Sergeant Major, not many people do that these days." (Limbu won his VC as a private in Borneo in 1965, was eventually commissioned and served as the late Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer. He retired in 1985 and died in 2023 aged 83).

The initial Turkish invasion had petered out, (the end of what became known as Phase 1), so much so that the Squadron was visited by Brig W.P.W. Robertson OBE (Commander Eastern Cyprus) on 8th August who informed us that we would be returning to the UK between the 20th and 25th of August. The Turks had other ideas. British intelligence reports on 12th and 13th of August strongly suggested that the Turks were about to initiate a Phase 2 to their invasion commencing on the 14th. Sure enough, the audible sound of an artillery and aerial attack on Nicosia could be heard at Pergamos, some 20 miles distant as the crow flies, and the Turks were advancing along a wide front to secure what territory they could, included a further push toward Famagusta, before the inevitable intervention by the UN or whoever.

In the meantime, REME support was being provided where needed, with repairs being undertaken in the LAD accommodation at Pergamos or in situ wherever equipment was deployed. This meant travelling out to various locations by Land Rover. The protocol was for all troops when travelling



Minor repair. George Zammit on the left

outside of base locations to be armed. This was my first experience of being so, (I had not yet served in Northern Ireland), without the strict controls imposed whilst being on ranges etc. I immediately recalled the wise words of Sgt Gerry Swallow REME (RIP) my permanent staff wing sergeant at Arborfield in 1962/3. A great guy, who's words of wisdom I'm sure helped to steer many of us through the years that were to follow. "Remember this," he said. "There are soldiers, weapons and ammunition. Mix any two in perfect safety but put all three together and you have a potential disaster on your hands." Bearing this in mind and for safety's sake, I would have to keep a close eye on everyone's weapon handling!

One location visited was at Ayios Nikolaos. This was still within the SBA but somewhat 'out on a limb' being connected to the main Dhekelia SBA by a single road. It was on higher ground and overlooked Famagusta which was only some 4 to 5 miles away. It was then and still is today the main 'listening post' in the middle east, monitoring and gathering all sorts of intelligence and radio traffic. It was occupied by 9 Signal Regiment plus numerous 'civilians' from various other 'agencies.' There were satellite dishes and 'golf balls' in abundance, so obviously a vital asset that could not be compromised. The journey to this 'outpost' was by the single road, and I will always remember driving along it whilst in the opposite direction streams of refugees were making their way to safety in the main SBA. It was surreal, and triggered memories of watching those old black and white 1950's war movies, of France just before Dunkirk. Carts, cars, bicycles, men, women and children all displaced and now seeking refuge. The only thing missing was the Messerschmitt's and Stukas strafing the road! We completed our tasks and then had the opportunity to observe the continuing Turkish advance on Famagusta from our vantage point. Tanks rolling across the terrain firing their main armament whilst F100 Super Sabers bombed and strafed Greek position from the air using rockets and napalm. But it was not all plain sailing for the Turks as recorded by this extract from the 'A' Sqn operation diary for 15th August:



Checkpoint duty

'At 1800hrs a Turkish M47 tank drove up to the roadblock at GR 815840 where 3rd Troop were on duty. The tank commander was lost, he had no main armament ammunition left, his secondary armament was jammed, his wireless did not work, he had no map, and his tank had almost run out of petrol! CO 9 Signal Regiment authorised the issue of some petrol, and the tank was escorted off the SBA'. As a member of NATO, let's hope that training in the Turkish army has since improved!

'All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.' How true. With the situation stabilizing, and the final lines of demarcation being established, it was time for all ranks to 'wind down' and enjoy some of the pleasures that Cyprus provides. A member of the Sgts Mess at Pergamos was an RAF Sergeant, who had good relations with the local Turkish village nearby. After a trip by car to Dhekelia, it was suggested that we end the evening with a drink in the aforementioned village. We were stopped at the outskirts of the village by local Turkish 'Militia,' civilians, untrained but

armed. I was sat in the rear of the car, and of course the windows were wound down. A discussion ensued, during which the barrel of an old Thompson sub-machine gun was 'plonked' on the open window frame pointing directly at my head. A Thompson is a 0.45" calibre weapon, and I can assure you, that when looking down the business end of that weapon it looked a whole lot bigger, and in the hands of an untrained 'amateur.' We were denied access, common sense prevailed, and we retired to the Sgt's Mess for our night caps!

'B' Sqn departed Pergamos in a hurry, so when we arrived, we simply picked up where they left off. This included taking over some eight Suzuki motorbikes. I can't remember the model, but they were more like scooters than bikes. We used them all the time and greatly reduced the wear on our boots! One day SSgt Danny Lee 16th/5th, and a qualified driving examiner, approached me. "John" he said. "Have you got a bike licence?" I replied in the negative. "Well, you have now. I've been watching you driving around the camp on that Suzuki, and I am satisfied that you are competent." That's how I obtained, and still hold a full bike licence, yet I have no interest whatsoever in two wheeled transport!

