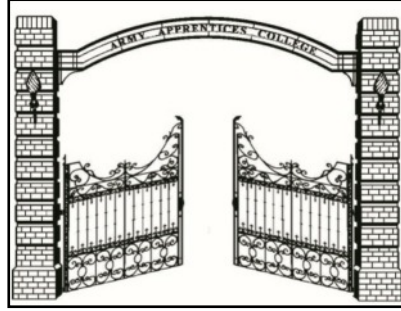


**Jul
2026**



**Issue
94**

Arborfield Old Boys Association Newsletter



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

Alister Weir- (75C)
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: Col Iain Wallace OBE ADC & Lt Col Mike Tizard taking the salute at the 2026 Reunion

Rear Cover: A/T RSM Jim Summerscales 65C RIP

Members Passed since OBAN 93

NAME	INTAKE	DOD
John Hutchinson	75C	18-Feb-26
Vincent Fuller	57A	23-Feb-26
Kevin Webster		CHEPSTOW
Andy Kennedy	78C	08-Mar-26
Thomas Whiteway	50B	13-Dec-25
Shaun Leighton	60C	13-Oct-25
Edward Horn	52A	23-Mar-25
Ronald Lawrence	47A	23-Mar-26
Bernard Gardener	48A	31-Oct-25
Mike Birdsell	62A	27-Mar-26
James Carus	97C	09-Mar-26
Dave Elson	74C	
Alan Hardy	65C	
George Brooks	45B	25-Feb-26
Jim Summerscales	65C	03-Feb-26

Martin Gilbert(75C) was listed in OBAN 93 as having passed away. This was a mistake on my part. Apologies to all concerned, especially Martin. Andy Dickson

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	Stepping Down June 2027
Vice Chairman	Mike Tizard	At AGM	Appointed July 2022
Committee Advisor	Bill Cleasby	At AGM	Ages ago
Secretary	Nigel Canning	At AGM	Stepping Down June 2027
Treasurer	Alistair Weir	ASAP	Appointed Jun 2026
Membership Officer	Robert Cassidy	At AGM	Appointed Feb 2023
OBAN Editor	Andy Dickson	At AGM	Appointed Sep 2016
Webmaster	Zeb Mansfield	At AGM	Appointed 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.

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



Georgie Wright-Rivers 77C

Hi All,

Just back from another wonderful AOBA Reunion weekend in Birmingham celebrating the very best of what our thriving association is here for.

More than 200 attended for the second year running which is wonderful news and great news for the association going forward. Naturally, there was some frustration and disappointment when the bar was drunk almost dry (mostly by 76ers!), but the necessary complaints have been lodged, and you have my assurance that they will not be ignored.

On Saturday morning we turned out in force at the National Memorial Arboretum to parade with our own Arborfield Apprentices Pipes and Drums. The new Corps ASM, Jack Coates was on hand to check our appearance and bearing, with the inspection being conducted by the Head of Corps, Colonel Iain Wallace REME OBE ADC.

We then moved to the Apprentice Memorial for the Drumhead Service where we bade farewell to those 50 old boys who departed over the last year. It was great to see a fully fit and healthy Padre Gary Kelly leading a dignified and very well received service.

Back to the hotel and the Gala Dinner for 76ers celebrating their 50th anniversary and a strong contingent of 66ers celebrating 60 years. During the evening, we received a Corps update from Col REME which included the wonderful news that ex-apprentice (88C) Lt Gen Simon Hamilton KBE received a knighthood in the King's Birthday Honours list that very day – amazing news! General Simon continues as the Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Master General REME, and I have extended our most heartfelt congratulations on his amazing achievement. Another ex-apprentice (87A), Major General (Retired) Darren Crook CBE, rounded off the evening perfectly with some very well-chosen words and a toast to the AOBA. My thanks go out to everyone involved for their contribution to this epic weekend event.

Looking forward, the Corps has a new means of communication, namely the REME Connect application. It launched on 1 June 2026 and is already having a profound effect on how the wider REME Family does its business. I implore you all to join ASAP – it is very easy to do. I have provided a simple guide below but for those who want to get on with it please go to <https://remeconnect.org/app> where you will find all you need to know.

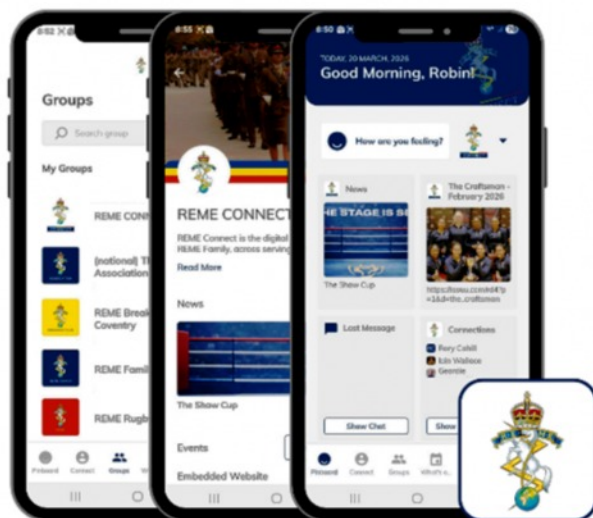
The REME Connect app will be the platform for the digital version of OBAN and the first port of call for booking tickets, attending events and keeping in touch with any AOBA news and activities. See you all there soonest!

Chair

Georgie Wright-Rivers 77C



DOWNLOAD NOW



Secretary's Report



Greetings,

Whilst much of the country is headed into another heat wave, Cornwall has been stuck under mist and mizzle since I got back from the reunion.

A fabulous weekend seeing old mates and reacquainting with even older folk from my distant past. I was a bit humbled when older apprentices remembered me from Brat School as it was always the sensible way to carefully avoid the higher Dirs if you could!

As I have family up north near Birmingham it was great to catch up with them too, although challenging my very speedy 11-year-old granddaughter to a sprint across a tennis court was not the greatest of ideas.

My styling out of a forward roll without breaking anything as I tripped over my feet was masterful. In my head anyway!

I read recently that there is a point in one's life that, upon finding yourself lying in a semi-recumbent posture on the deck you have not "fallen over" but have "had a fall". I'm going to say that I'm still in the first group but don't ask me to lift anything heavy just yet!

If you're heading down to Cornwall this summer, there's always a beer waiting in Fowey for you.

I'll expect you to pay for it naturally as the price goes up in the summer, but you won't be disappointed with the beauty of our Granite Kingdom!

Best wishes to all.

Nigel Canning 77C

Recruitment Officers Report



Hello everyone.

It was a pleasure to attend the recent AOBA reunion and AGM - my first experience of this fabulous weekend. It was nice to meet so many like-minded people from a wide array of intakes, from 1949 right up to the newly crowned JEEP - me, from 1993! It was a pleasure to discuss memories of the apprentice college and hear so many stories of service.

The LinkedIn page is now up and running. Whilst a slow start, we've gained some momentum and have just over 50 followers to the page with the posts generating over 2,500 impressions so far. (For those of you that are members of LinkedIn, just search for the Arborfield Old Boys Association and click on 'follow'.

Over the next few months, additional outreach and attempted contact will take place on other social media platforms, whilst I also review other ways to advertise the association, potentially through groups like the Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club.

My local group had a strong REME contingent!

As always, a rallying cry for us all to spread the word amongst your own networks to keep the membership base growing!

James Pittick - 93B

Webmaster Report



Hello, Members.

I took over administrating the AOBA website in September 2025 from Mark Jobes. The only qualification I have for running a web site is I have used a mouse and keyboard before.

Firstly, I would like to say a massive thank you to Mark for all his help with both transferring the web site over but also in his help in showing me how to do the day-to-day administration of the site and his very quick responses to all my questions as I learned the ropes.

There are no known issues with the AOBA website, I have not (yet) managed to break it!

There has been a major clean-up of data, cross checking the web site user details with membership data. Many email addresses were found to be out of date, and we are working to update the data.

If you update your email address, please remember to update the details on the website or let the Web Site administrator know so I can update for you.

Copies of OBAN are available to read or download from the website.

Company ties are available to order via the website order form.

Website stats.

In the last 12 months we have had:

- Just under 5500 visitors to the site, an average of 15 per day,
- Over 18300 page views.
- There are 663 users registered on the site.

Zeb Mansfield 77C

Membership Secretary's Report



Greetings.

First and foremost, I owe the association members and the committee a grovelling apology. Despite a meeting in February which I attended and several messages from members asking for their membership numbers to apply to Isle of White Tours I completely forgot about the 2026 Reunion this year! There I was having a relaxing day when I get a WhatsApp message from our secretary, Nigel. The message read 'Hi Bob, are you OK? Missing in action at the reunion'. Owing to my complete memory loss I was at first puzzled. 'What's going on?' 'What have I missed?' 'What is he on about?' Then the penny dropped, 13th June! Shhhhh*#t, not only had I forgotten what day it was

I had not sent in my apologies or my report for the AGM. Following a swift apologetic reply and a follow up phone call to assure Nigel I was OK I was left both embarrassed and bereft. So, no feeble excuses, no hiding from the facts, my 76 year old brain decided to dump the information about the reunion. Apologies to everyone, as my school teachers used to say 'Cassidy, you must do better'!!!

As reported in the last OBAN, our membership dropped a little from last year, mainly due to quite a number of our older members falling out for the last time. We are currently at 701 Active members. So, if there is anything you remaining members can do to bolster our membership numbers please do so. In particular let's see if we can garner as many 77'ers as we can for next years' reunion. Ah, note for my calendar.

Now, what have I got to remember to do tomorrow?

- Active membership numbers are back down to the 2024 count
- Sadly we lost a high number of our more senior members during 2026
- New membership down in 2025 compared to 2024
- New members for 2026 8 (so far) slightly down on this time last year
- Total Active membership is 704 down from 728 reported at 2024 AGM
- 76 Uptake for their reunion was low. Reunion message may need reviewing?

Year membership Stats

- New members for 2022 – 53 of which 2 cancelled or failed to re-join
- New members for 2023 – 35 of which 13 cancelled or failed to re-join
- New members for 2024 – 41 of which 1 cancelled or failed to re-join
- New members for 2025 – 28 of which 1 cancelled or failed to re-join
- New members for 2026 – 8 so far

Overall active membership is still quite stable. Looking back to 2021 our membership was in the mid 600's.

Therefore, currently the overall trend is upwards.

Bob Cassidy - 65B

Data Protection Officer/Database Officer Report

Hello, Members.



Another OBAN another report. I'm pleased to say, that once again our database is up to date and as accurate as possible. There is a steady stream of changes, mainly due to DDs being cancelled for whatever reason.

Please notify us via the website contacts link of any changes to your personal data.

The Arborfield Apprentice nominal roles now stands at 20,350.

From a data protection viewpoint, we haven't any had problems or information requests from members. Our data security has not been compromised at all.

However, one of our members unfortunately had his personal address book hacked recently. This resulted in both AOBA members and his wider contact group receiving "scam" E-mails. I have received two myself.

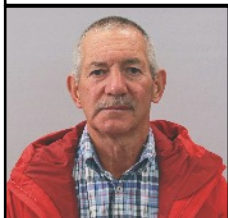
These were designed to obtain money using false information. Initial E-mails came from the correct address and were quite simple initiating a response.

Please treat unexpected or unusual E-mails with suspicion. Some things to look for:

- After a response from you, a different E-mail address is used.
- E-mails claim person is in hospital or seriously ill.
- E-mails claim member has laryngitis, difficulty talking.
- If the E-mail looks "dodgy" it probably is. **CHECK BEFORE ACTING.**

Jeff Baker 65C
DBO/DPO

Treasurer's Report



Gents,

The current state of finances is as follows:

Current Account £10,085.84

Business Account £27,582.30

This is similar to our opening funds on 1 Jan 26 which were:

Current Account £ 1,138.52

Business Account £37,445.20

The largest spends in 2026 were:

Reunion £10,743.74

OBAN £ 3,152.86 with another issue to come this year

Donations £ 2,000.00

Our only income, now that we are no longer supported by the REME Charity, is from subscriptions and the Gift Aid which this accrues. We are in a better state than the figures indicate as this year the bill for the Reunion was paid before the AGM which as you can see was £10,700. The increase in subscriptions to £25 has increased our income by about £6,500 with an associated increase in Gift Aid of around £1,500 and will negate any drop in funds over the next few years and leave the Association in a good place financially.

