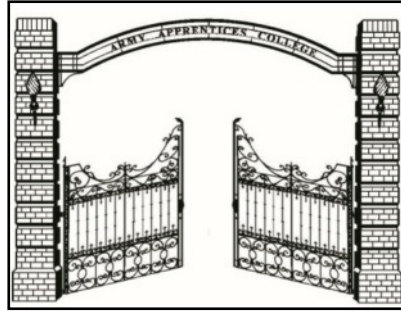


**Dec
2025**



**Issue
92**

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

James Pittick - (93B)

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: Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh - Colonel in Chief REME

Rear Cover: Get on Parade! Horse Guards November 2025

Members Passed since OBAN 91

Name	Div	DOD	Informant
Gordon Gregg	46B	13 August 2025	Anne Gregg
George Marshall	46B	06 September 2025	Carolyn Marshall
Frank Hodson	48B	21 August 2025	Sandy Hederley
Bernard Gauntlett	50B	11 September 1972	Alan Bonesey
Eric Thorpe	51A	23 August 2025	Maurice Hope
Robert Holden	52B	26 July 2025	Zoe Holden
William Summersgill	52B		
Clive Soord	54B	28 July 2025	Leonard Symonds
John Tinkham	56C	05 August 2025	Tony Tinkham
Robert (Bob) Sleep	57A	22 October 2025	Roger Traves
Carmel (Tony) Vella	59C	22 October 2025	Marite Vella
David Stewart	62C	01/11/2025	Stacey Stewart
David Symonds	64C		Terry Guy
Jeff Wood	66C	20 September 2025	Tony7 Wood
RSM Lincoln Perkins	233/236	19 July 2025	Dave Alexander
Jimmy Richardson	78A		Facebook
Glen Hamilton	89C		Keith Davies

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;
 So sleep your sleep Old Soldier - Friend, contented, knowing in the end,
 That all your friends will pause awhile and fondly think of you – and smile.

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	James Pittick	At AGM	Appointed Oct 2025
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



Glad tidings one and all!

So, it's already Christmas again – how!? Tempus really does fugit as one gets less young each year!

I hope this edition finds you all well and thriving in whatever you are doing. I was delighted to hear that Andy the Ed is back home from his latest hospital visit and has his head buried once more into producing this wonderful magazine on our behalf – I know you will all join me in thanking him for his tireless efforts.

Another incredible Remembrance Weekend has recently passed which began on the Saturday night at the Victory Services Club where we enjoyed a superb meal and a few quiet beers. Then, early on Sunday morning, we assembled on Horse Guards, alongside 10000 other veterans, before marching past the Cenotaph in front of the King and the Duchess of Edinburgh (who was wearing the REME Princess Marina brooch). Crowds cheered and applauded along the whole route and, on my return home, discovered that the full AOBA contingent got some decent coverage on the BBC!

Speaking of remembrance, it's really important that we don't forget those members who might be alone or struggling at this time of year. If you haven't spoken to your mates for a while, just take 5 minutes to give them a call and check that they're doing ok.

Looking forward, next year's reunion will be in the same place at the Holiday Inn in Birmingham over the weekend 12 – 14 Jun 26, for which you should have all received booking details from Isle of Wight Tours. There have already been 120 bookings so please get yours in soon if you haven't already done so – looks like it will be another bumper year.

In closing, I'd like to thank your whole committee for their hard work over this last year and welcome 2 new committee members – James Pittick, who has taken over from Bruce Leslie as Recruitment Officer and Alistair Weir who will take over from Bob McKeegan-Brown as Treasurer in due course.

Have a wonderful Christmas everyone and I hope the festive season is one you can all enjoy surrounded by your loved ones.

Arte et Marte,

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



Secretary's Report



Greetings,

Short and sweet!

I know it's a cliché that time passes faster with age, but this year does seem to have flown by, and I've already started my fourth year aboard The Polar Express at South Devon Railway. Ninety shows over fifteen days after three days of rehearsals. Spending six weeks in the company of 50 young people from the performing world is just glorious as the energy from them takes years off me (I think!).

We are already looking ahead to the next reunion in June, revisiting the Holiday Inn near Walsall over the weekend of Friday 12th – Sunday 14th. Booking forms are already available as are additional nights. All the details can be found via Isle of Wight Tours.

As usual we will be having our AGM on the Saturday afternoon so if you have any agenda items, please let me know in good time.

May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas – Nadelik Lowen!!

Nigel Canning 77C

Recruitment Officers Report



Hello, gents.

I'm very pleased to be joining the AOBA committee and looking forward to supporting efforts to grow our membership. I suspect I am one of the later intakes within our membership base currently, having started my REME journey at Princess Marina College on a cold morning, 28th February 1993 - Intake 93B.

I had wanted to be a VM, but due to the intake being over subscribed with that trade I was offered an Apprenticeship as an Armourer. After being a little unsure initially, I quickly realised that I wanted to join the Army and learn a trade, so decided to carry on!

Having completed the obligatory basic training in J Coy, there was an opportunity to switch trades (due to some apprentices leaving during this phase) so I grabbed that opportunity to change and started trade training as a VM! I loved trade training and didn't really appreciate at the time but now understand that I respond better to learning through practical application, so a mechanical engineer apprenticeship was perfect for me.

I was Posted to 3 (UK) Div HQ & Sig Regt LAD REME at Bulford and quickly settled into my new home, before being deployed to Bosnia, the first deployment under NATO, initially to Gornji Vakuf and then on to Banja Luka. I was then sent on a short-term detachment to Blandford, before returning to Bulford.

My time in the Army was cut short unfortunately. An ankle injury sustained during training saw an earlier than planned entry to civvy street in late 1998. My REME journey was short but has had a profound effect on who I became, and I look back on this time of my life with great pride and a deep seeded respect for all who have served. I've spent the last 25 years working in sales, predominantly in the tech industry. 15 of which were with Canon where I ended up leading the reseller channel for the UK and Ireland.

I am keen to find apprentices from intakes across the 1980's and 1990's to bolster our numbers, so this is where my focus will lie initially. A good many from these intake years will still be in work, so I will be setting up a profile on LinkedIn to actively promote the association. I'm looking forward to providing more updates in the coming months.

James Pittick - 93B

Webmaster Report



Hello, All.

The main update is, we have changed Website administrator from Mark Jobes to Zeb Mansfield.

There are no known issues and we average 16 visitors a day.
Website stats.

In the last 12 months we have had:

- just under 6000 visitors to the site - down 400 on previous 12 months.
 - just over 23000 views - down 8% from last year
 - There are 703 users registered on the site.
- 2/3rds of visits were from desktops, and a 1/3 from mobile devices.

**Best regards,
Zeb Mansfield 77C**

Views	
England	17,109
Scotland	1,146
Wales	800
Nothern Ireland	310
Sachsen	293
Neidersachsen	248
California	224
Arizona	203
Virginia	195
Victoria	171
Greater Wellington	155
New South Wales	140
Nordrhein Westfalen	116



Membership Secretary's Report



Greetings.

And there it was, gone!

That glorious hot summer with long days of sunshine. Like true Brits most conversations around our parts involved moaning about it being too hot, not enough water for the garden, fires ruining our green and pleasant land etc etc. It just wouldn't be Britain if we didn't have a good old moan, eh? But long may it continue I say.

One of my great benefits during hot summer months is that I have a two-seater soft-top convertible and this year we have covered many a mile with the top down driving around quite country lanes and visiting a variety of pubs, cafes and restaurants. Particularly enjoyable was a trip to Pembrokeshire where we enjoyed the quietest of roads, great views, stunning coastlines and, unbeknown to us, the best two restaurants we have come across for a long time. One Italian and one Pan Asian where the food and service were second to none. Without a doubt, when the sun shines in the UK there is not much that can beat it.

And now as winter envelopes us, the car is largely mothballed and I prepare myself for conversations that it is too cold, too wet, too dark etc etc! Oh yes, and the price of energy, the latest to join the list.

We continue to receive a steady input of 'old boys' joining our group. Despite the ravages of time we are still able to maintain steady membership numbers. Hopefully, with many more future reunions to go this steady number of new members will continue. You can always do your bit by introducing the association to your intake friend and acquaintances and encouraging them to join. Also, as I am sure our magazine editor will cover, write about you experiences when you were a proud member of REME. On both counts the more the merrier.

And so all it leaves me to do is to wish you all a very Merry Christmas (possibly belated?) and the very best for 2026. Let it continue to be a safe and healthy one for you all.

Cheers

Bob Cassidy 65B

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report



Hello to all members.

Once again, I can say that our database and data protection measures all appear to be working without any issues.

The "Data (Use and Access) Act 2025" that came into force this year did not require any changes to the AOBA procedures we already had in place.

In June 2025, Microsoft announced the end of our free licences to use "SharePoint".

This is the system we use for storage and security of our data.

Andy Dickson has successfully organised a new paid for "Premium SharePoint" contract.

This provides the security and usage needs that we previously had. The security provisions were sadly lacking in the 2 cheaper options provided by Microsoft.

We have reduced the number of committee members who required a licence. What was free, does now cost the AOBA about £240/Yr. (4 licences @ £60/Yr incl VAT) This is after a very substantial Microsoft discount for "Non-Profit" status.

Our project to have a roll call of AOBA apprentices continues. We currently have over 10,500 ex apprentice names and intakes confirmed.

Due to changes in organisation and apprentices time at Arborfield some just 4 months in the later years of Arborfield's existence the individual apprentice cards and Apprentice newsletter seem to have stopped being available.

For these latter years, I am using the PoP programs which list the apprentices passing out. I can spend an hour identifying specific pages from the programs.

These are photographed and forwarded to me by the extremely helpful and knowledgeable members of the REME museum archive department. I can then collate the names in my own time at home. Once I have added the names, collected in this way in Oct 2025 I expect the total confirmed names to exceed 15,000.

My next visit is timed to be in conjunction with the next committee meeting in Feb 2026.

Jeff Baker 65C
DBO/DPO

Treasurer's Report



Gents,

The current state of finances is as follows:

Current Account £ 4,254.34

Business Account £37,385.52

This shows a significant decrease from our opening funds on 1 Jan 25 which were:

Current Account £10,377.09

Business Account £48,960.17

The largest spends in 2025 were:

Reunion £9,865.40

OBAN £6,301.92

Donations £2,100.00

Our only income, now that we are no longer supported by the REME Charity, is from subscriptions and the Gift Aid which this accrues. As you can see, we are about £17.5 K worse off at the year end. This is why the vote at the AGM to increase the subscriptions to £25 was carried unanimously. To that end those paying by Direct Debit need to take no action as I have made the required changes. Those paying either by Stripe or PayPal will need to manually change your payment to £25 for any payments occurring after 1 Jan 26.

With the above changes our financial health will improve dramatically and we should be able to maintain the Association for many years to come.

Bob McKeegan-Brown - 69A

OBAN Editors Report



Hello, Gents.

Here we are again, December is upon us and the New Year is just around the corner. I hope I manage to stay out of hospital this year!

Thank you and welcome to our new committee members. It is great to see guys stepping up to keep our Association alive and healthy. It is also great we have some from the later Divs joining us.

I continue to be impressed by the efforts of Jeff Baker, our DBO/DPO officer. When he initially contacted me about joining the committee he freely admitted not knowing anything about Excel or databases in general. The amount of work he has put in to getting his knowledge up to speed shouldn't be underestimated. For my part, spreadsheets have been part of my working life for many years and I can't understand how you can go through life not knowing how they work. Even now, I track my blood pressure, physical exercises and exchange rates (Sterling v A\$) as we still have money in Australia, and I occasionally take a look at what Jeff is doing with the AOBA data.

My latest update on my stroke recovery and broken hip appears on pages 25 & 26. I was hoping I could cut back on my tales of woe in this OBAN but it seems there is more to report.

I am getting short of articles and stories to include in OBAN. I seem to be flush one edition and then the cupboard is bare the next time I look. I do scour the various Facebook pages related to the various Divs, REME and Arborfield related and contact individuals where I can. It would be nice if you guys just thought to send me articles as you post them, along with any photos.

If any of you think I could improve this newsletter in any way, please let me know. I get pretty much set in my ways and tend to keep the same format each edition. If you would like to see changes to the format just drop me a line via the Contact Page on the AOBA website.

Have a great Christmas and New Year everyone.

Andy Dickson 66B
Editor of the Association Newsletter

13 Commandments for Seniors

- Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.
- "In Style" are clothes that still fit.
- You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pi\$\$ing you off!
- Your people skills are fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.
- The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it".
- "On time" is when you get there.
- Even duct tape can't fix stupid, but it sure does muffle the sound.
- It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for 10 minutes and come out wrinkle free and three sizes smaller.
- Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.
- Growing old should have taken longer.
- Aging slows you down but it doesn't shut you up.
- You still haven't learned to act your age and hope you never will

..... And one more:

- "One for the road" means peeing before you leave the house.

A Brief Historical Survey

1939 – 1992

by Capt. (Retd.) D.B. Richards Dip. Ed. Tech.
with additional material by Major M.V. Costanzo R.E.M.E.