Being cavalry, a minor 'emergency' wouldn't disrupt mess life, and we managed to hold two mess dinners, borrowing the mess silver being held by 'B' Sqn at the time. Both functions were a huge success, and the usual mess 'antics' ensured that activities the next day were carried out at a somewhat reduced pace!

'A' Squadron 16th/5th Lancers were deployed to Cyprus in support of troops already there, to present a visible armoured presence, and to ensure that Turkish forces respected the territorial integrity of the SBA, which they did. Only one 'contact' was made, when three rounds of HE was fired at an observation post at Ayios



On Patrol

Nikolaos for which the Turks admitted was in error. There were no casualties. Apart from one broken ankle, the Squadron suffered no other injuries during the deployment.

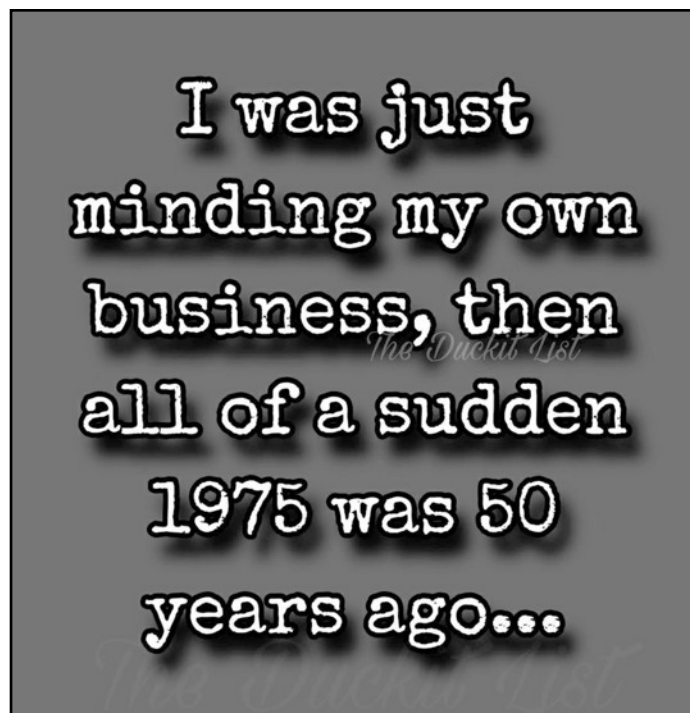
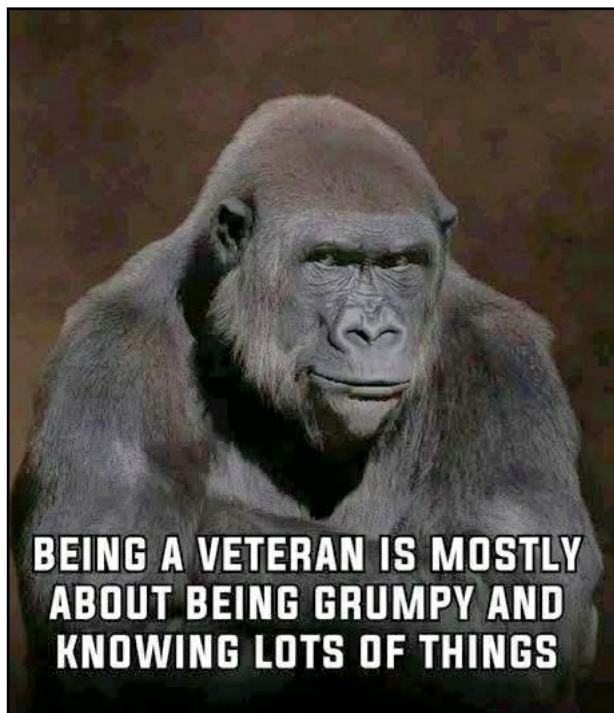
A lot has been said about Scorpion, but much work was undertaken by our Ferret scout cars. Apart from manning OP's and roadblocks, they carried out numerous escort duties including the evacuation of High Commission staff and sensitive radio equipment from Nicosia into the SBA, and the collection from the Bank of Cyprus in Nicosia of some £270k (£3.5m today) to pay SBA personnel.

REME support throughout the deployment was total, and we fulfilled all tasks asked of us (as expected). Apart from the usual 'run-of-the-mill' repairs, we changed three Scorpion engines and two gearboxes. CVR(T) is easy to work on, and major assemblies can be changed by first line LAD personnel providing the lift capability is available. Overall, an experience I'm glad to have been a part of, and I went on to serve with the regiment for three years in what without doubt was the best posting of my career.

Finally, on 7th Sept we received word that we would be returning to the UK between 10th to 16th Sept. On 13th 'B' Sqn, relieved of their UN duties, returned to Pergamos, and the day after, 'A' Sqn was relieved of all commitments in Cyprus. All our vehicles were to return to UK by sea aboard the RFA 'Sir Geraint' with a small party of drivers, but the remainder of the Squadron returned to the UK via RAF Akrotiri on 15th September. We collected the vehicles some five days later from Marchwood. Job done!