Finally, after a number of years as the Treasurer I shall be handing over to Alistair Weir at the AGM and I would like to thank him for volunteering for the post.

Bob McKeegan-Brown - 69A

OBAN Editors Report



Hello, Gents.

It seems when we try and e-mail new members that have Yahoo e-mail addresses from our Sharepoint site, (From our onmicrosoft.com domain e-mail addresses), They keep getting rejected by the recipient. This is not a major issue but is a bit annoying for some committee members, mainly Bob Cassidy. There is not much we can do about this as it is a Yahoo/Microsoft issue. There are work arounds but they shouldn't be necessary.

While we continue to investigate it would be worthwhile anyone with a Yahoo e-mail address check their Junk/Spam folder. If messages are there, add the sender address or domain to their **Safe**

Senders list to improve future delivery. This is similar to the guidance to add senders to the **Safe Senders list** to avoid missed notifications. I sent an e-mail to all current members recently on behalf of our Chairman regarding REME Connect. There were a few failures and I getting in touch with those members to tidy things up. Please let us know if you change your personal details, (Phone numbers, e-mail address or physical address), This saves us some admin time.

In addition Jeff Baker may have been phished by someone called John Janes. Jeff has searched all our databses and cannot find anyone with this name or even close to it. Jeff has and does take all necessary precautions but there are some clever and unsavoury people out there. Any future e-mails from Jeff will have this signature: **Jeff Baker 65C DBO/DPO**. So if you get one that doesn't end with this make Jeff is aware and then bin it.

Thank goodness the warmer weather has arrived. We see a lot on the news and social media about how to deal with this "heat wave" over the last week or so and it reminds me of our time in Mudgee NSW. (About 3 hours drive North West of Sydney). It wasn't unusual in the December to February period to get 7 or 8 days in a row with the temperature above 40C. It was like living in a sauna. Needless to say, we seem to be able to cope with these "high" temperatures here on the South Coast. I am sure, after living in Australia for close on 20 years, that my body adapted and my blood thinned out to cope with the warmer climate. The same logic applies here in winter, I seem to feel the cold much more than I used to. I hope it doesn't take 20 years to acclimatise.

No apologies for putting Jim Summerscales on the rear cover. While not the first A/T RSM I encountered at Arborfield he was the first I remember with any clarity. He always seemed a gentleman to me, and by all accounts after I posted notification of his passing on Facebook, many others felt the same way. RIP sir.

Dave Cosway (65C) sent me a file of photos from the reunion. I noticed a large number of blue berets on parade, which warms my heart. I must see if I can find mine for when I next attend! Air Techs Rule, OK.

It looks like everyone was having a good time. I think that IoW Tours have this all under control now. The format of the weekend is settled and works well.

Congratulations to Egon Taska (66C) In his victory at the annual bowling event an winning the Xodam Trophy. This event is open to all who attend the reunion. It is generally organised by Dave Cosway (65C) so if you want to join in next year let me know and I will get Dave to pass on the details.

Also, It was good to see Sher John, wife of our very own Rev Bev, attend this year. I am in regular contact with Sher and I know she wanted to attend but was very apprehensive and emotional attending the memorial service. My thanks go to Sher, who will always be welcome at the reunion, and to all who made her feel welcome. Bev would have been proud of you.

A special thank you to Tony Moogan (66B), a regular contributor to OBAN, for also making the effort to attend. His ill health didn't get in his way. Great effort, Moogs.

The Minutes of the AGM will be available on the AOBA website by the time you read this. So, for those of you unable to attend the AGM you can catch up on what was debated and discussed. Even long distance you can contribute by contacting the Secretary via the AOBA website contacts page at least a month before the AGM, or, before any committee meetings for that matter. The committee does try and make the minutes available to everyone. If you don't manage to get a copy I will be willing to e-mail them on an individual basis. Just contact me via the contacts page on the AOBA website.

This is my 27th Issue of OBAN. I try and keep things interesting for you all. If you have any tales you would feel comfortable sharing, or suggestions regarding the content or layout, please get in touch. It doesn't have to be Arborfield related. All stories are welcome and the more I have the less time I have to spend searching for articles.

My very best regards to all.

Andy Dickson 66B
Editor of the Association Newsletter

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 NEW TECHNOLOGIES

In September 1973 the College received the first intake of young men who had all stayed at school until their 16th birthday. In the same month Colonel H.K. Tweed, C.Eng., F.I.Mec.E., F.R.Aa.S., M.B.I.M., assumed command. In the following three years further change and innovation considerably altered the content of the apprenticeship for both Technicians and Vehicle Mechanics. In 1974, working parties were set up to examine the implications of the Technical Education Council (T.E.C.) requirements for the College technician apprenticeship and the following year, as a result of discussion with City and Guilds of London Institute (C.G.L.I.) the National Craftsman's Certificate was introduced for Vehicle Mechanics. This nationally recognized qualification marked a further enhancement of the vehicle apprenticeship. A highlight at the end of 1974 was a further visit by The Duke of Edinburgh, who, in his capacity as Colonel-in-Chief of the Corps, reviewed the College Passing-Out Parade on 9th December.

A new training group system was introduced in 1975. This move was linked with the incorporation of the Director of Army Training inspired common military syllabus and a rationalization of the workshop practices syllabus for all trades. A further step was taken when the Aircraft Technicians were enabled to complete their Class III trade training within the College. In the Electronics Wing a new syllabus "Basic Electronics in the 70s" was introduced. This latter marked a change in training philosophy; the existing 'Part to Whole'. Throughout the period discussions took place between the School of Electronic Engineering and the Aircraft Engineering Training Wing, with a view to coordinating and rationalizing the College's proposed submission to the T.E.C. of certificate and diploma programmes. These programmes were to replace the existing City and Guilds Technician Certificate and the O.N.C. in Engineering.

Command of the College passed to Colonel B.G. Keast, C.Eng., M.I.E.E., M.B.I.M., in June 1976. This was a red-letter day for the College as Colonel Keast was the first ex-Arborfield apprentice to return as Commandant. He had served his apprenticeship at Arborfield between 1945 and 1948 and, indeed, was one of the few apprentices selected for the previously mentioned Woolwich Arsenal Engineering Cadetship Scheme. His tour was marked by two events which were to have considerable significance on training. Firstly, during April 1977, the College took delivery of a powerful mini-computer system and secondly, in the September, the new T.E.C. courses were launched. The computer was obtained as a result of work undertaken by the Evaluation and Quality Control cell as part of a R.E.M.E. project known as ASCOT RAIN (**ADP in Support of Control of TRAINing**).

The equipment was provided to enable the College to implement a system of Computer Managed Learning during the project. Not unnaturally the computer was received with mixed feelings but, in the following year at the summer Passing-Out Parade, the Commandant, in his address to parents, was able to say with reference to the computer: "It has not developed into a 'Big Brother' as some people feared but rather a 'Man Friday' that has helped in the decision-making process, while in no way affecting the individuality of the apprentice. The new T.E.C. programmes for Aircraft and Electronic Apprentices was the culmination of an intensive period of preparation and negotiation, and provided Diploma and Certificate courses for technician apprentices as replacements for the Ordinary National and City and Guilds courses respectively.

In October 1979, Colonel J.D.C. Peacock, M.A., F.R.G.S., assumed command of the College. The period from then until July 1981 was, perhaps, the most significant in the history of the College to date. In addition to numerous far-reaching developments in the training of apprentices, the long awaited move to the new buildings and re-designation as Princess Marina College took place. Developments in T.E.C. came in September 1979 with the introduction of a seven-term T.E.C. Certificate Course for selected vehicle apprentices. An important aspect of this was to provide an additional source of potential candidates for the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham (*near Swindon, Wiltshire*) through a commission in R.E.M.E.

In February 1980 the College ran an inaugural two-day leadership assessment cadre for senior apprentices, based on well-tryed principles and practices used at the Regular Commissions Board and the Artificer Selection Board. It was highly a successful period of experimental learning both for the apprentices and staff concerned, and heralded the start of formal developmental training in the art of leadership for all apprentices. From February to October 1980, a one-week introductory leadership cadre was introduced for all technician apprentices in the fourth term, and for all Vehicle Mechanic apprentices in their third term. In the training of craft apprentices, the College took over the examination of C.G.L.I. Part 2 for Vehicle Mechanics from the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering in April 1980. The autumn term forecast a chilly climate to come as the Defence cuts took their toll of finances. The mainstream of training within the College had been protected but cutting back on the other activities seemed inevitable. The increase in apprentice subscriptions to P.R.I. (*President of the Regimental Institute*) and heavy inroads into this fund alleviated the situation, even if only temporarily. For long-term benefit, however, the Commandant decided to set up the College Trust Fund.

The target was, and remained until 1991, the raising of £50,000 by appeal to our Old Boys' Association, to Service Institutions, to other grant-making trusts, to commerce and industry, and last but not least to parents of the apprentices themselves; the apprentices being the direct beneficiaries. The investment income from such a fund should be sufficient to double the amount which apprentices already contribute and this hopefully will be sufficient for our purposes for the foreseeable future.

In early 1981 a working party was set up to consider the future training of apprentices up to T.E.C. Diploma standard, the result of which was the phasing-out of the seven-term Advanced Diploma course and the eight-term Diploma course and their replacement by a single seven-term Diploma course. The first of the new Diploma courses started in September 1981. That same intake also saw the re-introduction of Weapons apprentices the training of whom had been moved to Carlisle in 1960 but not returned to Arborfield when Carlisle closed in 1969.

Potential Armourers and Gun Fitters now follow a six-term apprenticeship based on C.G.L.I. 200/205, at the end of which they undertake continuation training at the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering for a period of approximately 12 weeks.

A significant consequence of the introduction of the T.E.C. courses at the College, and indeed throughout further education generally, has been the need for a dramatic increase in student assessment and administration. The answer for the College lay with the computer and additional funds were provided by the Army Committee for Instructional Technology to enable the system to be enhanced so that it could cope with the additional work. The required enhancements to both hardware and software were completed in September 1980, and not only gave the necessary power to handle T.E.C. matters, but also provided additional facilities, including the ability to generate examination papers from computerized question banks. The computer system, known as S.P.E.C. (Student Performance Evaluation by Computer), aroused considerable interest throughout the three Services and in many civilian technical training establishments.

Thus ended another chapter of College history and a new one was about to begin. Obviously over a period of forty-odd years a lot of material has been lost, hopefully not for ever, as we depend on past members of the College to correct.

THE NEW COLLEGE

After many months of delay, and the many hours spent in deliberation over plans and preparation by the members of the College New Build Co-ordination Committee from 1975-1981 the new College had at last taken shape adjacent to the School of Electronic Engineering. Captain (Retired) Ron Sherriff, the Project Officer and Secretary, is worthy of mention for his sterling work on that committee. The move began in March 1981 with Electronics Wing being the first occupants of the multi-million pound complex. The formal change of College title took place on 1st June 1981 to Princess Marina College, named after the late Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, the first Colonel-in-Chief of the Corps.

The new-build project obviously took time to plan and prepare before a brick was laid, and during this period a few changes took place, namely the raising of the school leaving age; the Army apprenticeship was shortened from three to two years and the new Weapons apprenticeship had not even been envisaged. The equipment on which the apprentices trained was undergoing change and there comes a time in any project when the specifications cannot be altered any more. So it was not surprising to find the new College to be less than a perfect fit.

The final move of the main College was completed in early July 1981 and Monday 13th July was the first day on which the College was fully operational in its new location. (Aircraft Wing remained in Bailleul Barracks and finally moved in September 1985). The change of location was a considerable achievement; over one thousand people and the equipment of such a complex institution moved in a fortnight with little outside assistance. There will always be the memory of those apprentices who helped move the library of some ten thousand books in what seemed almost as many boxes, which weighed far more than they had any reasonable right to weight!