THE INFORMATION

The training of young tradesmen in the Army is by no means a recent innovation. Prior to World War II Artificers R.A., Armourers R.A.O.C. (both specialist trades) and other tradesmen for technical corps were trained at Woolwich, Hilsea and Chepstow. The boys were taken direct from school and taught a trade in a manner similar to industrial practice; except that the military apprentices were also trained as soldiers so that they could take their proper place in the regiments or corps to which they would eventually be posted. With mechanisation going ahead it was clear, by the early 1930s, that the Army would be unable to obtain enough tradesmen for its needs from adult enlistment and existing apprentice training units. Two hundred Fitter Apprentices were recruited and enlisted on 1st October 1936 of whom 100 started their training at Bramley and 100 at Hilsea. During the summer of 1939 around one dozen Bramley apprentices went to Woolwich to be trained as Instrument Mechanics, whilst the rest of the Bramley first intake, and a few of the Hilsea intake, proceeded to Aldershot to complete their training. Some older apprentices who completed training in 1939 served in France with the B.E.F. [*British Expeditionary Force*] in various Field Workshops. There was still a shortage of specialist soldier – tradesmen however, so it was decided to build three new Army Technical Schools at Arborfield, Fort Darland (Chatham) and Jersey (Channel Islands). These schools were to produce tradesmen for the special needs of R.A.O.C., R.E. and R.A.S.C. respectively.

Here then, we have the seed of our present Princess Marina College at Arborfield, over 50 years ago. The School was designed to house and train up to 1,000 apprentices at any one time.

Building at Arborfield began in 1938 on the site of the Remount Depot and quickly took shape; sports fields, workshops, offices, barrack rooms, gymnasium, NAAFI, Officers' Mess, Sergeants' Mess and a hospital. The buildings, like many others of that period, were constructed of wood and corrugated iron and fitted with hot water central heating – they were destined to be in use for 42 years. Long before they were completed the selection of staff was being considered and some of the first incumbents were as follows:

- Commandant and Chief Instructor: Colonel F.A. Hilborn, M.B.E. (late R.A.O.C.) [*Royal Army Ordnance Corps*]
- Deputy Chief Instructor: Major W. Tanner, R.A.O.C.
- Adjutant: Captain C. Morgan, S.W.B. [*South Wales Borderers*]
- Company Officers: Captains P. Kay, 5 D.G. [*5th Dragoon Guards*] and W. Hughes, S.W.B.
- Workshop Officers: Lieutenants G. Trevithick, R.A.O.C. and C. Zweigbergk, R.A.O.C.
- Chaplain: Reverend Squires, C.F.
- R.S.M.: B. Cook, Gren. Gds. [*Grenadier Guards*]
- Civilian Workshop Instructors: Mr. MacKereth, Mr. Pugh, Mr. Wheeler and many more of whom we have no record.

The Commandant and Deputy Chief Instructor were frequent visitors to the site, from Aldershot where they were serving, to advise on the construction and fitting out of the School. R.S.M. Ben Cook was Regimental Sergeant Major until 1941 when he was commissioned and became the School Quartermaster. In this appointment he was instrumental in laying out the playing fields, gardens and hedgerows of the camp area – no small task. In 1944 his work was recognised by the award of the M.B.E.

By 1st May 1939 the almost completed School was ready for its first intake of 400 boys who were badged R.A.O.C. The first prospective apprentice, J. Oakley, walked from Wokingham Station for fear that he would be late in reporting for duty. Later that month the square was completed but the workshops were not finished until June. Soon the familiar figure of R.S.M. Cook could be seen leading squads of small, newly-joined boy-soldiers and from a distance his somewhat rasping voice could be heard with remarks like: "Now, who is that officer over there? 'Aven't I already told yer?"

R.A.O.C. and R.A.S.C. [*Royal Army Service Corps*] boys were transferred to Arborfield from Jersey, Hilsea and Didcot, arriving during the summer months. Further intakes followed in October 1939 and in April and October 1940; and yet more arrived from Hilsea and Chepstow. The April 1941 intake of potential armourers was the last to be badged R.A.O.C. It was also in 1941 that the Drum and Fife Band was formed, composed entirely of ex-pupils from the Duke of York's School. They supported the band of the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards who were stationed at the School whilst the regiment was on active service. In January 1942, 250 new apprentices arrived. The first to be badged General Service Corps (G.S.C.). Significantly, from the formation of R.E.M.E. [*Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers*] in October 1942, all R.A.O.C. boys were re-badged R.E.M.E., the remainder keeping their G.S.C. badges. The School was thus, to all intents, the first School with a direct affiliation to the Corps.

Looking back to 1942 one must sympathise with the apprentices in their aversion to wearing brass ATS insignia on their epaulettes thus confusing them with the then familiar female element of the war-time Army. After the January 1943 intake, the powers-that-be took the point. Cloth shoulder flashes 'Army Technical School', in gold lettering on a black background, gave the more dignified title. It was in 1942 that "Monty" visited the School for the first time.

Apart from a break of 12 months (November 1939 – November 1940) when Colonel P.G. Davies, C.M.G., C.B.E., was in post, the first Commandant held the chair until September 1943. His regime thus saw, not only the opening of the School, but also the formation of R.E.M.E. Colonel Hilborn was the only Commandant to have served **a double tour and he was commemorated by having the then Stevenson Road (after the engineer) renamed Hilborn Road, in his honour.**

THE DISPERSAL

Colonel J.D. White, D.S.O., M.C., (late R.A.O.C.) took over as Commandant in October 1943. Two events of particular note during his tour were the 'dispersal' and the initiation of the Woolwich Arsenal Engineering Apprenticeship (later Cadetship) Scheme.

The Woolwich Apprenticeship Scheme was evolved to enable certain apprentices to proceed to Woolwich Polytechnic and the Royal Arsenal, with the object of taking a course culminating in the attainment of an engineering degree or diploma, thereby qualifying for an engineering commission. In November 1944 eight apprentices were selected for the course from candidates put forward by Arborfield and Chepstow. The same term a new commitment was placed upon the School, that of training apprentices as Draughtsmen (Mechanical). This was necessitated by the closing of the Army Apprentices School, Taunton.

The 'dispersal' took place at the time when the invasion forces were assembling for the Normandy landings; the School was evacuated and Arborfield became a concentration area for troops. Beginning on 17th April 1944, Colonel White's command was dispersed in detachments to Aldershot, Ashton-under-Lyne, Ashford (Kent), Bury (Twocross), Chilwell, Donnington, Greenford, Gopsall Hall (near Nuneaton), Old Dalby, Sevenoaks and Woolwich. The Aldershot detachment, of 115 apprentices, continued their trade training at 13 Command Workshop. Only 67 returned to Arborfield. Of the remainder, 29 had already passed their trade tests and were awaiting postings.

The 72 in the Ashton-under-Lyne detachment started at Aldershot in the Motor Fitters' School. They then went to Ashton-under-Lyne to the 14th Technical Training Centre, to complete the driving part of the course. 25 returned to Aldershot to await posting age.

The Ashford (Kent) detachment was 140 strong. Conditions were found to be much harsher than at Arborfield and they also experienced the whims of the flying bomb. The Bury detachment also found difficulties at first, in accommodation and training facilities, but soon settled down as a happy, compact unit sharing Lowestoft Camp with the School of Electric Lighting. The Chilwell detachment found considerable interest in attending workshops because of the variety of material being turned out for D-Day. Donnington, too, appears to have been a happy detachment; there were no complaints about the food, accommodation or training and there was no doubt that the boys left behind a good impression of the Army Technical School. The party sent to Greenford was composed almost entirely of Telecommunication and Instrument Mechanics, many of whom were at an advanced stage of their training. The first Arborfield-trained Telecommunication Mechanics were trade-tested there and obtained 100% pass rate. At Old Dalby there was a different story, with apprentices finding themselves having to sleep on straw palliasses with no sheets; but the war diary records that, like good soldiers, they enjoyed roughing it. At 17 Command Workshop they were glad of the help that the newly arrived apprentices were able to give with the pre D-Day activity but the record states that thereafter, owing to the non-availability of weapons, instruction inclined to the theoretical rather than practical. They too experienced the flying bomb during their stay. The Woolwich detachment of 20 apprentice Armourers and 20 Instrument Mechanics were attached to 7 Central Workshop. Life was decidedly unpleasant, due to the flying bomb, and the boys slept in their clothes most of the time. Broken windows and falling plaster became a regular feature, until one morning during education classes a bomb went off just outside the building. Fortunately, apart from shock and superficial injuries only one boy, A/T Meek, was admitted to hospital. After this incident it was **decided to send the boys to 6 Central Workshop at Greenford and the detachment, less the boys who had passed their trade test, returned to Arborfield in September 1944.**

POST WAR

The Apprentices' cap badge, which has been worn by so many thousands of apprentice tradesmen, was first worn on parade on 19th August 1947. It was designed by Sergeant Jack Bolden R.E.M.E. from ideas and suggestions from the Commandant. Now that it is no longer in use, it is fitting to include some of the words written about it in 'The Arborfield Apprentice' in December 1946 by the Commandant of the School:

- The Cross and the Crown stand respectively for character and loyalty; character based on the principles of Christianity and loyalty to the School, the Army, the nation and the King.
- The Torch stands for learning and for training the mind and body on good sound health lines.
- The Crossed Swords stand for the military virtues of discipline, steadfastness and devotion to duty.
- The Great Wheel, which forms the basis and background of the whole design, stands for technical knowledge and skill.

A great day in the annals of the School was when the, then, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, revisited the School for the November 1946 Passing-Out Parade and took the salute. He had this to say

to the visiting parents: "The aim here is to turn your boy into the very best type of soldier tradesman. We aim that he shall reach the highest ranks of soldier tradesman in the Army or the best type of specialised commissioned officer. His education is continued so that he reaches the highest grade of education standards." Of the Parade, Monty said: "I would go anywhere to be able to see what I have seen this morning." High praise indeed.

The year 1947 saw not only the new badge on its first parade, but also a change of title; from 1st February 1947 it became the Army Apprentices School, Arborfield. Colonel C.E.M. Grenville-Grey, C.B.E. (late KRRC [*King's Royal Rifle Corps*]) succeeded as Commandant. He instituted the 'Champion Company' competition and founded the Old Boys' Association. The first post-war Royal Tournament took place at Olympia and the apprentices produced their 'Toy Soldier' display. His Majesty King George VI showed great interest in the display and was pleased to comment most favourably on the performance.

On Palm Sunday, 21st March 1948, a service was held in the School Chapel to commemorate the ex-boys of the School who had given their lives in World War Two. Major General Sir Bertram Rowcroft, the then Director of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering [*D.E.M.E.*], unveiled a memorial tablet and it was dedicated by the Chaplain-General, the Reverend Canon F.L. Hughes. It is interesting to note that the intake that term included five Polish boys. Later that year on 17th August on the Passing-Out Parade, the Champion Company banner was seen for the first time. The banner had been presented to the School by Mrs. Ironside and it was appropriate that her son, Major P.W.A. Ironside, 3rd Carabiniers, was O.C. 'B' Company, the first Champion Company.

In 1948 the decision was taken to terminate the Woolwich Arsenal Cadetship Scheme as the success rate with the first students had been a disappointment. With hindsight this seems to have been a premature and unfortunate decision as all eight apprentices selected for the last course graduated with either a degree or a diploma in engineering; one, A/T B.G. Keast, was later to become the Commandant of the Apprentices College. The first Old Boys' Reunion Dinner was held at the School on 28th August when 70 attended. Most were graduates from the previous two years.

In September 1949 the School welcomed Colonel E.L. Percival D.S.O., (late H.L.I. [*Highland Light Infantry*]) as Commandant. At the same time a new commitment was placed upon the School for, in addition to Armourers, Electricians (Control Equipment), Fitters, Instrument Mechanics, Millwrights, Telecommunication Mechanics, Turners and Vehicle mechanics, the School was to train Draughtsmen (Mechanical). These tradesmen, on passing out, were intended to go to R.E.M.E., R.E., R.A., R.A.C. and R.A.O.C., but in 1950 the War Office intimated that, in future, postings from the School would only be to R.E. or R.E.M.E.

Colonel F.A.M. Magee (late East Surrey Regiment) took command in June 1952 at a time of some difficulty. Because of a shortage of recruits it had been necessary to disband one Company ('D' Company) and the strength of the School was down to 643 apprentice tradesmen. The following year, on 1st June, 30 apprentices formed a guard of honour at Windsor Castle on the occasion of the dedication service of the Commonwealth Youth movement in St. George's Chapel. In October 1953, at a ceremony in the village of Bagshot Lea, in Hampshire, two handsome maces were presented to the School Bands in appreciation of services rendered during the previous three years. One was given by the residents and the other by Messrs. G. Potter & Co., the Aldershot musical instrument makers. The strength of the School began to increase early in 1954, and 'D' Company was reborn. Numbers quickly rose to 800 with a prospect of topping 900 by September 1954. During the year, the War Office gave approval for the unofficial affiliation of the School with the Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment). Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment, gave consent to the wearing of the Hunting Stuart tartan by the members of the School Pipe Band. There is no written evidence of this in the Regimental Records or that it was ever worn, nor do the archives reveal how or why the band came by the Fusilier hackle. Perhaps some reader can now solve this particular gap in the history.