Some facts to finish. During the initial invasion of 20th July, the Turks occupied approximately 3% of the island. Following Phase 2, Turkish forces enlarged their original holding to approximately 36% of the island. The final cease fire line became known as the 'Green Line.' Approximately 150,000 people (amounting to more than one-quarter of the total population of Cyprus, and one-third of its Greek Cypriot population) were displaced from the northern part of the island, where Greek Cypriots had constituted 80% of the population. Over the course of the next year, roughly 60,000 Turkish Cypriots, amounting to half the Turkish Cypriot population, were displaced from the south to the north. The Turkish invasion ended in the partition of Cyprus along the UN-monitored 'Green Line', which still divides Cyprus to this day, and the formation of a de facto Autonomous Turkish Cypriot Administration in the north. In 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) declared independence, although Turkey is the only country that recognises it. The international community considers the TRNC's territory as Turkish-occupied territory of the Republic of Cyprus. The occupation is viewed as illegal under international law, amounting to illegal occupation of EU territory since Cyprus became a member on 1st May 2004.

John Swarbrick 62A



Canon the Reverend Beverley John 66C



My friend, what a sad day for us all when you finally gave into the pain and suffering and said goodbye to us all.

I recall the article written by you, Bev, and re-published in OBAN 87 and I have taken a few extracts here.....

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

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

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

We were herded into the WRVS for squad allocations and in no time at all I found myself in 'D' Squad. We were marched (marched?) to Junior Company Block and sent to Charlie for a light trim (remember this was the 60s!), then, 'that' form to fill in. We were all helped by an A/T NCO and here I met, for the first time, A/T Cpl Johnny Hartley (a Brummie, I seem to remember). Filling in the form was proceeding to plan until we arrived at the little box marked, 'Denomination'.

Now, as you have already read, the number of denominations in my family was confusing and here I was trying to decide which of these denominations had had the major influence on me "Well," I said, "I'm a Christian." Johnny Hartley's reaction, having had to fill so many other forms, no doubt, was completely barren of patience. He roared, "We're all *#*##* Christians! WHAT DENOMINATION ARE YOU!!" Timidly, I replied that I wasn't sure. Then he roared words that would open a door for me that would slowly, but surely, change my life. "I'LL STICK YOU DOWN AS C of E!!"

Had I chosen a particular denomination or, out of exasperation, had he put me down on the form as OD (other denomination, of course), then there would be no church service, I would have simply sat in a room for an hour, reading a book. But Johnny Hartley had pushed open that door and I walked straight through realising it at the time what lay ahead.

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

I was posted to Tidworth in 1969 and met and married Sher in 1970 and, eventually, we were allocated a married quarter. One Sunday morning (for old times' sake, really) I went to a service and was amazed to discover that the service of Padre Woods or both, had ignited a 'God spark' within me. I felt compelled to attend not only a service every Sunday, but all three Sunday services.

Sher and I actually entered civvy street in 1976 and moved to Clydach, in the Swansea Valley, in 1977. We regularly attended the local church and it wasn't long before my vocational conviction returned and continued to intensify. In 1980, there was a moment (when, like John Wesley, "I felt my heart strangely warmed").

I knew, then, without any shadow of doubt, that Christ had died for me, (you, too, of course), taking on himself the punishment I deserved, for things I had said or done, in order that my relationship with God might be restored. My relationship with God was, for him, more important than life itself. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' What a message to share!



I spoke with our vicar many times until, gradually, he became convinced that God was, indeed, calling me to the priesthood. Following his recommendation, Sher and I successfully negotiated several selection boards, sometimes

together, sometimes as individuals and there followed two years theological study at Trinity College, Carmarthen and two years theological study at Queen's College, Birmingham.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

God bless you, Johnny.

Canon Bev John 66A

I moved to Merthyr Tydful in 2002 I think and soon became aware of Bev working as a local vicar. Of course we had to get together and he came to see me in my office. With his Dog Collar on he raised my street cred with the local office people and my time as an English/Australian interloper were over. We chatted often and he said I al-

ways made him laugh. We both laughed.

We had dinner with Bev and Sher one evening in Brecon and he charmed everyone we met. I think he was the Cannon at Brecon cathedral at the time so I am sure quite a few people knew him.

Bev joined the 66ers group and became friends with many of us, some used to visit him at home in Clydach. He charmed everyone he came into contact with and I never heard him say a cross word. I must admit we did share a saucy joke when the photo on the right was taken

He was the nicest man I have ever had the pleasure to meet. Although we didn't cross paths too many times at Arborfield It was my pleasure to have known you in later life. Many people use the term 'Gentleman' loosely but you were indeed a Gentleman and I am proud to have known you.

God bless you, Bev.

Andy Dickson 66B