During the summer leave period the College band embarked on a tour of the U.S.A. traveling 12,000 miles through nine states in what turned out to be a highly successful venture. In Europe a party were climbing on the 'Jungfrau' (*Switzerland*) and were paramount in saving the life of an Austrian climber who had fallen and was injured. Sergeant Challinor A.P.T.C. (*Army Physical Training Corps*), Apprentice Corporal Spencer and A/T Willis were recognized by the award of the G.O.C.'s commendation for their conduct during the incident. A further example of the best traditions of the College.

Certainly 1982 started well when Mrs. Peggy McMaster W.R.V.S. was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year Honours List. She was more affectionately known to the apprentices as 'Mrs Mac'.

In the shadow of the Falkland Islands war, H.R.H. The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief of the Corps, officially opened the new buildings on Thursday 15th April 1982 and unveiled a commemorative plaque in the main entrance hall of the College. The Band set off once again on a tour to B.A.O.R. and performed to their usual high standard.

The Falkland Islands war inevitably involved members of R.E.M.E. and as far as we could establish at least 37 ex-apprentices served there, mostly with the Royal Marines. Thankfully, none lost their lives but ex-apprentice Andrew Owen was severely burned on H.M.S. Sir Galahad whilst serving with the L.A.D. (*Light Aid Detachment*) of the Welsh Guards.

The College wished 'Charlie' the resident barber a happy retirement after nearly 30 years service with R.E.M.E. On Wednesday 20th October (1982) the College entertained The Worshipful Company of Turners.

The beginning of 1983 witnessed a change of command when Colonel S.J. Roberts B.Sc.(Eng.), C.Eng., F.I.Mech.E., F.I.E.E., F.B.I.M. became the 15th Commandant.

The winter term of 1983 was significant for its changes; the reorganization of the training programmes as a result of the Home Defence requirement for trained soldiers in the Composite General Reserve (C.G.R.) Companies; the arrival of the 'One Year Apprentice' on the closure of R.E.M.E. Company at the R.A.O.C. Apprentices College, Deepcut (*near Farnborough*) and the seven term apprenticeship reduced to six terms. Her Majesty's Inspectors from the Department of education and Science visited the College for five days, an event which happens approximately every four years, and their report was more than satisfactory.

Mr. J.A. Wedgwood, Chairman of the Southern Electricity Board presented a cup to the College, to be awarded to the best Electronics Technician, and the first recipient was Apprentice L/Corporal K. Milner of 'C' Company on 16th December (1983). Three apprentices passed out from R.M.A. Sandhurst, R.J. Mitchell who won the coveted Sword of Honour, A.T. Powell, who received the Anson Memorial Prize and P. Martin.

Despite the unemployment situation in the country, recruitment was very low and falling rapidly. The College population in the summer term 1984 was at its lowest point in the 45 years of its history (493). However, some aggressive advertising and presentations at schools and careers conventions resulted in an upsurge in enquiries and firm acceptances for the future terms.

On the architectural side, the College was being enhanced by the erection of the main entrance of the supporting pillars for the College gates. The original 1939 gates were found at the rear entrance to the WOs' and Sergeants' Mess, in the old College and these were repositioned at their original site. The existing gates, which were inherited on the closure of Carlisle Apprentice College, were now going to be hung at the new entrance and wicket gates added by Mr. Sadd. The entrance gates have become part of the history of the College, for all apprentices have passed through them on entry and again when they left on completion of training. The Arborfield Old Boys' Association adopted them as its symbol. The gates were officially opened by Major General T.B. Palmer C.B., D.G.E.M.E., in August 1984. But the year ended on a sad note At approximately 0400 hours on 27th December 1984 the gates were demolished when a car overshot the junction of Biggs Road and Princess Marina Drive. They were repaired and re-hung later.

After that incident we began 1985 on a happy note with the selection of Brigadier G.B. Berragan (late R.A.O.C.) to be the Director General of Ordnance Services, Logistic Executive (Army) in the rank of Major General in October 1985. An ex-apprentice of entry 48C, he joined ranks with major General (Retired) Baldwin (42A) (late Royal Signals) as our illustrious two-star Old Boys.

In February, a service of dedication was held in Saint Eligius Church, Arborfield, when a new Lectern Bible was presented by the parents of Kieth Baker. He was an ex-apprentice (78C) who was due to join R.M.A. Sandhurst but was tragically killed in a climbing accident.

As mentioned previously, it was intended to re-erect the Bell Tower and this came to fruition in February 1985. After various meetings and attempts to raise funds for the project, it was decided to completely rebuild the tower as an identical replica of the Old Tower. The woodwork was completed to a standard of workmanship which was a great credit to the staff of our sister College at Chepstow, and the metalwork was superbly copied by Messrs. Horton, Hunt and Spreadborough of our own A & G Wing. The footings were dug by a combined effort of 'J' and 'A' Companies and final placement was made with the assistance of 1 Training Regiment Royal Engineers at Hawley. The bell rang again before the College and Garrison Church service on Easter Sunday after an absence of four years. Past members of the band in the 'forties will no doubt be pleased to know that one of the Maces, which was found in a very poor state, has been restored through the generosity of Potters (the original presenters) and Colonel Sam Roberts. The Mace is now kept in the Commandant's office and is only removed for use on Passing-Out Parades.

May 1985 heralded the addition of the R.A.M.C./R.A.D.C. (*Royal Army Medical Corps/Royal Army Dental Corps*) Junior Leaders from Mychett, on its closure. So history repeats itself. There are, once again, three different cap badges worn by apprentices as there were in 1939.

Once again it was departure/arrival times for the Commandant. Colonel Sam Roberts was handing over command to Colonel M. Soar B.Sc.(Eng), M.I.Mfg.E., M.B.I.M., on the 16th September 1985. Like so many Commandants before him, Colonel Roberts experienced change during his tenure. He achieved almost all the aims he had set himself in 1983; will be remembered for his 'open door system' and his drive to increase the strength of the College from 400 to 750 in two years.

The summer leave, for some, was extended to enable the College to take part in Exercise BRAVE DEFENDER, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned.

To be continued.....

DE&S CEO Lieutenant General Simon Hamilton - 88C

Lt Gen Hamilton will complete his tenure as interim DE&S CEO at the end of March, a role he has held since October last year, and will succeed Lt Gen Sir David Eastman as Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS) in April.

Lt Gen Hamilton has a long history with DE&S, having previously been Head Vehicle Support from 2017 to 2019.

He served as the Army's Director Logistics Support and Engineering, then Director Programmes, until the summer of 2023, when he rejoined DE&S as Director General Land. He took on the role of Director General System Integration in DE&S' new operating model, before serving as Deputy CEO to Andy Start, and then interim CEO.

Now, he is preparing for the privilege of serving as the Army's second-in-command to Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker.

As DCGS, Lt Gen Hamilton will lead the Army's Force Design, overseeing personnel and capabilities, thus ensuring soldiers are equipped to fight and win both now and in the future.

He will continue to build on his extensive relationships with industry, driving investment in a modernised force that leverages survivable, autonomous and disposable attack systems.

Lt Gen Hamilton added:

"As DCGS, I hope to use what I've learned at DE&S to strengthen the partnership between the Army and the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group.

"I look forward to working with both DE&S and the wider NAD Group to deliver and sustain the Army's war fighting capabilities alongside my other responsibilities."

Congratulations to Lieutenant General Simon Peter Hamilton (88C), CBE awarded Knight Commander (KBE) in the Kings birthday honours list.



Cheer Up by TeeCee

I suppose there are times when we all feel quite low,
And for ordinary blokes who have nowhere to go
To unload all their troublesome worries and fears,
Unable to find a considerate ear,
Life must seem at times to be too much to bear,
Lacking someone who is able to share
And sympathise, help, and listen a while,
Until all cares are banished, and able to smile.

But thankfully, that is the fate we evade,
For while we were busily learning a trade,
We also were weaving a bond, never broken,
Which tied us for life with a vow, quite unspoken,
That we would remain truly comrades of worth
To each other, even to the four corners of Earth,
So, like it or not, 'cos you're luckily numbered
Among Arborfield ex-boy's, you really are lumbered!

Fred Hall - Ken Anderson - 57A

Thousands of Arborfield electronic and other trades apprentices will remember the Civilian instructor who basic electronics in the 1950's and 60's.

He retired from teaching in the late 1960's and took up the position of senior instructor for the Electronics Wing.

Fred also ran the Schools Radio Club, call sign G3HOS, of which I was a regular and active member. Fred has his own "radio shack" at his home in Eversley and I quite often would spend time there with his wife and daughter after Sunday Church Parades enjoying Afternoon Teas.



One of the Radio Club projects was to build a "Top Band" (160 metre) radio transmitter. In 1959 the Apprentice School had a recruiting presence at the Aldershot Military Tattoo, a number of apprentices were to display their training skills and I was there with soldering iron wiring the transmitter. (That was not to be my last participation in a Military Tattoo but those are stories perhaps for another time),

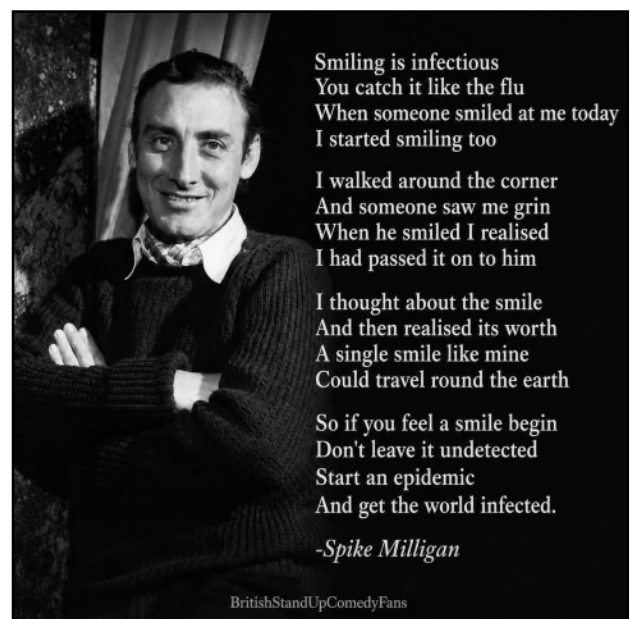


Ken Anderson

Fred and Mrs Hall in the Winter Terms ran ballroom dancing glasses which were well attended by many. To provide dance partners young ladies were bussed in from the Marks & Spencer store in Reading. I'm sure that many long term romances developed from those lessons.

The three year apprenticeship gave thousands to enjoy the skills of so many civilian instructors across all trades from basic metal bashing to preparing them a Class 3 tradesmen joining the Corps and soldiering all around the World. I'm sure that every reader can recall at least one.

Ken Anderson - 57A



Breakfast Clubs 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/>

REME Teesside breakfast club
The Don Bar
Cranworth Street
Thornaby TS17 7DR
09:30 on last Sunday of the month

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

Continued from OBAN 92

Our visit to The Famous Zoo in Gorton Manchester

There was a lot of building work round the Lake at Belle Vue and due to the nature of the work it was possible for us to use the work site to gain free access into the grounds. This was ideal for us kids; we certainly had no money to pay the entrance fees. Mum or dad did not know we were going there to play whenever we could. I don't recall being asked to show admission tickets once we had sneaked in, but I do remember looking round the front exits for discarded old tickets before we got in just in case we were asked for proof that we had paid.

Once inside we could look round the animals but hadn't any money for the fun park rides.

I mentioned learning very little at Todd's Nook in Newcastle; however they had taught me how to swim. I didn't much like the lessons; the swimming pool the school used was absolutely freezing. This ability came in useful in Gorton where a weekly visit to the Swimming Baths would count as the "Weekly Bath Night" I remember the changing cubicles around the outside of the pool and the Brylcreem dispensers "Brylcreem, a little dab will do you. Brylcreem, you'll look so debonair. Brylcreem, the gals will pursue you. Simply rub a little in your hair." Haha. I would later recommend using Brylcreem to my Uncle Laurie who had no hair; it would stop his scalp from itching.

I had learned to swim before my older brother Ivor; I remember dad had told us that he had rescued my eldest brother Jack when he had almost drowned sometime in the distant past. Dad was a strong swimmer and trips to the swimming pool were a family outing, we would not be allowed on our own.

Mum was Mum and looked at Malaya as just another posting

This would be the last time mum would live in her old street and birthplace and the last time she would see her own mum Amelia Thompson (Our Grandma) able to live independently in her own house.