At the February 1955 Passing-Out Parade, the Commandant announced the new trades would be taught at the School later that year. Radar Mechanic, Electrician R.E.M.E. and Fitter-Gun were to be added but the loss of the Turner and Draughtsman (Mechanical) trades would sever a long-standing connection with the Royal Engineers.

In October 1955 Colonel J.R. Cole (late Loyals) took over as Commandant, the seventh to hold office. The Passing-Out Parade on 31st January 1956 was notable for its wet weather routine; the first since the opening of the School. It was ironic that it was the day chosen by the BBC and ITN to record the occasion for television news. The Commandant referred to the awaited publication of 'The White Paper on Boys Units', otherwise known as the Miller Report. Some of the proposed recommendations were being implemented already and he welcomed the School's first WVS [*Women's Voluntary Service*] Lady, Miss Gunning.

An outstanding figure in the history of the School departed in February 1956 when RSM R.L. McNally, M.B.E., Scots Guards, who had spent 15 years as the School's Regimental Sergeant Major, retired. To quote the 'Arborfield Apprentice' of the time – no member of the staff had played such an important role in the life of the School over such a long period. Later that year an establishment change permitted a much-needed improvement to officer manning in the form of an assistant adjutant and company seconds-in-command.

New gates for the York Town entrance to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst [*R.M.A.S.*] were manufactured over a number of months, in 1957, by the staff and apprentices of the School. In June the School was the subject of a complimentary article in John Bull Magazine by ex-Sergeant Robert Holles, R.E.M.E., an old boy of the School. In July,

at the Passing-Out Parade the Commandant announced that, for the first time, apprentices were going to the Reading Technical College to study for the ordinary National Certificate (O.N.C.).

On this occasion Long Service and Good Conduct medals were presented for the first time to two old boys, W.O. C.J. Haslam and W.O.2 H.J. Cuss. The quality and elegance of the ornamental gates for the R.M.A.S. produced another order; this time from All Saints' Church, Aldershot, for four gates. As the church is the most senior one of the British Army the task was treated as something of special significance. Still very much in evidence these gates are a truly magnificent feature of the church and a credit to all who had a hand in their production. They were officially opened, on 29th July 1958, by Field Marshal The Earl Alexander of Tunis.

1958 was also memorable for the fact that Apprentice R.S.M. Fraser became the first apprentice to complete his O.N.C. while at the School. There was some new construction in 1959; H.Q. Company Block was complete and occupied and the construction of the new Education Block was begun. During this year the fourth Army Apprentices School, at Carlisle, was opened. The direct effect upon the three sister Schools was one of reallocation of trades. Arborfield lost Armourer, Fitter and Fitter Gun, and expanded the trades that remained.

The first entry into Hadrian's Camp, Carlisle, was in January 1960, 205 from Arborfield plus 87 new boys, joining the permanent staff of civilian instructors and officers already in situ. Arborfield received 57 new Electrician apprentices, the overall result being a drop in numbers to 700.

Thus, the new Commandant, Colonel R.F. Legh, O.B.E., (late R.A.) took over a slightly depleted School. Voluntary activities were introduced during the spring term of 1960 to enable apprentices to do something of their own choice in spare leisure time. This is an astonishing thing to have to record when one thinks of the multifarious leisure activities available nowadays.

REORGANISATION

Changes were in the air in 1960. The intake was to be increased from two to three a year. The Vehicle Mechanic apprentice was to undergo a two-week driving course as part of his training in his 8th term.

The programme now included more military training in the form of a full week of this activity in the 4th and 8th terms in addition to initial draft training. There were to be three wings in each company and the formation of a senior company for the last two terms. Also, the School now was concentrating on the electronic and electrical trades and Vehicle Mechanics. The apprentices passing out were Vehicle mechanics, Electricians R.E.M.E. (B), Control Equipment Technicians, Radar Technicians, Telecommunications Technicians and Instrument Technicians. In that year the Champion Company Award was presented for the last time, as it was decided to discontinue this feature of School life – 'A' Company were the winners. The Champion Company banner is no longer in the possession of the College and again it is hoped that some reader can give a clue to its present location.

In September 1960 the School library moved from premises adjoining the N.M.F.I. to the new Education Block. In the winter term of 1961 a new feature of College life appeared in the form of three civilian lecturers in the Education Department and a forecast for the future of half civilian and half R.A.E.C. [*Royal Army Education Corps*] officers.

By the end of 1962 the education Department had said goodbye to its Sergeants, Staff Sergeants and Warrant Officers; one of them, W.O.2 C.P. Salisbury, had served over seven years at Arborfield. Colonel Legh left in October 1962 to be succeeded by the first R.E.M.E. Commandant, Colonel H. Dobie, B.Sc, A.M.I.E.E. In his speech at his first Passing-Out Parade he referred to training policy changes about to take place whereby it was more realistic for apprentices to take the appropriate City and Guilds courses and to study for O.N.C., rather than take G.C.E. subjects. City and Guilds was a logical tie-up with trade training and would be in tune with industrial practice.

There were changes, too, in the trade training structure. The last of the Instrument Mechanics were leaving the School and future course loading would be 44% Vehicle Mechanics, 18% Electricians and 38% electronic trades. However, an adjustment to the September 1963 intake saw the entry of the first 22 Aircraft Technicians into the School.

At this time consideration was being given to the School running its own two-year O.N.C. courses and by December 1963 a start had been made with the teaching of O.N.C. mathematics and general studies. Also, the run-down of the trade of Electrician in R.E.M.E. meant that a number of potential Electricians had to be absorbed into new trades. This resulted in a concentration upon Radar, Telecommunication and Control Equipment Technicians, Vehicle Mechanics and Aircraft Technicians. Later that year an interesting experiment was conducted to compare results obtained by formal methods of teaching, scrambled textbooks, and teaching machines on which Captain John Birch R.A.E.C. wrote programmed learning courses. There was found to be no significant difference in learning between the three methods; teacher and machine were shown to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

To be continued.....

REME Breakfast Club Listing

REME COUNTY DURHAM BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME BREAKFAST CLUB FOR COUNTY DURHAM
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/f1L3GzbqeH42enrz/>

REME GLOUCESTERSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME Breakfast Club for the Gloucestershire area
Website
https://www.facebook.com/groups/8051262654937765/?ref=share_group_link&rdid=5jek3KQJbyw0tz8H

REME LANCASHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME Breakfast Club for Lancashire
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/stJ8kkoNfLmK7Zi7/>

REME LINCOLNSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME Breakfast Club for the Lincs area
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/ToFTPoVzbXCsjDG3/>

REME MERSEYSIDE BREAKFAST CLUB
Merseyside's REME Breakfast Club
Website
https://www.facebook.com/groups/711028933816823/?ref=share_group_link&rdid=cyGlcNIMjWwqEqOV

REME NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE
The REME Breakfast Club for N Staffs
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/19w6a9RbZj/>

REME NORTH WEST NORFOLK BREAKFAST CLUB
The Breakfast Club for the NW Norfolk area
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/qECFrZx8g58Dqfce/>

REME NORTH WILTSHIRE BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME Breakfast Club for the North Wiltshire area
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/mMCn9QeZZ9hntLD9/>

REME RUTLAND BREAKFAST CLUB
The REME Breakfast Club for Rutland
Website <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1btjDnHmWHQf2Fkm/>

And then the fight started.....

My wife and I were sitting at a table at her high school reunion, and she kept staring at a drunken man swigging his drink as he sat alone at a nearby table.

I asked her, "Do you know him?"

"Yes", she sighed,

"He's my old boyfriend. I understand he took to drinking right after we split up those many years ago, and I hear he hasn't been sober since."

"My God!" I said, "Who would think a person could go on celebrating that long?"

And then the fight started...

When our lawn mower broke and wouldn't run, my wife kept hinting to me that I should get it fixed.

But, somehow I always had something else to take care of first, the shed, the boat, making beer.. Always something more important to me.

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

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

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

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

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

She asked, "What's on TV?"

I said, "Dust."

And then the fight started...

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

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

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

And that's how the fight started...

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

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

I bought her a bathroom scale.

And then the fight started.....

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

The woman said, 'Unbutton your shirt'.

So I opened my shirt revealing my curly silver hair.

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

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

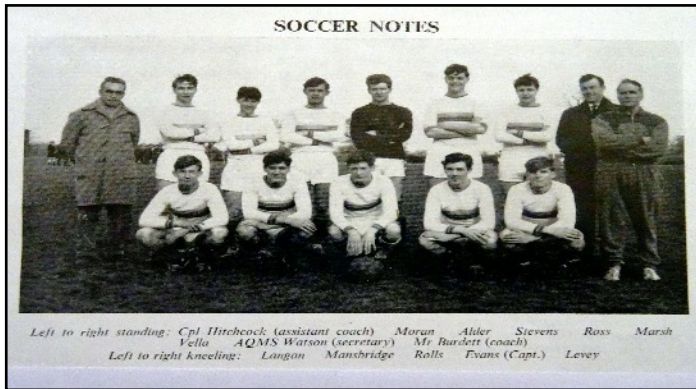
She said, 'You should have dropped your pants. You might have gotten disability too.'

And then the fight started...

Freedom of Wokingham



School/College Football Photos - Peter Marsh 65C



Can anyone put names to these faces: I recognise Len Burdett, Kev Leavy and Peter Marsh, Ray Stevens, Pete Moran... College 1st XI Nov 66



D coy Soccer XI 66 - 68



1967



Lt Col J. D. Law
presenting to Peter
Marsh



Best Army Junior
Athlete 1967



Al Jones and Pete Marsh S Squad
J coy 65C



Al Parnham, Steve,
Al Jones and Kaz
outside 'J' Block



Pete Marsh, Al Jones and Steve

The War Poets

A selection of poetry from WWI

Dulce et Decorum Est

BY WILFRED OWEN

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

The General

BY SIEGFRIED SASSOON

"Good-morning, good-morning!" the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

The Veteran

BY MARGARET POSTGATE COLE

We came upon him sitting in the sun
Blinded by war, and left. And past the fence
There came young soldiers from the Hand and Flower,
Asking advice of his experience.
And he said this, and that, and told them tales,
And all the nightmares of each empty head
Blew into air; then, hearing us beside,
"Poor chaps, how'd they know what it's like?" he said.
And we stood there, and watched him as he sat,
Turning his sockets where they went away,
Until it came to one of us to ask "And you're-how old?"
"Nineteen, the third of May."

My Adventure in the Arctic as an Air Tech - Rob Milburn

A few weeks ago when I was snowed into my Village I was moved to reflect on the last time I was surrounded by snow and ice. This was 25 years ago in Antarctica.



First Antarctic Home With Pet Husky At Door

After my return to Germany, I put my mind to how long it would take me to prepare my move if I was accepted by the British Antarctic Survey, I need not have worried as my return to Germany was on a Tuesday and Thursday, I was told that I would be in Cambridge for a course of training on the following Monday.

After frantic preparations like selling my car and packing all of my equipment I made the flight to UK on Friday. There was just time to tell my folks that I would be in Cambridge for a short while before going to Canada.

I was right about the short while bit, after an enjoyable 3 days in Corpus Christi College I was told that I would be flying to Toronto on Sunday for a course of training on De-Havilland twin otter aircraft. Of course, I would need to make my own visa arrangements before then.

So once again I bid my folks farewell on the weekend before departure to Toronto on Sunday.

The course of training on Twin Otter aircraft at De-Havilland was good and very different to my previous aircraft experience. The only fixed wing aircraft I had ever worked on before was a "Piston Popping" Radial Engined Beaver.

A short while after the training the air party consisting of 2 Aircraft with a Pilot and Engineer for each set off on the ferry flight from Toronto to Adelaide Base Antarctica. The journey was done in 7 stages which involved carrying a lot of fuel and equipment, a typical take off weight being 17,500 lbs which is a "little" over the normal all up weight of 12,500lbs.

The first leg was from Toronto to Miami which took 10 ½ hrs non stop the aircraft was equipped with six 90 gallon and one 65-gallon internal ferry tanks which gave us some 12 ½ to 13 hrs duration. The flight was very eventful as the aircraft iced up very badly flying over the Dakota Mountains. After arriving in Miami, I was ready for bed so I left the Inspection until morning.

My Inspection revealed the H.F Antenna had wrapped around the elevator and the heated intake had burnt through. I wondered if this was a taste of things to come as I set about repair work. (My Pilot said "Oh yes I thought the controls were sluggish as we came into land!!!)

The next leg was from Miami to Trinidad, which was just pleasure, and I thought that "well" someone has to do this job!

Trinidad to Manaus in Brazil was a remarkable journey with seemingly endless jungle which made me hope we didn't need to land anywhere. As we taxied in a marshaller was amazed when we reversed into our parking slot and the snow skis really confused him.

The next leg was Manaus to Santa Cruz in Bolivia, which was an eye opener. When we landed a group of young boys approached the aircraft and held out their hands. I passed around chocolate bars, which they accepted but kept their

Which, sounds like a place you would not want to visit but for me was the experience of a lifetime and one I would have hated to miss and would do all over again.

In summer 1976 I had just finished a detachment in Berlin carrying out a Major Inspection of one of the Military Helicopters. I was looking for a fresh challenge when an opportunity to join the British Antarctic Survey arose so I applied. The interview in Cambridge allowed a long weekend in UK which was welcome.



Guess who?

hands out. I was advised by one of the Pilots who had been here before that they wanted protection money and I would be well advised to give it as there was no security and I could find a wheel missing next day. So, we gave the leader an American ten-dollar bill.

The next morning, we set off very early and to my astonishment I found the little group of boys sleeping around the aircraft and it was intact. Money well spent I thought.

Santa Cruz to Mendoza in Argentina was fairly uneventful except for the standing waves, which come off the Andes Mountains. Such waves cause the aircraft to climb and dive very rapidly irrespective of the engine power settings this was a bit scary.

Mendoza has a large military presence and many armed personnel wander about or watch you refuelling while they smoked a cigarette but you are not advised to challenge them as that tend to pick up their weapons.

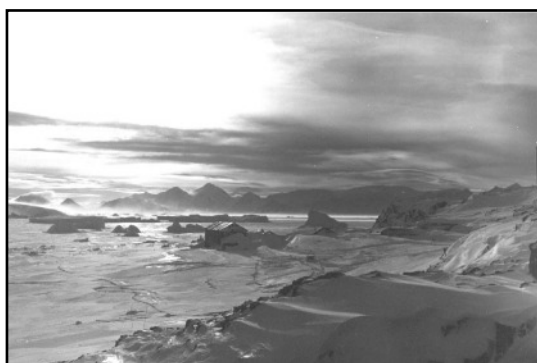
The next stop was Punta Arenas in Chile where we were met by our agent who took us for a fantastic meal with very pleasant wine and a strange drink called Pisco which can be very disorientating. I was informed that the air party can often be stuck here waiting for weather conditions to cross the Drakes Passage. I thought that this would be most agreeable, but of course not with my luck early next morning "weather is good let's go"!!

I will always remember my first flight over the Drakes Passage as the most cold, un-welcoming and isolated stretch of sea. After a few hours my Pilot announced that we had reached the point of no return and no matter what was ahead we would have to face it. This did nothing for my confidence as the weather deteriorated and Ice Burgs and Sea Ice became the normal view.

However, we landed at Adelaide Base in Marginal weather condition with a bump because it was my Pilots first Snow Ski landing!! A bit of a ripple on the nose ski we soon sorted.

The welcome from the base members was amazing. Of course, we were the first people they had seen since the ship left before the winter some 6 months before and of course we had mail and fresh produce for them. This could explain why their interpretation of reasonable weather differed from our own.

After removing the ferry fuel tanks and equipment, we soon got busy re-locating the base personnel and 48 husky dogs from Adelaide base to Rothera which was to be the new base on the other side of the Island.



The reason to move was because the airstrip was deteriorating rapidly with dangerous crevasses appearing.

Flying the dog teams was a real experience. They are fine with mankind but would tear each other apart literally. So armed with a rope cosh we would load a few on and put the heater full on so they fell asleep very quickly.

Rothera Base 2nd Season

Early in the season the RRS John Biscoe managed to get as far down the Antarctic peninsular as Damoy point. This place has to be seen to be believed, our first flight there to pick up early scientific field parties revealed a piedmont running to the sea with a mountain at one end and a crevasse running up the middle. I was totally amazed that anyone would consider ever landing there but we did. Many times we journeyed to Damoy and I don't mind admitting I was terrified each time we landed flying towards a Mountain dodging the crevasse or launching off an Ice cliff with petrol drums in the cabin banging like a Caribbean Band.

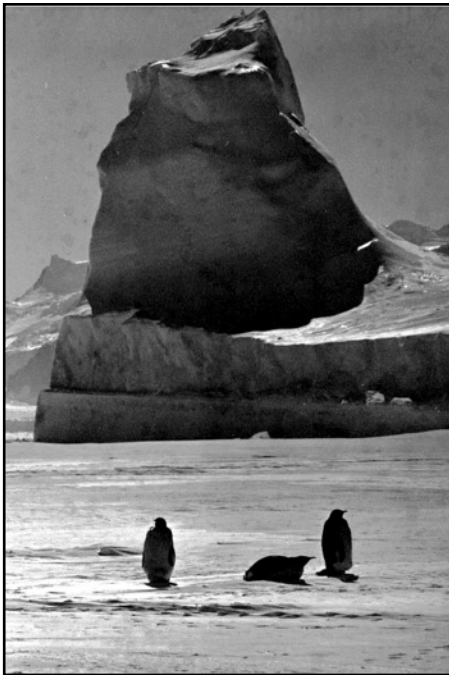


My Front Garden!!

Once I got used to the routine I enjoyed it, but I didn't enjoy living in a tent at Rothera. I always felt cold and damp. However, my view of my front garden was spectacular.

As the season progressed, we had managed to place the scientific field parties and moved the base so we felt quite pleased with the efforts.

The scenery was spectacular and I got to see some of the local inhabitants.



I also had a go at another form of transport with cuddly husky dogs see below.

However, there is no room for complacency in Antarctica as we discovered one fine Sunday when we flew to a place called Gomez Nunatak some 400 miles from Rothera.

I remember coming into landing and the speed was reduced with full flap when we pitched up and stalled. The aircraft panned into the mountain side and those of us in the cabin were shaken about.

After taking stock and inspecting the aircraft I made a radio call to base to announce that the aircraft was a write off as the undercarriage had spread, the nose leg was pushed into the cockpit, the engines had sprung the nacelles and the tail was twisted by at least 10 degrees.



My Pet Werewolf

↑ Locals !! ↑

Our party erected tents and we settled down as best as we could, there was an element of shock and dazed people. The next day our other aircraft arrived from McMurdo sound and took us to Rothera where the doctor checked us out.



He declared us fit and the next day found me back at Gomez making plans to dismantle the aircraft.

The next 3 weeks would be remembered as the most uncomfortable I have ever spent. Considering that we crash landed in good weather, within 5 days we were tunnelling through snow to get to the aircraft and back to the tent.

With the help of 3 general assistants, I managed to salvage engines, propellers, control surfaces and all avionics equipment. Which was flown back to Rothera in the other aircraft. This was a severe test of stamina, endurance and initiative.

Can I have another, this one is broken!!

I put the initiative part into practice immediately by chiseling off the nose of the aircraft which forms a baggage compartment with door to make a "portaloo". For this I received great admiration and plaudits from my colleagues who like myself could endure most things but not performing natural functions on top of a mountain in Antarctica with a severe wind-up one's chuff!!

Using the sledges, we were able to construct ladders to enable the removal of the aircraft flying control surfaces, rudder, elevators and ailerons. The props and engines were removed using the bolt on winch. All the parts were safely moved to an old base called Fossil Bluff which is on King George VI Sound. It was a good job we did salvage the parts as you will see later.

After 3 weeks we had completed the salvage work and finally flew back to base bidding a final farewell to Gomez Nunatak and VP-FAP (RIP).

For the rest of the season, I spent working on the new Rothera Base building and crating up the aircraft components.

As winter was approaching the other aircraft had to leave for the return ferry flight to Toronto. I helped with the preparation of this and waved my colleagues off. As they departed over the skyline, I thought of their return home in 8 days and my own journey of 8 weeks on the RRS Bransfield and wondered what kind of sailor I would turn out to be.

The night before we sailed there was a party on Base where we bid farewell to all the guys who were going to endure the very long dark winter on Base. I enjoyed the party but wondered if I had over done the libation somewhat. I did not realise that a similar farewell party was to be held on all the other Antarctic bases on the way home.

The next Base we sailed to was called Argentine Islands which is now called Faraday, only a small base which was full of lonospherisists and met people. They know how to party though, everyone got on the last launch back to the ship and

I swear we only had inches of free board which was a concern with drunken fids on board. However, my slight concern turned to dread when I spotted an enormous leopard seal swimming next to us, I'm sure it was smiling.

Safely on board we continued sailing North to Deception Island which is North of the Antarctic Peninsular. This island has a small inlet to a perfect harbour and they used to offload small aircraft here and assemble them for air operations. Sadly, volcanic activity here closed this Base.

From Deception we sailed to Signy Island in the South Sandwich Islands and onto South Georgia.

I fell in love with South Georgia immediately. The natural beauty and tranquillity is overwhelming. If you climb into the hills there is a small white church in a valley. The views are spectacular and it is easy to imagine the feelings Shackleton must have had when he finally led his men to safety in Grytvick whaling station after his epic sea voyage in a lifeboat. His final resting place is a grave on the hillside over looking the Harbour and Whaling Station.

The wildlife here is abundant and great care has to be taken when walking near the elephant seal colonies. Which were extremely whiffy.

Whilst watching an albatross aborting a lengthily take off, I reflected on a Twin Otter trying to take off from Miami weighing nearly 3 tones more than all up weight. Large airliners were taking off much sooner and it took us ½ hour to climb to 10,000 feet.

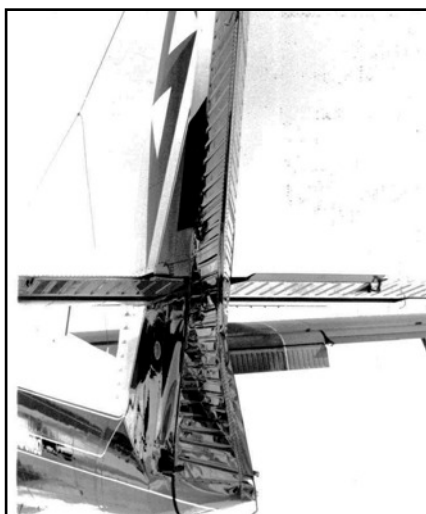
After 3 days in South Georgia, we set sail to the Falklands Island. Our arrival into Stanley Harbour could not have been worse. As we cruised by HMS Endurance the anchor chains snagged and the result was the bows of Endurance firmly plunged into the Bulwark of RRS Bransfield. There were sirens, hooters and watertight doors going everywhere on HMS Endurance but all RRS Bransfield could offer was much clicking of cameras.

The Falklands was quite an experience, like putting your watch back 20 years. It was nice to see plants and grass again though. A few of us were invited to the Governors house for a cocktail party. The Governor at the time was Rex Hunt who was in residence some years later when Argentina invaded. I had to smile at the Governors official car which was a maroon London taxi. Every other vehicle on the island was Land Rover or Tractor.

After the Falklands we sailed to Montevideo in Uruguay. Here we stayed for 2 days painting the ship and a little shore leave. The currency was boggling as inflation was running at 60 – 70% so if you paid for anything with American Dollars you received a huge was of worthless paper currency in change.

After Montevideo it was non stop sailing to UK for weeks. Eventually we anchored off of the Isle of White pending a sail down the Solent to Southampton the following day. Rumours spread of a tug boat and dockers strike which almost had people jumping ship to get to the Isle of White. We could see the cars and people from the ship, thoughts of “so near yet so far” prevailed.

The next day we docked and after hurling Antarctic snow balls at our nearest and dearest we all went on some well-earned leave.



The second season went very well apart from our Canadian friends of Survair who transited through Rothera and sustained damage to their aircraft. They refuelled and were stuck to the ice, even with engines at full power the aircraft would not budge. The survair party called it a day, however that night the westerly winds arrived and caused a lot of damage.



The wind caught the aircraft tail on and severely damaged the rudder.

I'm really good with a snow shovel, that's me at the front of the main ski. We towed the aircraft to a level area and I helped the Survair guys to change the rudder and elevator for the ones I had salvaged the year before from VP-FAP on Gomez Nunatak.

We set about digging the Survair Twin

I must close this tale of my experience or it will end up as war and peace. If I have kept your interest throughout then I am gratified if not then I hope such an opportunity should come your way.

My final picture is the aircraft flying home on a low pass by Reptile Ridge “My Journey to Work”.

I shall always consider myself fortunate to have travelled so far and seen so much in such a short space off time and of course the memories are priceless.



Lessons in Life No. 5 - Tony Moogan - 66B

Lunch or Dinner? that is the question

Well good day dear reader, however I do believe I can start using the plural 'readers' bcos I know I have one, our dear editor Andy, and at the last reunion a member of my div (66b) also opined that he too had read (and enjoyed) my stories so now I know I have 2.....at least!

So erewigo with:

Lunch or Dinner?

We (Intake 66B) arrived at Arborfield on 10 May 1966 and assembled in the WRVS complex to be allocated our respective companies and their locations.