Mum was born in Gorton Manchester 17th July 1917 and lived until 18th November 2003 would live to 86 years old. My mum was over 8 years younger than my dad. Her maiden name was Thompson. The Thompson's had been a biggish family however some of the children died quite young. I only ever knew my Uncle Albert Thompson who lived in Morecambe and my Aunt Millie Hall (nee Thompson) who lived in Speke Liverpool. We never met my dad's siblings.

My mother had from an early age been a bit of a traveller by necessity accompanying her mum and dad to Canada, during one of Granddads working trips in 1922-3 lived in Toronto Canada while her dad worked as an Engineer. Granddad would have learned and practiced his trade at Beyer, Peacock and Company Limited in Gorton. I would find later that I also had the necessary skills for a career in Engineering

In 1823 Thompson's family had returned to Glasgow following an opening for more work for Granddad before finally settling down again in Gorton Manchester. When mum left school she worked as a machinist in a factory in Gorton and did some weekend/evening work as an on stage dancer in Belle Vue. I understand she was one of the "Chorus Girls" at Belle Vue.

Mum had been introduced to her boyfriend George "my father to be" by her girlfriends boyfriend. George had sailed off to China in 1935 with the Lancashire Fusiliers when mum was just seventeen years old. Somewhere along the line she had promised to marry him. Four years later in 1939 when mum was 21 years old he arranged for her to sail out by convoy to India to marry him. My sister Beryl told me it must have been quite a shock for mum to see dad in India to find he was skinny and had lost a lot of weight during those four years away.

Mum sailed off as she had done times before with her parents to Canada but this time she was on her own with a convoy of ships guarded by the Royal Navy. The voyage first took her past Gibraltar where dad had previously served; she got in trouble for leaving her cabin porthole open for while she was up on deck gazing over Gibraltar when the rough seas at the Gateway to the Mediterranean flooded into her cabin. The convoy moved through Suez into more dangerous waters where with barrage balloons flying in case of attack they eventually sailed onwards to the coast of India. On docking in India mum still had many days to travel northwards overland by train before arriving in Quetta India. On the 27th March 1939 the day after arriving in Quetta Mum and Dad were married.

Three of my older siblings were born in Quetta and when dad returned to England at the end of the war 1944 another two of my older siblings were born in Gorton Manchester before I was born there myself at home in Clay Street January 1950

There would be three more children born. In all mum would have been pregnant for a total of 81 months that's almost 8 years worth. They don't build them like that anymore.

Malaya would be something of a bonus posting. If the Army had not made a mistake regarding dad's real age we would probably never have got out to Malaya. He was already 53 years old and should have been retiring less than two years later in March 64. We were lucky and on our way to the Far East

Preparing for the move to Malaya

The Army had provided advice on what to take to the “Far East” they said no winter clothes were needed and cotton was the best material to wear. I am sure it mentioned lots more as well but that would have been for dad to know.

The Army always produced comprehensive booklets for people posted to the Far East; normally you got that book upon arrival at your new post. Dad would have known far more than they could tell him after all his service in China and India.

We all got a pair of new shoes and two new shirts with short sleeves. The shirts were quite tropical looking compared to other stuff we had worn previously. I remember getting my pair of shoes from Cross Street, they were two tone brown, very grown up looking, I had been keeping my eye on them since being told we had to get new shoes, I had only ever had black school shoes or sandals prior to that.

Journey down to London June 1962

We went by train down to London Victoria Railway Station. I had got used to big Railway Stations; Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Crewe, brother Jack had even been a “Fireman” at Chester Railway Station. I had never been to London before everything was brand new and so much busier to me. When we arrived at the Rail Station we took a “London Taxi Cab” to the “Air Terminal” in London, I had never been in a London Taxi before it was another first for me. We booked into the Air Terminal and checked in luggage prior to being bussed to Stansted Airport.

We would fly out from Stansted Airport in a Bristol Britannia turboprop aircraft with Refuelling stops at Istanbul and Bombay, and then on to Singapore.

Firsts and Thirsts

I had never been in an Airport terminal before, the taxi ride there was no problem. I had to sit on the rear facing fold down seat behind the driver, all nine of us squished into one taxi, two were babies and Ken still “Tiny” we often had more people than that in our old Ford Pop. The Terminal in London was like a big “Waiting Room” with padded bench like chairs. We seemed to be there for a long time doing paperwork and checking in the baggage. Us kids had all got new “hand carry” bags stuffed full of things for the journey. I clung to mine like my sanity but cannot for the world remember exactly what was in it.

We all knew our place in life back then. The pecking order, who was important who had to be obeyed. We were clearly marked by the WD (War Department) as “Second Class” We lived in ORs (Other Ranks) quarters, and were issued with 2nd Class Railway Tickets. Right there and then however we were not second class people anymore but the most important people in the world being chaperoned around doing all sorts of important stuff and just about to fly on an “Aeroplane” life was good.

We were all dressed in our “Tropical Attire” I was in my best shorts with new shoes and had my new shirt with its colourful vertical stripes. I didn’t own a watch, not that time was relevant to me. I wasn’t in any rush. It was June so shorts and shirts were good enough for the local weather.

We joined a lineup to get out to the coach that would take us to Stansted, even the coach was a novelty after only ever travelling on school or Army buses, even more luxury, this new “First Class” was easy to slip into.

I had never been inside an Airport. There was a certain advantage being with a big family everyone had to chip in and assist looking after each other in order to survive and make sure everything happened and kids didn’t get lost along the way. If one needed the toilet everyone went, if one needed a drink you waited till everyone could get one. Everyone looked after everyone else. It also removed any fear of the unknown, I still wasn’t keen on passing cemeteries after dark thanks to mums “Stories”

Travel would be no problem though we were now well away from home, even at 12 years old I could not remember “Eating Out” or going anywhere that you spent money to buy food ready to eat other than at a Fish and Chip shop, so how would we be fed? Mum had looked after the catering side exceptionally well. School dinners didn’t come close, but now we were in the hands of fate.

Ready for Boarding

There was no trepidation. This was an adventure and soon I would experience the joys of flying.

Did we walk out to the aeroplane or take a shuttle bus? I do know we had to climb up steel steps to board the airplane. So many new things had been happening it is academic to worry about such trivia, the colour of the airplane, or which airline was responsible for this Bristol Britannia Turboprop. We had a couple of pilots whose names I forget an engineer and stewardesses whose sole purpose in life was to look after us. I didn’t get a window seat; I didn’t even get an aisle seat, so the family pecking order must have been working well. The youngest Ray would have got a sky cot but I am not sure if Linda at 4 years old got her own seat.

How long is a Flight from London to Singapore? The actual time was irrelevant to me it could have been anything

from one to four days as far as I would care. It was just a case of being strapped into a chair which at first seemed comfortable and time spaced out between wondering what to do, doing things, walking to the toilet, sleeping, drinking, and eating. By the time we had taxied down to the runway and taken off I had learned what flying was all about. It was noisy, stuffy, confined and the windows were pretty useless. I didn't "Not Enjoy" the journey as such, but what kid likes to be stuck in one spot for hours on end. It even got dark before it should have done.

Istanbul was our first refuelling stop. When the doors opened and I walked out onto the top of the aircraft stairs I thought it was a blast of hot air from the engines that hit me. Walking down the stairs and over the tarmac the same blast continued and I realized it really was that hot outside. Reaching the terminal it soon became obvious to me that the place was full of foreigners. I think dad knew how to deal with those sorts of people; he had been in China and India before. We had to wait quite a long time which gave us a chance to stretch out our legs and look out of the windows to the scenes outside; yes it was all very foreign. Maybe we had coupons to queue up and get a cold drink. It did taste a bit funny but "Hey" things were going to be different!

Back on-board heading for Bombay.

This time I knew what to expect, how the plane would take off, what the cabin crew did. It was just a case of filling in the time until we arrived at our next refuelling stop.

It was almost 18 years since Mum Dad Jack Beryl and Albie had sailed back from India to what remained of England and a bedraggled British Empire at the end of WW2 in 1945. Things would have improved a little since then. I doubt Beryl remembered much as a four year old girl in India and now at 21 I am not sure what she would be thinking on her way to Penang. Jobs would be impossible to get, it would take weeks for letters to even keep in touch with anyone in the UK. It would be the same for David and Ivor too Dad would now have three dependent adults in the Far East.

Mum had given up employment the day she sailed out to marry him in Quetta in 1939. It was just as well dad would be on the high pay of a long service Sergeant and still have four younger children on "allowances"

We landed in Bombay. If I had thought Constantinople was hot this place was like Hell. The nearest I had ever been to this before was standing in front of a roaring coal fire and singing my trousers. This heat got right into the eyes and down your throat; even with my exotic tropical gear on it was boiling. I had fair almost blonde coloured hair and the sun would surely kill me! We managed to get into the cooler Airport terminal where I found the foreigners were all wearing white bed sheets, some adults even appeared to be wearing nappies. I am sure it was that old school Todd's Nook fault, they had taught me nothing about foreigners that lived overseas, the nearest I could think of it was the pictures of Jesus that I had seen in Sunday School back in Warminster. Yep Bombay was full of Jesuits.

Fortunately dad having spent over five years in India knew the language and was able to communicate with the indigenous airport workers; in exchange for coupons he obtained fluids of some description. I did have visions of him bartering for bananas or coconuts. It was the same feeling as when I had first arrived in Newcastle, how on earth could these people even understand each other? We as children had been shielded from foreigners. I can understand why mum had never liked the Germans following WW2, she must have known some secrets about the "Indians". She warned me not to wander off or I would never see her again. Was this the first steps in learning to live with the Natives?

Singapore at last

My first flight and I was bored already, it was a relief to be told we were about to land in Singapore. I had never been happy to be trapped on or in anything that moved. Maybe dodgem cars were ok at the Fairgrounds but Waltzers were definitely out. I didn't much like the times when the Britannia had gone all bumpy and wobbly or left my stomach on the ceiling. I was glad to get my feet on the ground in Singapore.

Singapore was another very hot place. I had been warned it was hot and although it wasn't as hot as Bombay anything over 80 F was hot to me. We were taken to a small rather grubby looking "Seven Story" hotel in an even grubbier looking street. No complaints from me. The sounds, the smells, the "differences" with England were terrific and I knew straight away that this was going to be fun.

For a start there were telephones and TVs in every room, this was the first time I had ever seen a TV that didn't speak English. There were loads of cold drinks available. The windows looked out over the street below. The hotel wasn't Air Conditioned though I doubt if I knew what Air Conditioning exactly was anyway. I think the rooms had an overhead fan and a black bedside table fan.

We soon got the hang of the telephone and were able to dial dad's room number and when he answered put the phone up to the television where a Malay man was shouting at someone. It wasn't long before dad came to the room and told us to leave the phones alone because he had just had a call from the hotel manager telling him off. I think Ivor was probably the ringleader with all his experience at the GRA Belle Vue telephone exchange.

To be continued

The Sausage King by Rob Castell 64A

Over the last few years, probably more, I've been researching my family history. I guess most people reaches that age in life when you stop looking forward and start looking back to discover where, and who, they've come from. I have managed to trace, with a lot of help, back as far as 1774 in my paternal side to a John Castell living in the London area, and to 1595 to a William Hatherel living in Calne Wiltshire on my maternal side.

The further back in time the more difficult it is to get information as research is reliant on parish records of births, marriages and deaths. Few people in those days could read and write, so when a parish priest asked for names it was written in the records as he heard it, meaning eventually over the years surnames evolved. Hatherel for instance has now become Haddrell today.

In my research I've come across interesting characters, one of which was my Great Grand Uncle, one William Harris, known as 'The Sausage King'.

William was born in 1843 and as a boy worked a butchers round in Woolwich and Greenwich, going on to start a career in the sausage business with a stall in Old Newgate Market. In about 1872 he took a shop in St John's Street Smithfield and lived in the flat over it until his death.

With hard work and a flair for clever advertising he became one of the most famous caterers in Victorian London, having at one time forty shops in various parts of London as well as Southend, Brighton and Portsmouth. As the leases on the shops gradually expired he gave them up to concentrate his energies on the wholesale sausage trade, supplying the Army, Navy and large firms.