We were escorted up the D & C Coy side of the drill square (never across it!!!) by A/T LCpl Watkins who I believe was actually D Coy. C squad (us) was located on the top floor of the Junior Company (J Coy) accn block, B Squad below us and D squad on the bottom floor (Jeepland),

A squad was located across the road in a separate block, therefore cementing its status as 66B pariahs (jus' jokin' boys) After a week or so we were settling in nicely and getting use to the daily grind, oops routine which ran something like this:

Breakfast

Kit prep, kit prep, kit prep, drill, drill, and more drill under the expert and watchful eye of Sgt Jock Pittendreigh, whose favourite phrase for our efforts was "terrubull, terrubull, terubull!"

One morning as we were queuing for breakfast, my mate behind me Jimmy Mitchell "I come fae Fife" tapped me on the shoulder and said "Taff, Taff, Taff" to which I replied "yes Jim, Jim, Jim"

He then asked me if we were actually training to be officers?

I recoiled in shock and horror and replied "FFS Jim I hope not otherwise I'll never be allowed back in "The Dock" (Pembroke Dock,) my place of birth. I asked what had made him ask me that and he pointed to the large board outside the cookhouse with meals and timings on it.

It read:

Breakfast: 0730

Lunch: 1220

Evening meal: 1700

Jim then asked me when was dinnertime? He was used to dinner time at midday just like me and countless other lads from working class backgrounds. I replied that I had no idea but would find out and report back to him!! (I didn't silly Jock fae Kirkcaldy), which I pronounced as written, big mistake, me not being fluent at all in Jockinese and he delivering a withering bollockin' for my mispronunciation!) Jimmy then went on to lecture me in the correct way to say it which was "Kirkcoddly!) Not that I'm in a position to criticise since I come from west Wales!!

Anyway, life went on and we, the inmates of this august institution got used to the daily routine and all expressions and sayings of army and Arborfield life.

HALF TERM

At last, after 7 weeks, we were liberated at half term on a Thursday, the buses lining up to take us tp our respective stations of departure, in my case Reading for Swansea, change for Whitland and last train down to the "The Dock". Oh, such bliss and excitement!!

So onto the train with Terry O'Rourke (also a denizen of the Dock) and Dai Morris to Newport. It took Terry and I 8 hrs to get to our home station and jumped off the train and straight into our car a Hillman Minx! It was a wonderful feeling to be home again, I dumped my kit and went straight out with the bois.

The following day was Friday I went shopping ready to meet my then girlfriend, Jackie Evans, lovely girl 14 yrs old, I was 15 shortly to be 16 on 27 June.

Saturday dawned quietly with mum cooking breakfast and my father reading the Daily Mirror! Later Mum was back in the kitchen and from where she called asking "are you hungry Tone?" to which I replied "yes ma, what's for lunch?" My father's reaction was scary!

He very slowly lowered his newspaper and peered disgustedly over the top.....at me. He called to my ma shouting "Pam, Pam tell this boy of yours that in this house midday is "dinnertime" always has been and always will be!!"

Ma's reply was "Oh Jackie, give him a break he's living a new life now, and clearly a new way of talking!" This did nothing to mollify my father, he glared at me and warned that if I carried on there would be trouble!

Next day was Sunday and in their house my father always cooked The Sunday roast which was always beef. A lovely joint which would he 'nuke' till it was dry and tasteless. Having said that I always enjoyed it until I went to Arborfield.

As you all know we had a choice of 3 meats, roast spuds and 3 veg at every LUNCHtime. At first the beef was pink in the middle which I refused to eat because to me it was RAW, but once I had tried and got used to it, it was very tasty indeed.

And so on that fateful Sunday, trying to digest my father's roast I very unwisely opined at the table, "do you know Ma at Arborfield our beef is served pink in the middle and at this point my father could take no more from his stepson.

He slammed his gobbling rods onto the table, gave glared at me again and left the room muttering "that bloody boy needs sorting out....blah blah.

An old adage in my family being "children should never cheek their elders"

I can't remember being so pleased to get back to my new life at Arborfield with all its new language, phrases and sayings and new mates who were all like me in our new environment!!

Tony Moogan - 66B



Keith Bartlett & Tony Moogan Enjoying a glass of wine

Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson 66B

Gym classes have been both a benefit and a trial.

I have always gone too hard at things I do. Well, sometimes you need to think before you do.

I was in the gym on August 19th and had quite a hard workout on my arms and legs. They have all sorts of torture machines that are there to get the maximum out of you. They certainly did on this day. I had to sit down for 10 minutes after I finished before I could manage the 30 or 40 meter walk to the car. Once I got home and put my feet up I was OK. (Note to self - you are not as young as you think you are. Take it easy!)

The following week, August 28th I was on the treadmill and I normally do 25 minutes at quite a brisk pace for me but from the moment I started I knew something was wrong. My left foot was dragging on the toe when I tried to swing it through. After about 5 minutes I stopped and reset myself and set off again. Another 10 minutes of foot dragging before I asked them to stop the machine. I felt clammy and Sue said I was white as a sheet.

The physios took me to a quiet room and took my blood pressure, 96/75 and temperature 38.3c. Clearly something was not right and they said I couldn't go home and called an ambulance and I was taken to Bournemouth A&E. I spent 10 hours getting poked and prodded, had a chest x-Ray and CT scan of my head. All clear. Still had to go through the processes. They think I might have had a TIA that had sorted itself out. We had to go back to Bournemouth the following afternoon to a TIA clinic. I felt ok now but wonder if my reaction last Tuesday was a similar incident. I am 'normal' this morning so will have to wait for appointment this afternoon to see what they found.

The 29th: Another ECG and then a review by a consultant. Compared my CT scan from May 2023 to the previous day's and there is no sign of a bleed of any sort. He encouraged me to get back to the gym but in moderation. My blood pressure issue is probably due to the medication I am on for my enlarged prostate and other things. I am to drink more water, every two hours a glass full. He suggested a botox injection for my arm/hand and will suggest this to my GP. So all good news. So I thought.....

The Following day I felt really crook No energy, shivering, hot and cold and my temperature was all over the place, the highest being 39c. I struggled through for a couple of days taking paracetamol but couldn't get on top of it. I had no strength and struggled to walk. Aching in my knees, shoulders, neck and hips. I was dozing quite a bit too. On last Saturday evening I got stranded half in and half out of bed. Sue had to get the neighbours to get me sorted out and into bed.

That was the straw that broke the camels back and I went to the emergency treatment centre at Lymington hospital. The doctor could find anything and suggested a urine test to see if I had a UTI. Sue delivered the sample to the surgery on Monday morning and I managed to get an appointment with a GP the same day. Still nothing obvious so I have to go for more blood tests.

I am feeling better today but I have had these swings over the last week or so and I will wait and see how I feel over the next couple of days.

Well, it all kicked off on Oct 4th. We had our flu jabs and I felt steadily worse over the day and on Sunday the 5th I felt as if I was fighting a virus, which I guess I was. Late afternoon I got up to go to the loo. Sue asked if I needed to be taken in the wheelchair which I declined. I regretted this decision a few minutes later as I was laying on the toilet floor in agony. Sue tracked down a few neighbours to get me into my wheelchair, which was even more agony. This was about 18.00hrs Sunday evening and Sue called an ambulance. 11 hours later the ambulance arrived and took me to Southampton hospital where x-rays confirmed I had broken the top off my femur.

The operation took place on Monday. The anesthetist offered a lumbar injection to allow them to operate or did I want to be knocked out. I opted for the latter. I had a rod inserted in my femur and another in the ball joint to keep everything stable. After it was all over and I was back on the ward the pain was more manageable as long as I didn't move around too much in the bed. There were 8 beds in the room, all filled with people like me with broken hips. There were various cries of pain from them all as they adjusted their positions in their beds.

I spent the next 10 days here getting as mobile as I could and talked them into transferring me to Lymington hospital for Rehab. (I spent 4 months there after my stroke and they knew me well). Back into a single room with my own bathroom, TV etc. Much better environment. The long process of rehab begins.

I have been off my food for a few months but the time I spent in hospital this time really affected my appetite and I virtually stopped eating. I got weighed each Saturday and went from 109 kgs on admission to 101.5 Kgs when I discharged to go home. Nice to lose the weight but not this quickly.

I got back home on Sunday the 16th of November. Back to learning my routines all over again. My walking is not great but I can get around with my trusty quad stick. It isn't as hard as it was when I got home after my stroke but it is still a struggle and I have to be really careful I don't twist my left hip.

The home visit physio I had after my stroke came to see me on the 19th of November. She wasn't impressed that I had undone all the good work and progress I had achieved but, to be honest neither am I. (The day I fell Sue did ask if I was OK to walk or should she take me in the chair. In future, 'Listen to your wife'!)

One of the consequences of being bed ridden is the speed at which your muscles waste away. No matter how many 'exercises' I do laying flat on my back I can't stop the wasting. This of course affects my ability to do any sustained physio. I get tired out so quickly. On top of that, my appetite has disappeared so I am not getting enough fuel to give me the energy to work any harder. (See my comments earlier about my appetite).

I have a number of exercises I do in bed before I get up, mostly to strengthen my leg muscles. My core strength has also suffered and I have to keep trying to build myself up there. My physio tells me that everything I do My trunk muscles try and help, which is not what she wants. Somehow I have to concentrate on just using the muscles I am targeting and not getting the others involved. Not easy.

I seem to remember being in this same situation two years ago. I came out of hospital at the end of October 2023 and had to rush to get OBAN finished before Christmas. My schedule is a bit tighter this time around. I should be able to get it done though.

Onwards and upwards.

Andy Dickson 66B



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

Continued from OBAN 91

The Final Addition to our Family Jun 1960

Newcastle would be mums last pregnancy; altogether mum had been pregnant for around 81 months, that's almost 7 years, for about a third of the time between the first and last child mum was pregnant

Births:-

1909 Mar: Dad George Albert

1917 Jul: Mum Olive

1940 Apr: John Edward (Jack) was named after Grandad... John Edward Thompson

1941 Jun: Beryl

1942 Dec: George Albert (Albie) named after Grandad and Dad all three were George Albert

1944 Jul: David Peter

1945 Dec: Ivor Gordon

1950 Jan: Eric Lance

1953 Dec: Kenneth Leslie

1958 Jul: Linda

1960 Jun: Raymond Thompson

Jan-Dec and Jun-Jul were the months to watch for.

When Raymond Thompson Davies was born in Newcastle, older brother Jack was 20 years older than him. No problem to me I had witnessed two additions already. I never thought of my dad as an old man but he was 41 years old when I was born and now 51 in Newcastle. Having smoked like the proverbial Trooper all his life he could have been mistaken for my granddad! My parents started the family with the arrival of "Jack" dad was already 31. Mum at eight years younger was 23.

Having put our family into perspective it was when I was 10 years old that dad got our first car. I had never seen him drive. He had passed his driving test at our last posting in Chester. I knew he had absolutely no idea of how to ride Jacks motorbike. The old car we got looked quite modern it was a Hillman Minx Estate car built in 1949 or shortly thereafter, it was a bit of a rust bucket. David only needed to touch a post in the garage up on the top square and the RH front wing crumpled off it. It was supposed to have a top speed of 60mph but I seem to remember it standing at the front door most of the time.

Far better was the second car a Ford Popular, what I would call the sit up and beg shape. There were 11 of us remember, I cannot believe how we all fitted in. Everyone except the driver had someone sitting on their knees. Albie wasn't home very often so that meant just 10 of which two were babies. Regardless the springs were always down on their stops.

The Boy with too much hair.

It was fairly obvious that things were not always equal in our family, I would just assume it was the way things went with a 20 year age gap between youngest to oldest. We were all born into the same family and dad had been a sergeant for ever and ever, now each one of us had become an absolutely different character.

Jack was just the big brother to me and being ten years older there were no arguments, he moved in a different time frame and I would always be a bit remote from him leastways back then with that age gap. Would I aspire to what he achieved? Nope that was in the far too distant future.

Beryl just over a year younger than Jack her influence was in the "Real Men" she brought home. They had to be nice to me of course but I could see Mum and Dad keeping a close eye on them. I would hear the low-down as soon as Beryl stepped out of the door to wherever it was she went with them. In her absence Mum and Dad would voice their opinions in no uncertain manner; this would all stick in the back of my mind. Beryl was working in the families NAAFI behind our quarter, she would see every last person in Fenham Barracks at one time or another and hear their chatter. Some of the scandal overheard must have been an eye opener for her.

Albie was away in a care home (asylum) most of the time; now and again Dad would drive us all to the "Prudhoe Nut House" to visit him. I was never too sure about the stories I heard from Albie but now I realize that the real nutters were actually some of the Prudhoe staff, Albie was just their unfortunate patient. He would recite the beatings he had taken for things that were not his fault. If I had been my dad back then I am sure I would have had to kill somebody.

David was a Musician and a Tailor as if those two occupations were not enough alone to give you attitude David and Dad also did not always see eye to eye. David would however bring material home for mum "The Machinist" to make clothes for the younger kids, which along with the "Knitmaster" mum had bought and the "Hand me Downs" we were always "clothed" I mentioned before David now had Jacks Bantam motorcycle, that was until the Massive Chimney fell down from the top of our block of houses and wrote it off. It was an "Act of God" apparently.