It was thus that the Harris Sausage Company came into being.

He was somewhat eccentric to say the least, this was largely due to his love of personal advertising, which was his motto for business success. He would usually wear evening dress with a top hat, white shirt, cravat and a large diamond tie pin, even when he was buying in the market. On some occasions he would wear full highland dress to stroll round the streets of London to promote his sausages. All the paper he used, whether for writing or wrapping had his photo on it, and his trademark, which he registered in 1872, was an illustration of him riding a pig and winning the 'Pork Sausage Derby'.

One anecdote tells of when he was visiting one of his shops in Brighton when a tramp ran off with a string of sausages from his shop. The tramp was caught and William challenged him to a sausage eating contest, if the tramp won he would go free. A huge crowd gathered to watch, and William won by four sausages, he then gave the tramp a sovereign and his freedom.

Every Christmas William sent 1lb of sausages to each fireman and policeman in the City of London and all the other districts where he had a shop.

In 1897 he put a sun bonnet, with a parasol attached, on a mule and rode it from Folkestone to London, though some say that it was a pig he rode with the words 'tomorrows sausages' somewhat cruelly written on it. He also bred brown Shetland ponies which he used to pull his red advertising carts around the streets of London.

Another of his eccentricities was to name each of his three sons William (Williamone, Williamtwo and Williamthree) and each of his four daughters Elizabeth (Elizabethone, Elizabethtwo etc). In 1877 he was summonsed for not sending his son William to school, he brought all three of his sons before the magistrate and asked him which one he meant. The magistrate was puzzled but he was fined 2s 6d anyway. He said afterwards that although he was fined the publicity was worth £20,000 of advertising.

William died in 1912 aged 69 from heart failure brought on by bronchitis, and the main factory producing the pork sausages eventually closed in 1982.

Interestingly the factory was in Calne Wiltshire, where my 8 times maternal great grandfather William Hatherel lived in 1595, and where his descendants were still living in 1982, so the family history story has come full circle.

Rob Castell - 64A

Reunion 2026 Photographs Courtesy of Dave Cosway - 65C & Bill Wraight - 69B





The 76 ers 50th - Dave Sparrow - 76B2



The 76ers

June 1976, the 60 members of 76B2 drove through those famous (or infamous!) gates into the Apprentice College for the very first time. Who amongst us would have thought that fifty years later we would be gathering in Birmingham to commemorate that important day of our lives?

Of the 60 boys, 7 managed to attend the weekend and two others would also have made it, except that they had medical issues. At more than 10% of our intake, I think that was an excellent turnout.

Most of us have met several times over those years, but there was at least one that I had not seen since the college days.

I think that we all managed to have a great time, swapping war stories and remembering misdemeanours from our youth.

We were not the only 50 years celebrants as there was representation from 76A, 76B and 76C and I am sure that they all had their own equivalent of our catching up.

One individual from 76C unfortunately could not attend. Richard Walmsley, or Wormy to those who know him, was all set to fly over from Australia, but the fine British Passport Office could not manage to produce a passport for him, despite him giving them about 3 months in which to do so. If you are reading this Richard, we all had a few beers for you in the style you would expect!

I would like to thank the AOBA Committee for organising such an excellent weekend and for all the work they do for no reward all year round. I am confident that many 76ers will be there at the ongoing weekends ahead to help the JEEPS behind us celebrate their 50 year anniversaries.

Dave Sparrow - 76B2

A Call Home

There's a cherry-coloured phone box to the left of our main gate,
A pair of sad faced juniors by the door,
'Twas their only mid-term contact, with those that were at home,
To give them aspiration for some more

Punishment, it may have seemed, to some, that trod the path,
Others took it easily in their stride,
A parent's voice, "you're doing well son, keep it up, you hear?"
To swell the chest, righteously with pride.

It wasn't just a simple trade that we had joined to learn,
But skill at arms, resourcefulness, and grit,
To bear the standard set so high, working as a team,
Not landing all your room-mates in the shit!

Steep learning curve, the first term done, juniors no more,
More confident, and building by the day,
But taken down a peg or two, or," suitably advised"
If cockiness was getting in the way.

Company drill, a special halt, frowned upon by some,
As was jipping, (but we progressed along the queue)
From nuts and bolts, basic parts to theory and tests,
14 weeks, those terms just really flew.

The months and years passed quickly by, and soon it was our turn,
To practice for our ultimate parade,
The parent's turn to feel the pride, in what we had achieved
A common bond, and lifelong friendships made.

And so we left our mates behind, and went our separate ways,
Some anticipation once again before,
Arriving at our postings, a new beginning once again,
But every one of us an asset to the corps!



Lessons in Life No 7 - Tony Moogan 66B

'Ewe Doc' Bois are Rubbish' – Part 2

As promised dear readers, here I am again, all fresh-faced n bushy-tailed to amuse, cajole or infuriate you with my latest little episode!!

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It was at this point that I began to fear for the custody of my "cherry" which had yet to be plucked! (And would remain in that status quo until I was 18 and a half) But I thought "well Moog ol' chap if this is to be your Waterloothen have at it boi bach!!

So, the film has been watched, in the back row, amid quite a bit of 'tonsil hockey' at which I was improving with every contact, or so I thought but as I was to learn later in my army career "No plan survives contact with the enemy!!!" And sure enough mine failed miserably My plan was to get her the in alleyway behind her house and then wedge her gently betwixt the 6ft back wall and the telegraph pole right next to it, which went like clockwork Her only comment was "oh Tony you could do whatever you wanted with me now, and pushed her nether regions right against mine.....and with some gusto ...!

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Two things happened once I had achieved my goal:

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Never before have I been so pleased to be "sent on my way!!"

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Conclusion:

When one is just 15, do NOT take a 19yr old 'looker' on a date unless you have SOME idea of what you're about!! Clearly, I did not!! I promise to do better next time.

QED!

- I hope Pete and Sally Moran may remember her for a Mess disco in Bordon one Saturday night (I think it may have been a "fancy dress" do bcos I'm sure I recall Sally dressed as a royal lady ish??) when Lyn got me up to dance and wanted to jive!
- Now I am no jiver but I could stand there with my arms where ever Lyn wanted them (I looked more like a traffic cop "finger post" on a B road!!) and could just stand still whilst Lyn would "strut her stuff", bringing the whole place to a standstill because of her gyrations, rhythm, legs up to her shoulders, and the obligatory "webbing"!
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Tony (Moogs) Moogan 66B

Random Arborfield Memories



I don't know when this photo was taken, pre 1966 at a guess as there is no TV on view. I don't remember fluorescent lights in the rooms I was in, (A1, A3, A6 (the Bunk) and B1 if My memory is correct.

The layout is familiar to many of us I suspect and I bet there are a few army issues suitcases out there somewhere.

I still have my locker lock and key, and it still works. Why am I keeping it? Beats me. Like all the other useless stuff I have in my garage and desk drawers. I might find a use for it eventually.

Anyone else have any memories of their rooms?



This brings back a few memories too. Room inspections and Commandant inspections took on a whole new meaning.

The gloopy orange floor polish was a wonder. Over all my time there I never saw the tin the polish was in get refilled even though we used it in great globs. Individual bed spaces used to get special attention depending how diligent each individual was and the competition for 'best bed space' was very interesting. I can remember being on my knees with my boot polishing brush for hours trying to get the best shine.



Andy 66B

Op Flying Spanner - Leonard Symonds - 54A

EXERCISE "FLYING SPANNER"

Contributed by: Leonard SYMONDS (54A)

An account of an Adventure Training Exercise carried out by three members of 74 Aircraft Workshop REME at the completion of their tour in the Arabian Gulf.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

74 Aircraft Workshop REME, Sharjah

Objective

To obtain the release of a 'Cast' Landrover, bring it up to standard and drive it home via Iran, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Holland and Belgium. An 'initiative' exercise with maximum administrative and practical tasks devolving upon the team themselves.

The Exercise was promulgated in Workshop PT 1 Orders, briefly described and called for volunteers, there was to be a 5 month lead time, departure March 1969.

The chosen three were: WO 2 (AQMS) L.A. (Len) Symonds Art Ac EI&R
Cpl S.G. (Steve) Langridge Ac Tech A&E
Cpl M.J. (Mike) Estridge Driver



The Vehicle

OC Workshop Major C.R. (Chris) Collier REME decreed that before serious preparations began NOK would be required to agree the participation of their loved ones. (Speedily obtained of course – tongue in cheek)

Application for exercise approval was made to Headquarters Land Forces Gulf (HQLFG) who readily agreed, allotting us the code name 'Flying Spanner' and authorising an allowance of £12 per head to offset expenses.

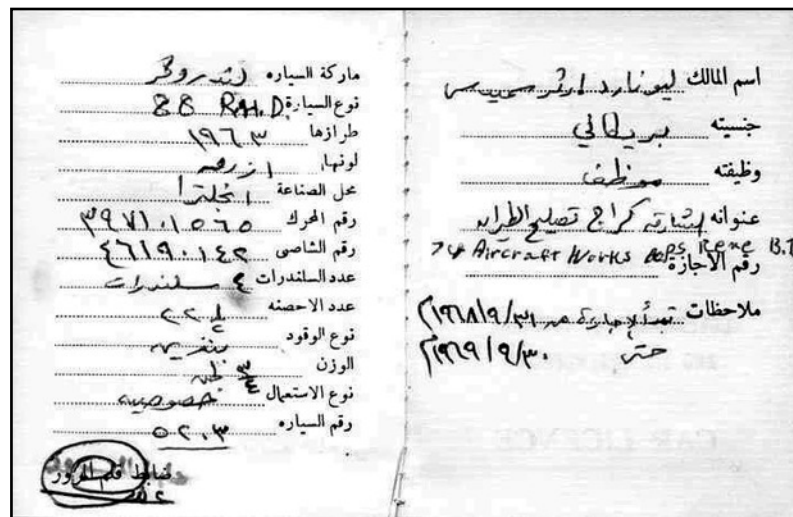
The Vehicle

The search for a suitable vehicle began and it eventually came to our notice that the Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS) had just cast a SWB Landrover which although mine plated was still a 'runner'. This was a valuable piece of information, as all the vehicles we had been offered to date had been very sick indeed. Q (AE) HQLFG speedily secured it for our use – 45ER72 was ours and we took possession immediately to stop the flight of its already depleting inventory from 1 Field Workshop BLR Park.

Preparation of the vehicle for its 6,000 mile journey made a very pleasant change for the Aircraft Tradesmen who delighted in taking large hammers to big rusty nuts, not so delightful for our driver who spent his working life down in the MT Section doing just that all day and had to be constantly reminded of the forthcoming delights of Istanbul and Usküda to maintain his enthusiasm. A large number of sunny afternoons were taken up in this way. During this time Major Chris Collier who had been enormously supportive of the exercise left for home and was relieved by Major Dennis Bingham who proved to be equally supportive.

Paperwork

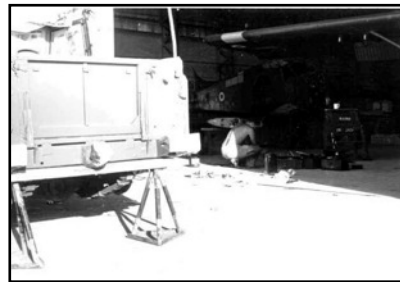
While work proceeded on the vehicle HQLFG were obtaining political clearance from the embassies on route, maps and a route guide were ordered from the AA, a heater kit obtained from the Rover Company, antifreeze liberated, insurance organised for the Landrover and for us, foreign currency obtained and negotiations opened with the TOS for use of their Dhow to cross the Gulf to Bandar Abbas in Iran. The bills were coming in thick and fast. The £12 per head allowance was long gone.



Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) Driving License

Major Overhaul

45ER72 was stripped right down to bare metal in the Aviation MT yard, thoroughly checked, important parts 'procured' from other cast vehicles, re-painted with primer/white undercoat and re-assembled. Eventually, after a great deal of work the vehicle was pronounced roadworthy and registered with the local police as 'SHARJAH 5203', the number it was to carry all the way to CVD Ashchurch.