Ivor was the bright Spark he went to Rutherford Grammar school and was a Sgt in the Army Cadet Force; he was fortunate enough to have been born with what is known as a "Double Crown" and always had masses of hair on his head. I say always with "Tongue in Cheek" Dad had told Ivor to get a haircut, and I am not sure why but then Dad took matters into his own hands. Dad had all the gear a pair of scissors and a pair of hand operated hair clippers. Ivor duly took a seat and dad performed the master strokes I dare say much to the encouragement and advice of those observing. It was a spectacular failure with bald spots; it looked like weed killer had just been splashed on Ivor's hair at random. A blind man could have done better with a knife and fork. Ivor was rushed to the emergency room of the camp barber who could alas do very little to put it right other than to cut the lot off and polish the skull. Ivor would not go to school or even out of the house without a hat on for a week or more, at least till some stubble had grown back. Boys at school would have assumed we all had nits.

It would be unfair to comment on anyone younger than myself at this point, however I did feel sorry for Kenneth. I mentioned Todd's Nook being pretty hard. It would have been a horrendous time in life for Ken with a start like while on the upwards learning curve of a seven year old. The school must have been a real nightmare for him; I tried as a big brother to make it a little easier. You don't pick on the Davies family. Ken did try to wind us all up back at home somewhat but I still wouldn't let my brother get hurt.

A dream to look forward to and the Quayside Market

At the end of 1961 Dad came home with the news that his posting was in and we were going to Penang Malaya. After three years at Todd's Nook I hardly knew where London was let alone the Far East, I thought St James's park was the Centre of the Earth. I knew where the Tyne Bridge was so will tell you a little about that area instead.

Below the Tyne Bridge was a Quayside on which during every Sunday would be held a market, this would be our shopping highlight of the week. The Quayside Market was a treasure trove of things to be had "On the Cheap"

To get down to the River Tyne you could travel by trolley bus or bicycle. Newcastle still had remnants of it's the tramcar days in the form of rail lines along many of its streets. On a bicycle you had to be careful of those hazards especially if it was wet. There were unsavoury people that if you took your eye off your bicycle for a second it would be gone. I remember one such occasion when we had bicycle stolen then some days later dad spotted the bouncer that stole it riding it down town. Dad not being slow at coming forward accosted the chap demanding an explanation! Some of us kids had noticed that it wasn't our bike after all so were trying to let dad know before the chap was forced to get off and surrender his own bicycle. I never remember going down to Newcastle by car. I dare say with so many in the car there would be no room to bring back all the shopping.

We did get some bargains at the Quayside. Dad bought some cheese there that tasted like soap. Dad swore blind it was cheese and forced himself to eat it to prove his point. To show otherwise one of us kids tried it out in the sink and it "lathered-up" a bit, no one else risked eating it after that. It reminded me of days at Aldford School being sent to wash your mouth out if you swore in class. We also bought cheap shoes at the market which were ok until it rained and the soles melted. You mostly got what you paid for, rubbish or knock offs and there were no guarantees provided.

My Dad grows turnips at the allotments.

Dad didn't have an allotment; neither did dad grow any turnips though Ivor and I thought it would be better if others thought he did.

Nobody as far as I recall liked turnip in our house so they must be good for you. The funfair had arrived and set up in a field somewhere between Spital Tongues and Leazes Park. They had distributed turnips all over an adjacent field to feed the horses that pulled their caravans and trailers. I happened to see the turnips on the way home from school and told Ivor.

Initially there were three of us hatched a plot to collect some turnips and sell them door to door around Spital Tongues. The "Browns Boy" backed out. It was in fact quite hard work and we got turned down at most doors but after a few hours perseverance we had made over three shillings. I think we even gave some turnips away here and there when old grandma's answered the door. Some did accuse us of collecting them off the field but we said that dad grew these ones in his allotment and nobody would ever eat the ones in the field. They were only fit for horses.

Preparing for the Big Move to Malaya

There was considerable excitement about going to live "Far East" Dad was over the moon. He was a man of some experience and getting on towards the end of his career on the "Long Service List" Mum had given birth to three kids in India. However there was to be a couple of drawbacks. Albie could not go and Ivor was told he had to stay to finish his Grammar School education or all the effort getting him there was wasted. I wouldn't know that I was earmarked for "Boarding School" I didn't even know there was such a place far east. It was bad enough when you couldn't get home for dinner and had to eat the stuff at school, fortunately Todds Nook had been close enough to go home for dinner. Jack had by then himself joined the Army so was away from home. David and Beryl would have to leave their jobs if they wanted to go to Malaya with the rest of us.

Again the packing began. The Army had supplied old tea chests for MFO or maybe it was just ones dad had brought back from India all those years ago. I recall the silver paper lining they had. Dad would never tell us what he was giving

away or dumping, you would only find out what you had lost when you unpacked at each new post. In the Army when someone moves those staying inherit all sorts of things that can't or won't be packed and likewise when those people subsequently get moved themselves things get passed on again even down to the very food left in the cupboards. Kids could however slip items of personal value in between things in a partly packed box without anyone knowing.

I cannot be sure if any MFO had been packed ready for Malaya the night the storm came and blew the chimney off our house one cold November night in 1961. The gable end of the whole block was damaged. I don't remember waking up and seeing the bedroom wall missing but we had to get out of there pronto. The chimney was a massive brick contraption serving all the houses on the block end. We had fireplaces in living rooms and all bedrooms. We could not afford to use the fireplaces in the bedrooms and had put plywood covers in front of them to stop cold and soot coming down the chimney into the rooms. Not sure how the system worked but if dad lit a smoky fire in the living room the black smoke would find its way out of the unlit bedroom fireplaces into our bedrooms.

Every now and again if you looked behind the plywood in the bedroom fireplaces you would see twigs and such like that had fell down the chimney, sometimes even whole birds nests or dead birds. The Chimneys had to be kept clean or soot would build up and fall back down into the fireplace. It wasn't very often you saw a "Chimney Sweep" in our house. The Army didn't pay for Chimney sweeps but dad had got that covered. Dad had learned how to sweep or rather how to clean his own chimneys.

Do not try this at home. In order to clean your chimney for free you stuff old newspaper far up it. Then if the fire is not already alight you set fire to them, it works better if the fire is on and the chimney already hot. The following roar of the soot in the chimney setting on fire is alarming with frequent casual looks outside. If anyone has their clean washing outside on the drying line God Help Them! The event should not take place at night for flames shooting up out of the chimney will alert people who will call the fire brigade. During the day the thick black smoke can also get you in trouble. I am sure dad had calculated the best time the event should occur when it was both daylight with few people about and no washing on the lines. Lesser experts have set their houses on fire doing this. The standard excuse on being caught was that you only had the chimney swept last month and the coalman must have slipped you a sack of cheap coal that burned too quick putting flames up the chimney even though you had paid for the good stuff.

Oh I do love to be Besides the Seaside

4 Monks Way Nov 1961- Mar 1962

Cullercoats, Tynemouth

It was November 61 it had taken a Chimney falling down that smashed the roof of our Ford Popular wrote of the BSA Bantam and the "Gable End" of the Houses to send me on my way to the seaside and an early escape from Todd's Nook. This would be my thirteenth residence and I would miss school for two terms I wouldn't start back at school until after the summer holidays by which time we would be in Penang Malaya 1962.

The Army had found us accommodation in Cullercoats which was about 10 miles from where we had lived in Fenham Barracks. It was an officer's quarter on Monks way. It wouldn't impress me that all the issued items for the house were the posh officer pattern, china crockery and silver cutlery, or the fact that the mattresses on our beds were sprung mattresses and not just foam, it meant nothing to me. What could have been impressive for the first time in my life at eleven years old already at my thirteenth place to live I was by seaside albeit in November.

I didn't care it was winter I didn't care that my education was being effected. I didn't understand then how the Army was wrecking any chance of stability for education or even as a family. Would any eleven years old know they were being screwed around and no one really gave a damn as long as my dad was doing his job efficiently? Did my dad even understand it? He had been abandoned by his own family as a child and no doubt had a rough time! Did dad know Todd's Nook had been a useless school? Jack was OK he had joined the Army and was himself being processed by the machine. Beryl's job, David's job, Ivor's "O" level studies all being compromised, the only "Compensation" a few "China Plates" absolute luxury?

Living in Cullercoats during the winter was so much fun I can hardly remember it? I certainly had no school to remember. There was no chance of going for a swim in the sea anytime during November to March that we lived there. The Cadet Force in Newcastle was history too, no chance of getting back to the old drill hall. The single event I do remember was Jack coming home from his unit one weekend and treating us kids to a night out, probably an hours worth of fun roller skating at a local venue. I do recall there was a park with a pond that I could go and sail a cheap model electric motor boat that I had got for Christmas. We were packed up for the move to Malaya and I think all our personal stuff would be in MFO boxes being processed through the system.

The good thing about Cullercoats was that I can't remember anything bad about it.

Clay Street Gorton Manchester March 1962

If memory of Cullercoats had faded I certainly made up for it in Manchester. Folk were talking in a language I instantly understood and I was back in the street I was born.

There was just my Gran Amelia Thompson living there now and at 79 years old she was a kind old lady, I had been too

young to remember her bossy days, now she had soft hands and pocket money.

Anyone from Gorton will know how soft the water is there and how easily soap lathers. We had lived for years with the hard water in Newcastle. It would have been a pleasure to have a bath in the house in Gorton if there had been such an extravagance. The toilet was still down at the bottom of the back yard, My brother Jack had wired an electric light in that you could switch on in the tiny back scullery before you went out. The scullery was used for cooking it had a gas cooker, the living room still had the massive black and stainless steel "Coal Fired" cooking range in it.

I had become used to watching TV by this time, Gran had a TV but the license had run out. When Gran realized we were intent on using the TV she cut off the plug before the "Detector Van" would come round. It might have been safer if she had switched off the power and unplugged the television before cutting the cable. There was quite a bright flash and a loud bang, though grandma didn't get an electric shock she had melted a considerable groove in the blades of the scissors she had used.

Gran had a lovely old HMV fashioned record player with a spring drive that you wound up, it had a big horn type speaker. There were whole packets of changeable needles for the "Pickup Arm" they looked like framing pins without heads. Gran had lots of those large breakable 78rpm records. I remember one was Hiawatha. When we bought a new 45rpm type record "Little White Bull" we had to slow the turntable manually in order for it to play properly to not sound like Mickey Mouse, the end of the song ended with a sound just like a big scratch would make and we only found out later in Malaya using a more modern player that it was in fact a roll of drums.

I can still smell the olive oil and kerosene that Gran would rub on her joints at night to get some relief from arthritis. Gran could tell us if it was going to rain by the pain in her joints, nine times out of ten she was right, it would rain. Hang on though nine days out of ten it does rain in Manchester

We knew old Mrs Rotor at the corner shop, all the old shops had that sort of Paraffin smell back then or maybe it was rising damp. I know Grannies parlour floorboards were rotten and broke through near to the parlour window. I was surprised the old Piano didn't fall through the floorboards too.

Fitting everyone in

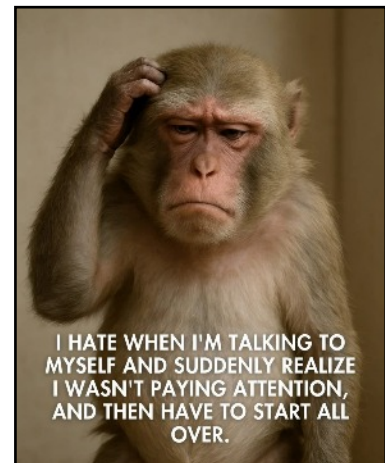
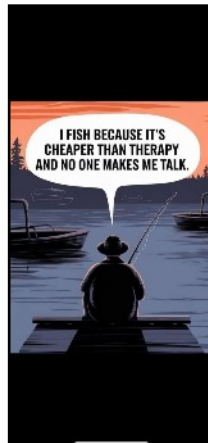
We must have been like sardines to all cram into the rather small terraced house at 41 Clay Street. Jack was away in the Army and Albie still in a home but that still that left ten of us to fit in including Gran. Linda Ray and Ken were fortunately still very young and small.

We lived out of suitcases the rest of our possessions had been forwarded on to Penang Malaya. Winter had almost ended in May; the main problem now was rain. Pakamac's were all the rage so I got one and probably Ken too. I will never forget that smoked transparent grey coloured plastic mac, it stank of chemicals and gave me headaches, and it also got just as wet on the inside as the outside. Along with its popper buttons it was probably most awful raincoat I ever possessed.

Quite amazing really but Beryl, David and Ivor were able to find paid jobs right away. Beryl worked at GRA Belle Vue looking after the dogs. David worked in the tailoring industry where he was able to obtain low priced clothes for us kids. Ivor worked at GRA Belle Vue in the mail and communications office. I well recall the antique telephone exchange he operated there.