Len Symonds



With the vehicle complete it was time to concentrate on loading lists and camping equipment. We were able to purchase Propane Gas Bottles with cooking and lighting attachments and these were to prove a tremendous boon especially in the cold weather experienced covering the high passes in Turkey; generous donations of camping kits were gratefully received. The problem of accommodating three persons in a SWB Landrover was overcome by stitching together a tent type canvas extension which fitted over the back providing space for three camp beds and a small area around

the tailboard for cooking and eating. We incorporated a 'stitched-in' canvas floor and a zip door at the end. Very snug and comfortable even at 15 below.

With a month in hand we were ready. By this time the white undercoat had been superseded by Army Aviation blue (coincidence), the Arabic registration plates were fitted and we were insured with the Royal Insurance Group for motoring within the Trucial States. It was time for a 'work up' exercise.

Published: 1st January 2007



Part 2:

Exercise 'Messpot', another unit, another cast (LWB) Landrover but painted shocking pink, was similarly placed although they were due off a week before us, so a joint up country trip to Masirah was organised. Handy to have company if things went wrong. In fact the trip was a great success notwithstanding the intense effort we put into cross desert work to try and encourage the things to fall off which might have a propensity for doing so. It was time to go back to barracks and hand over our day jobs before setting off.





(left, back to camera) Len Symonds with Steve Langridge; (right of picture, centre of group) Mike Estridge



Len Symonds



Len Symonds and Steve Langridge



Part 3 to follow in OBAN 95

Steve Langridge

Len Symonds

Lessons in Life No 7 - Tony Moogan 66B

'Ewe Doc' Bois are Rubbish' – Part 2

As promised dear readers, here I am again, all fresh-faced 'n bushy-tailed to amuse, cajole or infuriate you with my latest little episode!!

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How to call a Spade a Spade, or a Spud a Spud! - Arthur Ward 50B

Before joining up, my father would always employ me for the weekends just trying to teach me the 1947+ method of gardening. Our army Married Quarter, near Dover Castle was a bungalow where the front garden had previously been a Tennis Court Prior to WWII but now there was only long grass and high hedges. Once we had cleared the area, some climber Rose bushes were added to the house, followed by what seemed to be large plots of potatoes as was my father's choice. Thankfully the lawn would remain much smaller because we only had a push along army issue Lawn mower for the pathways.

I was soon to learn that this kind of job would re-appear when signing on at Arborfield plus the 8 & 4. After the first weeks of our Square-Bashing training in H.Q. Company, we move to join one of the four Companies for our remaining years at Arborfield unless we were promoted. Armourers were normally sent to C. Company but because the size of some intakes arriving were beginning to have larger numbers, D. Company appeared and some trades were added to each Company. When escaping upwards into Two. Div. of D. Company, some would be under the watchful eye of CSM "uncle" Paytee? Somerset Light Infantry. We all settled in well as this would seem more. relaxed after our initial drill chase about by Sgt Bill Buckley of the Grenadier Guards whose favourite advice had been, when shouting very close to your ear was "Don't wipe it off, let it fester". We were then above the Jeeps yet climbing the Company ladder of seniors depending on our Division year.

All went well until one morning Muster parade when I heard the bugler sound the second call and everyone disappeared on to the Square leaving me to gather all the weekly washing bundles for the corridor collection.

Unfortunately, I would be greeted by the CSM which could only mean, "That's no excuses for missing Parade call." "What's, your name?" "You're on a Charge!"

The next morning, I was up before the OC of 'D' Coy where I was put on the hooks, which was worse than any other Company, because ours had added punishments. The seven days Jankers meaning seven more Gate report, parading at the Main gate in full SD at 10 pm, plus the added attraction of two, one hour, Rodeo's, (drills) on a Saturday afternoon, followed by again reporting to the Gate for extra duties handed out by the Provo'.

I always got the cook house. The cook house meant peeling Spuds into a large tank for hours at the weekend just to be ready for the next few days camp meals.

I hated potatoes for a long time' believing that it might be for ever!

The lucky ones would be ordered to report to the RSM Mc.' Nally's house to "Beeze" polish his boots and belt for the next morning Muster parade. Sadly, not me!

Tom Lennox and I, as the ever-popular Janka Walla's were ordered to clean the Guard room and before escaping, we were both given two buckets, each containing Tulips and Daffodil bulbs with instructions to plant them a foot apart on one side of the main camp road. We both knew that this would go on to pass the Company offices or maybe further?

So, when on our hands and knees, we worked quickly for the only way to beat this system which was to plant them just however we liked and sometimes in pairs.

This was just to leave the main gate Provo' area and get some distant job when we returned the empty buckets!

Sadly, this was not to be because later we would be given the two wheeled hand cart with directions for us to fill it by finding the Coal and Coke yard hidden behind the workshops area used for the Camp heating.

An added attraction to this punishment at the main gate was to carry out drill on the two wheeled fire Pump which was by the kind permission of the Provo' Sgt Costa. KRRC' shouting "Water on. Water off."

Him being a not so pleasant type to disagree with!

I was soon to find that the best way to avoid being given the high jump was to get promoted and take up the Long Jump down on the long gone, distant Arborfield Sports fields were the only sports not taking part there were Boxing, Cross Country and Route marches.

Only the Medical Officer, a Major was allowed to play Golf there!

Does anyone, apart from me, try to forget those heavy leather, oversized Medicine Balls used to cause self-inflicted injury in the Gym Hall while hoping to build up some muscles? We all tried forgetting the wall bars and ropes if we could get away with it, thinking that this place was best used for film nights and where only the Duty company got caught for putting the folding chairs away. I remember that the Queen Elizabeth's Coronation was shown via a large TV box on the stage to be projected on to the screen in colour.

It was on there for the whole of the day so that you could miss some of it by going to dinner.

Whatever was your sporting choice, you had to join the Company team first for Sports Days until being chosen for the School Team on Sporting visits to the other. AAS at Chepstow.

Well, that kept me away from the unsociable Guard room visits in future and I never did join the Fire brigade in later life. Water on. Water off!! These days, I am still fit enough to do a little bit of jungle fighting in my own garden while picking the Plumbs. This would be my own "Gardeners World " which is not on the TV, Yet!

Arthur Ward - 50B

Stroke Recovery - Andy Dickson 66B

I could write a book about it.

A couple of weeks ago on Saturday the 25th, I started to feel unwell, again. By Sunday I knew I was going to be heading back to hospital. A high temperature and a decidedly uncomfortable feeling around my stomach and at the back under my kidneys.

Back to Lymington hospital.

I got interviewed by a doctor on Monday morning who was very interested in finding the cause of my problem as the symptoms were identical to those I had at the end of January. He sent me for an aorta scan and the technician scanned my kidneys at the same time. Back on the ward and the same doctor came to see me again and told me he was pretty sure I had kidney stones that were blocking the tubes to my bladder from time to time thus causing my illness.

Off to the urology department in Southampton where I had a proper kidney scan and confirmed I had a lot of stones. At just before midnight a doctor came and took some blood and hinted that I might be going to surgery shortly. Anyway it was the following day before anything started to happen and it was explained to me that they were going to insert two Stents, one on each side, to allow my kidneys to drain properly as a temporary measure. The plan being they would get me back to have the stones dealt with by laser. The stents were inserted through my bladder and I understand that the laser procedure will be carried out through my bladder too.

Two weeks later and I have heard nothing about the two operations I will need to get the stones sorted.

I am truly getting fed up with illness and trips to the hospital of varying lengths. It is hard coming to terms how fragile I have become since my stroke. Nothing used to bother me and now I have to be so careful about everything. I guess age plays its part too. Hard to believe I just turned 75.

1st May - I went for a Dexa scan 10 days ago. This is to check my bone density after my broken shoulder and hip. After all the hassle of getting to the hospital, getting onto the scanning bed etc. they decided they couldn't do my left side because of the metal in my thigh and hip. It turns out that because I have these stents installed they can't do the rest of me either. You would think that they would read your records and tell you before hand and save everyone the trouble.

4th May - Its been over two weeks since I got discharged from the hospital and still no news of when I have to go back for the next procedure. I called Southampton hospital the other day and apparently They are meeting on the 18th May to decide the next steps. This on top of my wife's second cataract operation on the 26th of May confirmed my decision not to go to the reunion this year was a sound one.

18th May - We are going back to Odstock at Salisbury hospital on May 21st to get a review of the FES equipment I use on my arm and leg and my performance with the electrodes on and off. It is a bit of a trek but with my broken hip and other hospital visits I am overdue by almost a year. They are lovely people to deal with and always very helpful. It is a nice run up through the New Forest and we found a nice place for lunch a while back so it isn't a bad day out. It does use up all my energy though and with the bladder issues I have at the moment it might need some extra planning. I am also overdue my diabetes review at the local surgery too. I am not too worried about this. I am careful what I eat and I am Type II so its not too big a deal.

31st May - The kidney stone saga continues. I have to give a 24 hour urine sample in a large plastic container. They need this to do all sorts of test to see what is going on in my kidneys. In addition, I have to give them another blood sample and a small, normal, urine sample both of these to be taken on the same day. I still haven't heard anything about my operation(s) to remove the stones.

11th June - Still no news from the Urology team about my procedures. 24 hour urine sample is complete and sent to Southampton Urology Department. I have the necessary blood test on Monday, the 15th. I have a face to face meeting with a Professor at the Urology Clinic in Southampton on the 23rd of June. Maybe this is when I will find out what the plan is!

28th June - We visited Southampton Hospital and had a chat with a urologist. My kidney stones are a wonder. The right hand side can be handle without any surgery, (I will leave that up to your imagination how they get to them). There are two to be dealt with, a smaller one blocking the urethra, and a larger one in the kidney. The left hand side one is a whole different story. It must be at least 2.5cms in diameter and needs to be dealt with by surgery. They will attack the right hand side first to make sure I have time to recover before they attack the left hand side. Another few days stay in hospital! It is no wonder I was feeling ill. The scans we saw took us completely by surprise. How they didn't spot these stones before is beyond my understanding.

Happy days.....

Andy Dickson - 66B

CONSEQUENCES

By Adrian Lacamp, B Coy, 64A

Continued from OBAN 93

Almost immediately before the Head had had to deal with Ms Jones and the alarm, Davey Hepscott had burst into his office, screaming something about quitting. From the look on his puce coloured face the Head immediately reassessed his opinion of the situation, maybe it was an emergency after all. Then, without a bye-your-leave, he had stormed out again.

As a matter of course, and not entirely in line with Policy, he asked his secretary to phone 999 and get the ambulance service to send the paramedics. Then he set to, again, in the Policy folders.

Less than a couple minutes later Mr Hepscott returned to the Head's office, carrying one of the Mevagissay twins, Melisandra as it turned out.

This time he stepped calmly into the office and sat down, still cradling the twin in his arms. The Head told them to await there for the paramedics. When they arrived, a few short minutes later, they were directed to his office.

In the name of Political Correctness, and supported by the Council's perceived health and safety concerns, Policy absolutely forbade the headmaster from delivering bad news over the phone; especially in the case of accidents or injury to a child.

Policy stated, quite categorically, that such tidings should only be given in person, by the Head or his Deputy, and only given face to face and in the privacy in the Head's office. Supposedly because bad news given over the phone could cause panic, but not if given in the Head's office; one shrugs one's shoulders at the logic in that sort of thinking!

He therefore placed separate phone calls to each parent. And, as per Policy, he politely informed each parent that their daughter, Melisandra, had been involved in a minor *incident*, he further *requested* that they attend the school at their *convenience* to discuss the matter, and to assume *parental possession* of their errant child(ren).

Those, of course, being the exact words and phrases that County believed would convey the utmost urgency without eliciting panic.

After their initial examination, the paramedics stated that, as per the local NHS Trust Policy, all call-outs involving children must be routed to Accident and Emergency, for further tests. At that the Head asked that they wait while he, again, checked with School Policy regarding letting a child out of school without being on a school-chartered bus, with a parent or named guardian or in the presence of a school appointed designated responsible adult.

When he returned to convey his decision, he was surprised to find Melisandra, still sobbing quietly, but clinging even more determinedly to her teacher's neck. This only reinforced the Head's decision to let her go to A&E with Mr Hepscott as the responsible adult accompanying her.