We had to visit the "Bath House" once a week unless we had been to the swimming pool. I don't know how on earth we all managed to organize ourselves at home with only one outdoor toilet; mum would always be there with words of encouragement if you took too long. "Hurry up there is other people queued up!" We all had to wash in the kitchen sink in the little scullery; those with no job or school to worry about were the last in line. I think Gran may have inherited our old washing machine with the electric rollers but would have had to keep it in the back yard.

To be continued.....



80A Reunion in Newbury - Kevin Davies

80A had our annual reunion over the weekend of 10 - 12 January 2025 In Newbury so we could visit the REME Museum.

We did our normal drinking and chewing the fat over the weekend reminiscing over all the old tales, especially about life in the spiders before we moved mid term up to Princess Marina College around June 1981.

Dave Pendry had contacted the REME Museum prior to our visit and the resident historian arranged a display of photos and paraphernalia which was greatly appreciated by us all, whilst touring the Museum we bumped into Fuzz Townsend from Televisions CAR SOS, he was visiting the museum with his young son and was good craik talking to all the lads, very amenable bloke who made the day for a couple of the lads.

Next years reunion is weekend of 9th to 11th January 2026 back in York, staying at the Premier Inn North if anybody else is interested I can be contacted for further details. (Contact the OBAN Editor for Kevin's e-mail address).



"Find a REME Soldier, point him or her at that problem and they will find a way. They're just unstoppable."

Lieutenant Colonel Lance Rosie

Ex Coral Sands Australia 1968 - Gunter Webster - 64B

Recollections of 2 Flight in "Oz"

I was posted to 2 Flight Seremban in May '68, after spending a year at my very first posting 75 Ac.Wksps in Kluang, Malaya. Kluang was a great introduction the "Real World" and the meaning of life! where one was introduced to Tiger r example, and being informed of "Out areas that could result in some serious "medical" issues should you decide to visit these places!

Anyway, upon arriving at 2 Flight in Paroi Camp and completing all the formalities of booking in, OC's and "Tiffy's" interviews etc., I settled in and* began to enjoy life in a small 1st line Unit. (Since then, I much preferred that type of posting i.e. operating "Live Aircraft" rather than a 2nd line workshop) Some months later, we were told that our Flight would be taking part in an exercise down in Australia with further details to follow.

The details soon followed and our purpose was to act as umpires and controllers for the duration of the exercise. 2 Flt. would supply 3 Scouts, 7 Flt. (Terendak) 2 and 11 Flt. (Kluang) 1 plus 2nd. line support from 75

Our trip would involve moving down to Singapore and prepare equipment etc. ready for loading onto our ship, LSL Sir Galahad, for the journey

down to the ex. area which was Port Alma on the east coast near Rockhampton. This would take 10 days sailing from Singapore. All of this would start on Monday the 16th. of September and conclude on Monday the 28th of October.

The first day consisted of final preparations of the aircraft which were flown down to Seletar the next day where they were refuelled with AVCAT before being loaded onto the Sir Galahad. The Scouts used were-XT630, XP887, XP894(2Flt) XT628.XT629(7 Flt) XT626 (11Flt) As a point of interest XT626 is still flying with the HAAF (Historic Army Aircraft Flight) Middle Wallop.

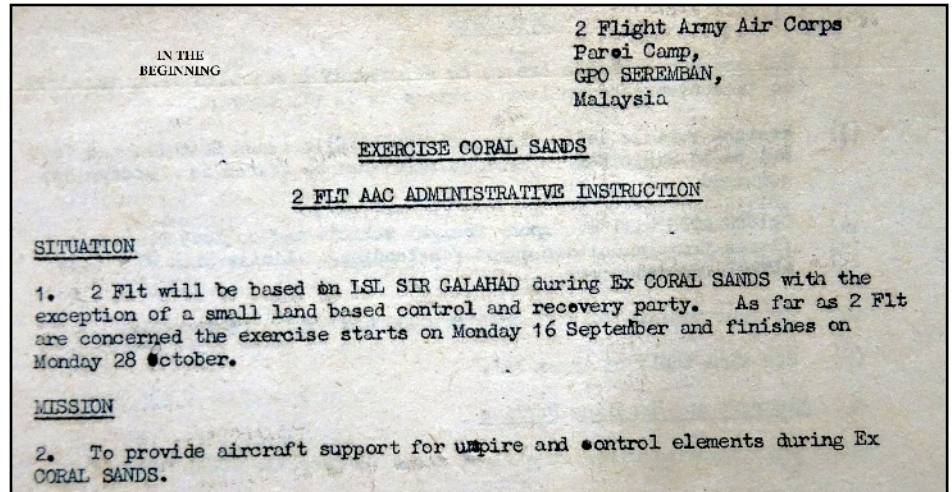
Eventually after everyone etc. was on board, we set sail on the 19th. The journey took us past Borneo, Sumatra,



the Gulf of Carpentaria and round the North East tip of Australia and finally into The Great Barrier Reef. During this trip, we were "entertained" with lectures on various topics such as Theory of flight to current affairs. These were inter spaced with aircraft servicing, PT, Games, engine room visit with time off for things such as "Dhobi days" I can remember listening to English radio stations via the aircraft ADF and sat inside with a headset on. Our first port of call was Townsville for re-supplies where we were not allowed off shore, there was a reason but cannot recall why. I think it had something to do with the Gurkah Dasheera festival? That was our first encounter with the local "brew" namely Victoria Bitter that seemed to go down well. Not so sure the next morning though.

Once we were re-supplied, we set sail again to our destination. The trip down provided us with some amazing scenery along the reef, past place such as Whitsunday Island and a beautiful clear sea through which you could the coral, sea snakes and a variety of tropical fish.

Finally, we arrived at Port Alma which in fact lies on the Tropic of Capricorn. All the Scouts had their skids painted white to identify them as "Umpires" and so began our time "down under!" The daily routine varied each day and as long as we had the required number of Scouts plus a spare available everyone was happy. We operated from the aft flight deck so space was a tad scarce and so we became very skilled at blade folding and moving Scouts to make room for the next landing.



Daily tasks include fresh water compressor washes after the last flight using some "very high tech "equipment consisting of a bucket of water, and a stirrup pump connected to a pole with a circular wand on the end. This was a 2-man operation, pump operator and pole "holder" to direct the water down the intake. This worked well unless the "pump" operator was a bit too enthusiastic causing an engine Flameout! Apart from the routine servicing and not many snags to fix, we had good time. The forward deck was used to facilitate any visiting Helo's and can recall an RAAF "Huey" landing once, also other Scouts used the helipad there.



Out of work hours were spent catching up on dhobi, watching films, some "Egyptian PT", Letter writing, etc. I used to listen to English radio programmes via a headset while sat in the front and tuning in the ADF receiver.



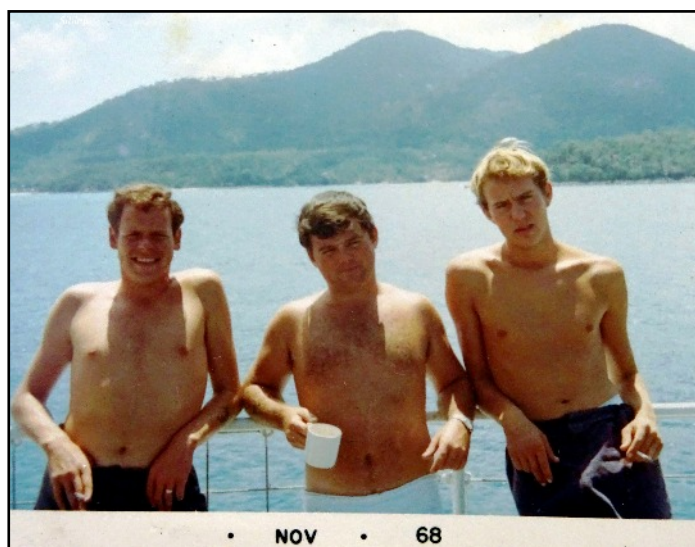
Finally, when Endex came round, it was time to repack all the equipment, stow some of it down the hold. we lashed down our Scouts on the rear deck after removing the main rotor blades. Once all of this was completed and checked for any missing bits of kit, we slowly sailed back out of Port Alma and headed north This time we were allowed on shore after docking again in Townsville. This made a pleasant change, plus the opportunity to sample the local "brew" which was served in "quart" jugs

I seem to recall. One thing that I am unable to solve is "How did I manage to break my specs in half?" Too many jugs perhaps? anyway with some locking wire I managed to temporary repair them till we got back to Seremban.

After arriving back in Singapore, unloading and regrouping we made our way back up to Paroi. I was lucky this time as instead of going back by train I had the privilege of flying back up, which was nice!

Here endeth the lesson. a brilliant experience for all.

As a foot note some may recognize a couple of ex Apprentices in the pics, Pete Sibley (RIP) 64C and Pete Hill, not sure of which intake, maybe 1960 ish?



Gunter Webster - 64B

CONSEQUENCES

By Adrian Lacamp, B Coy, 64A

Continued from OBAN 91

Coincidental Consequences

Before he had left his classroom, Davey Hepscott had suddenly realised that he had instinctively known that it was Melisandra, and not Bethlynda, that he held cradled in his arms.

She was very quiet, but he did not worry too much, even though he could feel her body moving in a constant stream of silent sobs.

"Bethlynda," he spoke the other twin's name, the surprising firmness of his voice breaking into that sister's silent fugue. "Bethlynda," he said her name again, this time gentler, calmer and quieter, "would you please take charge until I get back, today's discussion word is on the whiteboard, just pull it out and discuss it amongst yourselves till I, till we," he amended, "get back."

Bethlynda said, "Yes, Mr Hepscott, sir," and as she walked out from behind her desk, the traces of tears still on her cheeks, added in a small voice, "And please look after my sister, please, sir!" Davey could only smile in reply.

As he then turned to leave, he heard the whiteboard being pulled out for the class to see. As he was closing the door behind him, he heard Bethlynda, in a voice that sounded both scared and proud at the same time, saying "Oh! Today's word is Consequence."

The whiteboard showed:

Today's Word is Consequence

- 1 Effect, outcome, result, event, issue or upshot; an action that follows and is caused by some previous action.
- 2 Aftermath; the outcome of an event relating to a specific person.
- 3 Import, meaning, significance; moment having important effects or influence.

Pick one of these three definitions for your essay after the discussion - 2 FULL pages! Finish as Homework.

AFTERMATH

Davey

Having set Bethlynda the task of continuing his job for that period, Davey went straight out into the corridor, Melisandra still a light and helpless bundle, cradled delicately in his arms. Once out in the corridor he made his way swiftly and directly to the reception desk.

The headmaster, having just sat the counsellor down in his office, was slightly confused when Davey walked back in again.

He was carrying an obviously precious cargo and he stepped directly past the Head's desk and sat himself down in the big, overstuffed armchair that the Head used when, and if, he had a few minutes to relax.

"Uh, what's going on, Davey?" the Head asked quietly, already making several subconscious decisions, thankfully not all based on Policy.

Davey sank back into the large and comfortable armchair beside the Head's desk who, for his part, stepped out from behind his desk, turned to look the two newcomers over and raised an eyebrow in askance.

"It's Melisandra," Davey told him quietly, "One of the twin's pranks just went a bit wrong, and she's hurt herself" he said in a gentle voice, and sighed. It took the Head a few moments to realise that this definitely was not the same mad-eyed Davey Hepscott who had so emphatically resigned just a few of minutes ago.

"She actually lit up a cigarette in my class." Davey said, easing his silently sobbing cargo gently forward, he lifted his jacket up very gingerly and studied the girl's face, "And she seemed to have set the lighter flame to her hair somehow." he told the Head as he gently stroked her face with the backs of his curled fingers, wiping a tear off her left cheek with his thumb, "But we soon put an end to that, didn't we Mellie?"

Melisandra, for her part, seemed to hiccup and gave a nod or two, while trying to hold back her sobs.

"Is she hurt?" the head asked, coming over and kneeling down to also look at her face. "An ambulance should be on its way, Sheila was phoning as you came in and sat down," he informed Davey.

"Her hair's a bit singed, but I don't think she's hurt very much," Davey said in a whisper, as much to soothe Melisandra's hiccupping sobs as to update the Head.

At that she seemed to uncurl a little on his lap, at least her sobs seemed quieter, and her body a little more relaxed.

About then, Melisandra reached both arms up and out from under Davey's abused jacket, to hang on to Davey's neck with some determination, then buried her face back under his jacket and, between sobs, wiped her tear smeared face on the front of his shirt.

"Davey," the Head started, hesitantly, "I can see that you, quite literally, have your hands full, so you just sit there and wait for the ambulance, Melisandra is your only priority right now," he stated, stressing the 'only' and patting Davey on the shoulder.

'Did he just call me Davey?' Davey thought for a moment, 'Well, that's a first, but he's right,' Davey really did have only the one priority at that moment, Melisandra, at least until the ambulance arrived.

Moments later, they heard the distant wailing siren of an approaching emergency vehicle, the siren quickly cut off, and they shortly heard the crunch of tyres on the gravel of the school's drive, and they could see the flicker of the strobing blue lights through the office window.

Some twenty minutes later, Davey found himself sitting in the back of an ambulance, still with Melisandra cradled gently in his arms.

Her head was now uncovered, showing that her singed hair was a bit of a mess, while Davey's slightly smelly jacket now lay, discarded and forgotten, on the floor beside the big chair, back in the Head's office, dropped there by one of the paramedics.

Somehow, his heart was still beating in his chest, but it seemed that it's rhythm now had a different feel; it beat to a gentler rhythm, with a warmth and a cadence Davey had not felt for many years.

The paramedics had confirmed that Davey's prompt and purely instinctive reaction had probably saved the child from any real injury.

It would appear that she had only sustained one small area of slight reddening, to the skin of her right temple. It turned out that the lighter flame had caught her hair when the lighter, which had remained lit, had touched her hair as she had picked up the waste bin, to be sick.

The Head, after being reminded of Policy, by a thoroughly chastened and embarrassed counsellor, had informed the paramedics, in no uncertain terms that, as per School Policy, he had made calls to the girl's parents.

What he failed to tell the paramedics, because Policy forbade him from mentioning it, was that he had only been allowed to inform them that Melisandra had been 'involved in an incident'. He also failed, therefore, to tell them that had only been allowed to suggest that they 'attend the school at their earliest convenience'.

School Policy strictly forbade him from telling either of the parents over the phone what had actually happened, or even that the paramedics had been called because, according to Policy, that would cause them to panic.

And School Policy clearly stated that the telephone was never to be used to deliver bad news, nor may bad news even be hinted at, bad news should, and must, only be given in person, face to face, and only by the Head.

In the event, neither parent seemed to think that 'an incident' sounded serious. Weren't their two darling little imps always getting into little scrapes and minor incidents at school?

So each had decided, in their infinite wisdom, to let the other parent take care of this incident.

Each thought, in their own style, 'Honestly, how bad could it be.'

Meanwhile, in the back of an ambulance, a remarkably composed Davey found he still had Melisandra held gently in his arms.

Her head was now uncovered and her singed hair was still a bit of a mess. He might have felt calmer and far more relaxed than he had half an hour ago, but his heart still beat ten to the dozen for some reason.

Melisandra

Melisandra's mind seemed to have been cowering in a small, dark corner of her head. She vaguely remembered that she had been carried somewhere, to an office she thought, then from there she had been carried, by the same person, oh, her teacher? Oh yes, he had then carried her into the back of an ambulance.

She vaguely remembered that he spoke to her almost constantly, reassuring her that she would be okay, that she was safe and that all would be well.

She also remembered that his voice was gentle, and that his words calmed her fears and made her poor heart yearn for... Something.

Something that she couldn't quite define, something that she felt may have been missing in her life.

It was not until she had submitted to the ambulance guy's examination that Melisandra had finally calmed down, at least enough to let her sobs be replaced by the occasional sniff, hiccup and snuffle.

It was then that she knew what her next move just had to be, something that she had never done in the past, and had never thought to have to do at all.

Slowly, hesitantly, she looked up directly into Mr Hepscott eyes and whispered "I'm so sorry, sir, I really am so very sorry." At which point she clung even tighter to his neck, burying her tear-streaked face back into the crook of his neck. Davey Hepscott felt another change in him at that moment. It was an almost physical feeling that he felt, and one that he knew would almost certainly have a profound effect on the rest of his life, though he could never, later, define that feeling in words.

Looking down at Melisandra as she had apologised, he saw in her eyes that she had, probably for the first time in her short life, told the truth. And had done so willingly and that she had truly meant every word she had just said. The frightened, hurt and now quiescent young girl who sat in her teacher's lap, also knew deep in her heart that she would probably never be the same girl after this, would never be the selfish brat who had been the bane of her teachers' working lives, and she also knew that her sister would be different, too.

Sitting there in Mr Hepscott's lap, Melisandra didn't really remember much of what had transpired after she lit up that stupid, idiotic, lung wrenching and awful tasting cigarette. Those few moments where all a bit of a sickly green blur. The first thing that she could remember with clarity, was sitting in the back of an ambulance, on Mr Hepscott's lap, crying and holding on to him, tightly, almost desperately, and feeling oh so terribly guilty.

The paramedics had told her that, as per the local NHS Trust's policy, they had to take all children to the local Accident and Emergency department for a full check over. But the Head had kept saying something about School Policy, and that no pupil could leave the school premises during the school hours without either a parent, guardian, teacher or other, approved responsible adult accompanying them.

Melisandra couldn't understand that. Wasn't Mr Hepscott both an adult and her teacher, and he was definitely one of the most responsible people she had ever met. She thought it was just a pity that he wasn't her Daddy, he would have qualified on all four counts.

Then, in what seemed like a fit of unnatural haste for the Head, he had authorised Mr Hepscott to stay with Melisandra, and accompany her to the hospital. Right at that moment it would probably have been impossible to pry her away from her teacher anyway. She vaguely remembered that the Head had also said something about Mr Hepscott's car, but neither Melisandra nor Davey were really listening, they only had each other on their minds.

Melisandra just sat in Mr Hepscott's lap in the back of the ambulance and silently tried to think through the events that had landed her here, in this spectacular mess. She remembered that the cigarette had originally been Betha's idea, but that was just to put it between her lips and pretend to smoke it. But when Mellie had seen their father's spare lighter in the drawer in the kitchen table, well, who could resist the temptation?

She remembered the feeling of anticipation of the mischief as she had stood up, as she took one of the ciggies from its pack and then that lighter, from her blazer pocket. She vividly remembered Mr Hepscott's face as she had put the cigarette between her lips, he had looked very puzzled, as if he could not understand what his eyes where seeing. She felt a little bit of regret at his confusion.

She remembered how that look of puzzled confusion had almost instantly turned to shock and horror as she had clicked the lighter into life, put the flame to the cigarette and sucked the smoke into her mouth and inhaled, just like both of their parents did. It was then that her memories seemed to turn to ugly shades of green and grey. She knew that she had inhaled the smoke into her lungs, because she instantly wanted to blast it all straight back out in a series hacking coughs that had made her throat very sore and her chest ache. She was not certain of her thoughts at that time, probably just a confused panic when she couldn't stop coughing.

She vaguely remembered Mr Hepscott leaving the room at some point, but was that before or after she had lit that stupid cigarette. Yes, she had definitely been confused, followed by panic. She remembered feeling a bit woozy and dizzy, but at least the coughing had calmed down a bit. She thought that she must have still been confused. Because she remembered stupidly taking another drag on the cigarette, but just blowing the smoke straight back out into the room instead of inhaling it. She did remember thinking that she must have looked like a real grown-up as she took a third huge drag on the cigarette. And stupidly inhaled!

Then she remembered her tummy suddenly started to feel very odd, and her head feeling extremely weird all of a sudden, like she was going to be sick. She knew that she had felt a definite increase in her panic at that point. Then she remembered that Mr Hepscott's waste bin was beside his desk, so she had suddenly reached for it, bent over it and was suddenly throwing up in it. She couldn't remember if she could think straight at that point, but she knew she had felt extremely bad. She couldn't remember when her teacher had come back into the room. Her memory seemed to be full of blank spaces, then she had heard her sister's scream, she'd have know that scream anywhere.

To be continued.....

Remembrance Day 2025

Photos from Georgie Wright-Rivers and the Internet



Letters to the Editor

From David Finch - 63A in Australia

Hi Andrew.

I trust that you are well, and that your recovery is progressing well, albeit slowly.

Thank you for the Newsletter. It is, as always a great read. I tend to take a couple of days to read it all, I take my time so that I can savour all the information and stories from so many members. It brings back so many memories of my time at Arborfield, the "good old days". I will drop a line to my old mate Geoff (Ginge) Gendall, and ask him if he enjoyed the Reunion, it's the first time he has been to one in a long time. I hope he wasn't the only 63A member, as I was back in 2022.

Take care of yourself Andrew.

All the best.

Dave.

As OBAN editor I get to contact new members as they join us.

I recently exchanged e-mails with a new member, Ian Corryer. I mentioned that I was an ex air tech blackie and this was his response:

I was a Blackie as well.

71 Ac Wksp,

3 Cdo BAS LAD REME (3 postings, Coypool x1, Yeovilton x 2),

1 Regt AAC Wksp REME,

94 Locating Regt RA Wksp REME (22 Bty Tiffy),

Aircraft Engineering Standards Team (UK),

Brigade ASM of 145 (HC) Bde and then 2 (SE) Bde.

Commissioned,

Mobile Aircraft Support Unit (RN unit as Repair Officer),

OIC Aircraft Systems School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering,

Helicopter Islander Combined Integrated Project Team (I/C Islander/Wessex/Agusta A109),

Senior Engineering Officer of Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing (Chinook, Lynx Mk7, Gazelle and Defender),

SO2 Avn (Army Platforms) Joint Helicopter Command, SO2 Apache Airframe/Engines Apache Project Team,

SO1 Gazelle Project Team, 5 years as a Full Time Reservist as the Deputy Continuing Airworthiness Manager for Lynx Mk 7/9A and Wildcat (the Lynx replacement).

That is an impressive CV. Some of you may have come across Ian in your careers.

Obituary - Clive Soord - 54B

Scribe: Major (Ret'd) Leonard Symonds



Clive was born in Rangoon, Burma, just before the start of the Second World War. His grandmother, on his mother's side, was Burmese and his grandmother, on his father's side, was Anglo-Indian. The rest of his grandparents were English. He was quite mixed-up from birth! (His words).

When the Japanese army invaded Burma in 1942, Clive and parents were evacuated to India, where his father joined the army and served in the Middle East for the remainder of the war, while Clive, his younger brother and his mother stayed in India.

After India was granted independence, Clive and family were sent to the British army transit camp at Doolally to await a ship to the UK. This may explain Clive's occasional 'Doolally Tap'! Eventually, Clive and family sailed to Tilbury on the Empire Windrush in April 1948.

From 1948 to 1954, Clive's father served in various postings in Scotland, England and Egypt, with the Soord family following. In September 1954, Clive's father was serving in Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt, when Clive left school at 15 years old. The only option seemed to be to join the army as an apprentice tradesman, so Clive signed on the dotted line and was sent to the Army Apprentice School at Arborfield Intake 54B.

The highlights of an otherwise unremarkable three years at AAS Arborfield, were winning the Champion Company boxing tournament at light-welter weight for 'C' Company and being awarded the Instrument Mechanics prize in 1957.

After serving in Warminster, Cyprus and Manorbier, Clive joined 26 Artificer Instruments course at Bordon in 1961. On completion of the course, he served in Duisburg until 1964 when he started the process of converting to Artificer Electrics, Instrument and Radio (EI&R) now Avionics in support of the Army Air Corps.

On completion of the Artificer EI&R course, he served with 669 Squadron Army Air Corps in Wildenrath, Germany and with HQ REME Aviation in Bielefeld, before joining 13 Maintenance Advisory Group, based at the Westland Helicopter factory in Yeovil, tasked with coordinating the introduction into service, from the maintenance point of view, of the Lynx helicopter.

In January 1977, he was commissioned to join the Lynx Intensive Flying Trials Unit, As the Avionics Officer, based at Middle Wallop. After the introduction to service of the Lynx, he was appointed OC of the re-formed 13 MAG to formulate the maintenance policy for the TOW anti-tank missile system which was to be fitted to the Lynx.

Clive left the army in 1984 and was recruited by Westland Helicopters to head a small, newly formed, team, whose aim was to improve the survivability of military helicopters. Following the Westland Crisis in 1985 (which led to the resignation of Michael Heseltine) the Head of Survivability failed to survive and was made redundant! However, after a few weeks, he was offered a position in the Marketing Department or Gin & Tonic Brigade.

Clive took to the G&T Brigade like a duck to water and travelled the world as the Product Marketing Manager EH101, extolling the virtues of the new helicopter. The highlight of his marketing career was a year based in Canada, as the Office Manager in Ottawa, helping the salesmen to secure the Canadian Government order for 15 EH101 (Cormorant) Search & Rescue helicopters in 1998.

At the age of 60, Clive took early retirement in 1999. Now settled in Yeovil with his family, Clive became a keen but lousy golfer (his words). He also remained a keen skier and he and I were founder members of our self-styled Geriatric Ski Club. (Search for 'Geriatric Ski Club' on You Tube). He and I with our families and many friends skied from the now defunct REME Hotel until it closed moving on to the high slopes at Obergurgl in the early Spring for many years until common sense told us it was time to stop before we met an untimely end.

Clive married Jeanette in 1968. They have two children and seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Clive sold his house in Yeovil when both he and Jeanette decided it was time to downshift to a Retirement Flat in the centre of Yeovil Town close to shops and medical facilities.

Clive excelled at everything he put his hand to. Lead a good life with many steadfast friends who already miss him greatly.

Major (Ret'd) Leonard Symonds