Having then returned to his office, the Head arranged for one of the teachers on a free period to take over Mr Hepscott's class, a duty which had completely slipped his mind in the confusion.

He was, therefore, just a little surprised when, some few minutes later, Linda his secretary, showed a quiet, almost painfully shy looking lone Mevagissay twin into his office. Logic told him that this had to be Bethlynda, as her sister was on her way to A&E.

He was then taken completely aback when she quietly, and methodically, told him everything that had happened, from her point of view, in one long, continuous stream of a confession, seemingly only punctuated by gulped breaths and the occasional half sob..

"Please sir Mellie and me have been very stupid an' we've done something that has hurt somebody an-an-an' it's not just Mellie what's hurt it's Mr Hepscott an' it was stupid an' well" she gulped down a very quick breath, carrying on before the Head could get a word in edge-ways. "It was my idea the cigarette thing that is sir but Mellie" (sob) "w-was the one what wanted to do it then he went out an' when he came back in she lit the cigarette in front of Mr Hepscott an' then Mellie was being sick an' her hair went all fiery and fizzy an' Mr Hepscott just slung his coat over her head an-an'," another quick breath, "an' he put out the fire in her hair an' then he asked me to do the class for him an' he took Mellie out an' I think I heard the ambulance coming an'... and...um. " And she just stood there, quietly waiting, staring directly at the Head, looking as if the sword of Damocles were about to fall on her.

Just about the only thought going through the headmaster's mind at that moment was that his flabber was totally gasted! For the first time that he could remember, one of the twins was actually owning up to something that was their doing.

When asked for more details by the Head, she described her sister's odd expression when she lit up and inhaled the smoke.

She told him how she had screamed in panic when she saw her sister's hair on fire. She went on to confess that, in her panic, she had been unable to move, but that Mr

Hepscott had just seemed to fly over the desk to her twin sister's rescue.

She even looked a little proud when she mentioned how she had been asked to take over the class after their teacher had taken his coat, wrapped it around her sister's head and stopped the burning.

What the Head saw in Bethlynda's eyes as she recalled her teacher's deeds looked almost like hero worship to him.

She then took a long, shuddering breath before she carried on. She told him about how the class had just sat, quietly, while she read what was on the board to them.

Then she freely admitted breaking school rules, by having and using her mobile phone, and that she had sent a group text message to both her parents, while standing at the front of the class.

She said that she had tried to call her mother and father, about fifteen minutes after sending the message, to try to tell them how sorry she was and to explain more, but had got no answer from either parent.

When she finally stopped talking, she pulled out her 'phone from her pocket, opened up the text message she had sent to her parents and showed it to him.

It read:

**mel n me dun u stupd
thng n mels hair got on
fyr but techr putit out
medix r here
xxxxxxx
beth
im scaird**

He read the text through a couple of times, finding kids text language a bit odd, then he began to understand why she was so upset at not being able to get in touch with either parent afterwards.

The Head had met the twin's parents, just the once mind you, Angela and, was it Paddy, no Patrick, that was it, and he had taken an instant dislike to them both.

Talk about your Yuppys, Nimbys and Dinkys, those two had turned the acquisition of wealth and position into an art form. The fact that they had kids as well was just another ticked box on their Resumes when it came to their corporate ladder games.

They had told him that they were proud of the fact that, because they each had to work such long hours, they had to have a live-in Nanny, and sometimes used a maid service and a gardener, too. They had even boasted of their membership of some of the most exclusive local clubs and committees. And to top it all off, they had recently purchased one of the most desirable, and expensive, properties in the area.

The Head asked his secretary to call their places of work and find out if they were still there.

She confirmed that both parents had left work some while ago, after receiving messages on their mobile phones. She also told him that, in addition, she had phoned the A&E, but they had not arrived there yet, either.

By noon the Head had decided to inform the police of the parents' non-appearance at either the school or the Emergency Room.

Bethlynda

The remainder of the academic day at the school seemed to just drift very slowly by for everyone.

A quiet melancholy seemed to settle over proceeding at the school. No more pranks were laid, no loud games were played at playtime, even lunchtime in the canteen went by without a hitch or a shout, just the soft susurrus of hushed whispers from the many huddled groups of tiny hunched shoulders.

Bethlynda was relieved to have been released from her class leader duties some time before lunch. She had then taken herself immediately to see the headmaster, where she admitted everything, openly, freely and without resorting to her usual sullen refusal to accept responsibility.

For some reason, Bethlynda felt that a huge weight had been lifted from her heart and soul after her confession. She had always thought that, if you owned up to something bad, something equally bad, or worse, would descend on you. But this felt exactly the opposite, she felt as though a light had gone on inside her, a warm, soft light that left her feeling brighter, somehow. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, though.

After leaving the Head's office she just settled quietly back into her studies, silently, half fearful for her sister's wellbeing, but patiently awaiting further developments. Forefront in her mind though, was the terrible thought that she and her dear sister might even be excluded from school.

For the first time in her young life, she truly regretted the mischief that she and her sister had instigated.

She pondered on that for some time before coming to a conclusion that almost made her burst into tears. She realised that she had hurt someone. No, not the physical pain that she already knew that she had been instrumental in causing to Mellie; it was the memory of seeing the hurt in Mr Hepscott's eyes, a hurt that she had caused and could never take back.

She also realised that, from the moment that she had screamed her sister's name, that there had been no more anger left in him either.

When he had asked her to take over, he did it with a calmness that she, only now, was beginning to understand. There had seemed to be a kindness in his heart, something which she could not remember ever having seen before, in anyone, a kindness that accepted what had happened, that it had been wrong and that it had caused harm, but could, and probably would, offer forgiveness if true repentance was shown.

Bethlynda was feeling a little stunned by it all, especially by the new warmth that she was beginning to feel in her heart.

Melisandra

Melisandra still clung to her teacher as they sat in the Emergency Room.

Similar thoughts to those of her sister were going through her mind. And again, she was more worried for her sister than for herself.

Sitting in a sterile cubicle in the A&E department at the hospital, she had no idea what retribution was being meted out to her dearest sister. Was she being told off by the Head? Was she being punished for her part in the morning's fiasco? Were they both to be excluded?

Although terrifying in their own way, these thoughts quickly made way for a question that she was dreading being answered. What did Mr Hepscott think?

Not just of the prank, but about her and her sister.

She vaguely remembered that he had seemed to instinctively know which sister was which when things went bad. Betha and herself had always tried to confuse their teachers by being so much alike, not only in looks and their dress, but in their speech, their mannerisms and by swapping seats at every opportunity, too. Yet he just knew.

And her memory dredged up that fact that it was her sister that he had put in charge, not one of the class goody-two-shoes, but Betha.

And she also realised that, in all the confusion, he had not let go of her at all since it had happened. She didn't just feel safe, she knew, absolutely and without any shadow of a doubt, that she just was safe.

To be continued.....

Hi Ian. (Email to Ian Scurr regarding the Drum Head Service)

I just wanted to say thanks to you and all the Veterans who made it such a lovely day.

Sorry I didn't track you down to say hello.

It was lovely to see the serving RSM and Colonel in Chief too who were happy to chat.

I bottled out of the March because I saw the inspection being done and saw them 'bollocking' the old boys (Jokingly) - on them letting their boot bulling skills slip!. I had my NI medal and Dads Malaya one on the other side of my suit but I had sensible walking boots on thinking I would get muddy so didn't March. I think the RSM would have done a good job on me with those boots on hehe.

My Foster brother came too which was lovely. I think they fostered about 15 kids when Dad came out of the Army after 24 years. So he was much more than a soldier.

I wish I could have chatted to more folk - I'm sure some would have worked with Dad but it was a great Day and the family have seen our video on Facebook.

Dads headstone is being done and in a few months and we will have a family reveal and I will place the Old Boys Cross there then too.

Thanks again Ian for helping us arrange this and best wishes for yourself, family and colleagues.

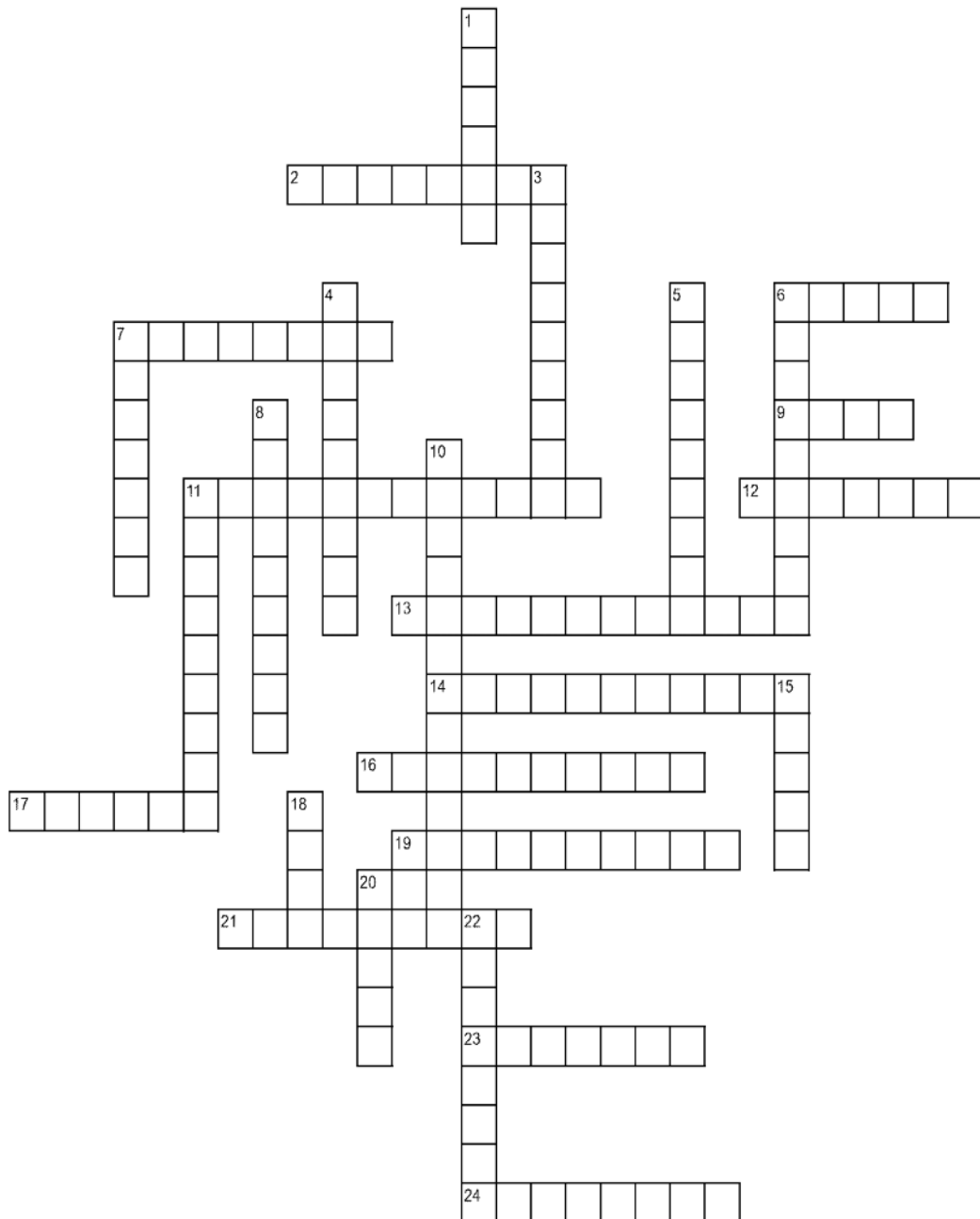
Regards

Bradley Webster

Son of Kenneth Webster Chepstow Old Boy

OBAN 94

No prize - Just for fun

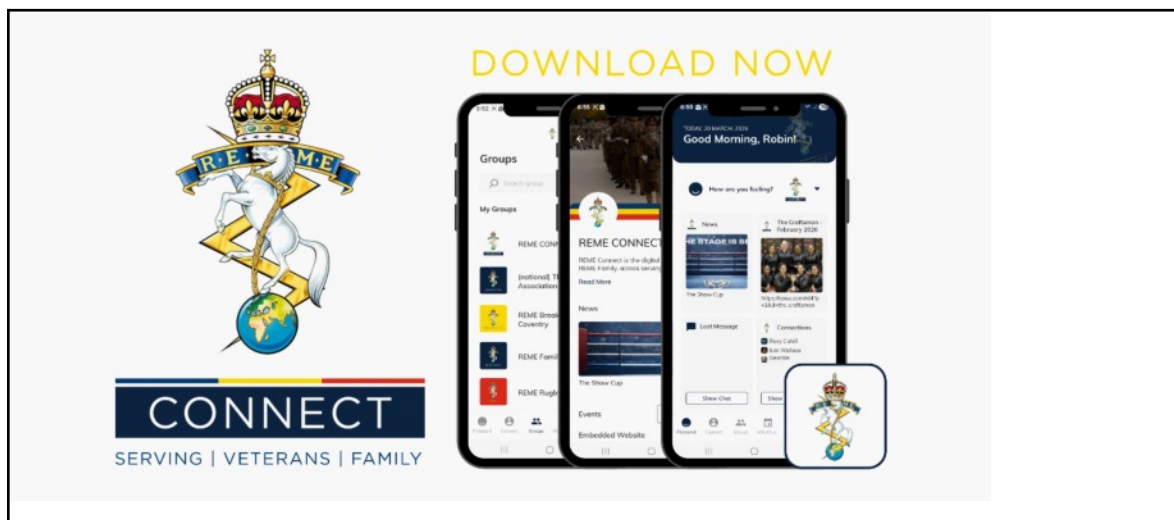


Across

- 2 Getting from A to B in a squad
- 6 Everyday Headwear
- 7 A rank of non-commissioned officer
- 9 9 of them make up a full apprenticeship
- 11 The rifle is brought on the left or right sides by the shoulder
- 12 A rank of commissioned officer
- 13 Where the Commanding Officer stays
- 14 Stand at the extreme right of a rank or squad when in formation
- 16 Set off, left foot first
- 17 A surprise attack conducted by an enemy lying in wait
- 19 All personnel except the right marker bring up their left arms parallel to the ground
- 21 The parade turn their heads to the right after a check pace
- 23 Have designated troops to face the commander to be dismissed.
- 24 Marching on the spot

Down

- 1 Have designated troops move into formation on the parade square
- 3 Place of duty by the main gate
- 4 A military unit containing up to 1,000 soldiers
- 5 Big, heavy coat for the winter
- 6 Highly polished parade wear
- 7 Long time barber
- 8 Reverse Direction
- 10 The whole point of the Apprentice College
- 11 This is a ceremonial pace, used for funerals etc
- 15 a long-barreled firearm designed for accurate shooting
- 18 A single line of soldiers
- 20 A craft without a human pilot onboard
- 22 A break during a term



Dear AOBA Members,

REME Connect launched on 1 June 2026 and is available for free on mobile app and web-app for computers and tablets. It will support top level news across the entire Corps family of veterans, serving personnel and families, as well as hosting over 150 REME community groups, events, chat and more.

I am inviting to download and register now in order to take full advantage of all it has to offer.

Joining the REME Connect App

1. Download the REME Connect app and select 'Register'.

iPhone: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/reme-connect/id6759965779>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.allegre.reme>

2. Then enter the access code: REME42 (note: no space!)
3. Register as a 'Veteran' (with the same email you received this)
4. Set up your profile and include AOBA in your groups.
5. To learn more, connect to <https://remeconnect.org>.
6. For technical support at any stage email help@militaryapp.org
7. Website Access. Please set up a mobile app account first. However, if you then prefer to login or register using a work or home computer, laptop or tablet you can use the same account information to login to the REME CONNECT Web-App here: <https://remeconnect.org/web-app>

Making the most out of the App...

Joining the AOBA group

You will be automatically loaded into the branch group and will find this in the Groups tab > My Groups (at the top). If it is not there, type recovery into the search field and join the group.

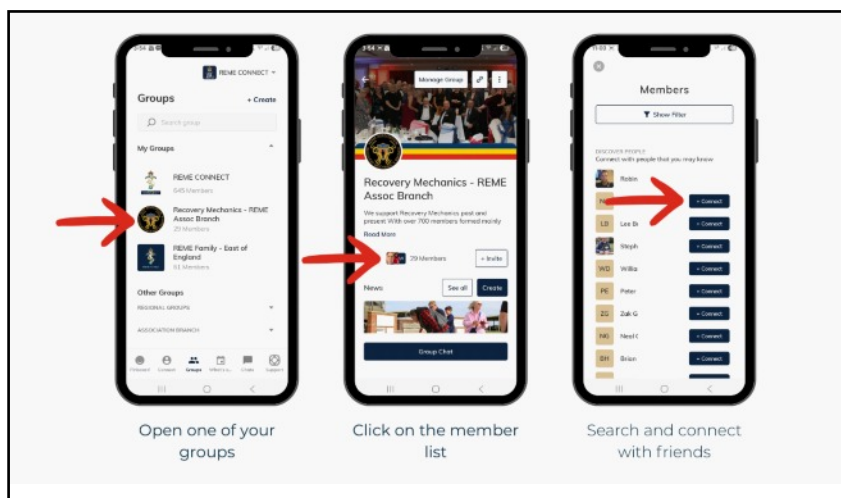
Connecting with friends

The best way to search and connect with friends is to go into a group, open the member list and connect.

Already registered on the Military App?

There are a large number of Army regiments, Corps or some charities (such as The Not Forgotten) already on the Military App platform. If you already have an account through a different unit or organisation, you can add REME Connect to your account (or vice-versa). You will need the one-time access code, **REME42**.

Simply log in with your existing account and you can follow this instruction video: <https://youtu.be/nTH9syqRONA>



Letters to the Editor

From: Pete Logan - 66C

You asked for anecdotes so here is one of mine.

I was on detachment with 651 Sqn AAC in Omagh, Northern Ireland in 1974 when we were given an unusual task.

A pregnant cow had fallen into a ravine and we were asked to lift it out. So a scout helicopter was sent with obviously a pilot plus an air gunner and me (airtech).

We eventually arrived and we're met by some RUC police and the farmers. The cow was in some distress in the ravine which we had to climb down a ladder to reach. On top of the ravine were some tall pine trees so we needed a very long rope and net.

The only way to communicate with the pilot was by putting a police radio on the airgunners seat with the speaker against the mic on his helmet. It was one way only, the pilot couldn't speak to us. The pilot hovered way above us and lowered the net. Geordie, the airgunner said to me, put the cow in the net. I told him to sod off and the farmers grabbed the cows back leg and toppled her into the net. We then got the pilot to start lifting. He did a superb job and managed to lower the cow onto the field, missing the telephone wires crossing it.

A very relieved cow was then released. We then were invited to the farmhouse for tea and cake. It was very bizarre sitting in the kitchen in flack jackets and fully armed with live ammo. By then it was dark and we set off back. At some point the pilot said thank god for that as we saw the perimeter lights of Aldergrove airport and we landed and spent the night there. I asked the pilot about a year later at his leaving do why had he said "thank god for that" he said what you didn't know was that the fuel low level warning light had been on for a couple of minutes and we would have had to land in NI in the dark in the middle of nowhere.

There is a another happy ending. Geordie asked the farmer to name the calf Geordie if it was a boy or Georgia if a girl. I ant remember which it was but not long after we returned to Germany he wrote and told us it was a very healthy calf despite its mother's ordeal.

Hope this may be handy.

Pete Logan 66C

Ed's comments: Great story, Pete. Thanks for taking the time to send it to me and making me smile. Andy 66B

From Geoff Wilding - 66C

So, this tale of woe occurred either late 1966 or early 1967 when us Jeeps were transported to Middle Wallop to see what Air Techs got up to. We got the usual spiel presented while we were shown around the workshop including the ubiquitous 'Jesus Bolt' scenario in respect of rebuilding a helicopter gear box.

On the day in question there was a helicopter on tie down, having been serviced and had now been tested prior to being released back into service. Something we were told took quite a while to complete.

We were lined up on one side with the doors on both sides left open and were told we could climb on board, sit in the pilot's seat and then get out the other side, BUT on no account were we to touch anything.

Slowly the queue processed through the cabin of the helicopter and with the name 'Wilding' I was last in the line. As I climbed on board, I instinctively pulled the door closed behind me.

It was a bit stiff, so I pulled harder and in doing so was showered with Plexiglas as the unattached door stay punched a neat hole through the overhead viewing panel.

It was not well received, and I was rather brusquely informed, in un-woke military parlance that it would take considerable time repair the damage and that the tie down process would need to be repeated.

When back a Arborfield I was marched in front of the Company CO who tore me of a hell of a strip and put me on jankers and cancelled my weekend pass.

Expecting the worse I, along with another, were tasked to clean up the officer's mess after the previous evenings dining event. On entering the room, we found tables strewn with half empty bottles of wine and leftover and untouched food stuffs, the consumption of some while we worked made the whole punishment a much less disagreeable task.

Geoff Wilding - 66C

Obituary - WOII Bernard Gardner 48B

Provided by his wife Anne Gardner



Bernard had Parkinsons for the last 9 years of his life but not too affected by it until 2023 when he began to have falls which eventually led to first hospital and then a Care Home. Prior to that he led a normal life and we travelled a lot, mostly to France where we had a holiday home, or Portugal in winter months.

Bernard and I were married 59 years and we met in the Oman in 1965 when he was seconded to the Sultan of Muscat's Armed Forces. I was in the Diplomatic Service and both of us had been in Bahrain previously but not at the same time.

As you can imagine the Gulf was a very different place then, and he always kept a keen interest in what went on. The Straits of Hormuz problem today came as no surprise. He would have had a lot to say. He used to say we could write a book!

At no time did Bernard have dementia, just lack of mobility and he looked forward to receiving OBAN and would comment on the articles in it and Stand Easy, I see that Raymond Derrick would have been one of his Intake who died in November not long after Bernard.

Bernard did attend a couple of Reunions, I think the last one was in the 1980s, but generally did not keep in touch, though after leaving the Army he was Armourer with the Hong Kong Police, and then went to Agricultural College becoming an Agricultural Engineer, swords into ploughshares, but later on he returned to the MOD retiring in 1993 from a RAF station where I also worked.

I could tell you more about him if you wished, he had an interesting career and yet never served in Germany, which must be unusual for REME. I would like him to be remembered in some way. We visited the National Arboretum on one occasion and looked at the Memorial.

I have not cancelled the Subscription to OBAN as I would like to know what goes on. Please get in touch if you would like any more information.

Bernard's trade was Artificer Weapons and he served in many places after his time at Arborfield was completed. I did not know him in those early days but an early posting was to Malaya (during the Emergency), Hong Kong rather than Korea, Kenya (during Mau Mau I think), Bordon, Bovington, Aldershot, Bahrain. There must have been others in the 12 years of Army Service before we met and he talked sometimes about the more colourful ones.

I think the one he enjoyed the most was 1964/1966 in the Oman, where he was Armourer to the Sultan of Muscat's Armed Forces, as a Staff Sergeant the most senior of 8 NCO's, outnumbered by Officers of Army, Navy and Air force. They had their Camp in Bait Al Falaj, not far from the little walled city of Muscat, where I lived and worked at the Consulate General. Bernard travelled widely through Oman in his duties as Armourer in the days when there were no proper roads. A very different place from what is today. It was an unaccompanied post but as we married halfway through my tour I was already there living in some palatial splendour in a beautiful waterfront house in the Consulate Compound. Bernard officially lived in Camp but came to see me at weekends unless he was away up country.

After our return to UK Bernard asked for a London posting as I had a flat in London and I worked in the Foreign Office. He had hoped for Woolwich or Ashford maybe, but he got Larkhill in Wiltshire. Later on he was with 9/12 Lancers at Catterick, and I had transferred to MOD and we settled in Salisbury. He finished his Army career at Tidworth 10 Field Workshops. He went to Canada on Field Gun trials at one point. He joined the Wessex Yeomanry, not as an Armourer but as Paymaster, working meanwhile at Larkhill as a civilian on Tanks Then he got the job as Armourer to the Royal Hong Kong Police, a contract for 3 years, but decided not to renew when it came up. That was the end of any military service, as he went to Lackham College of Agriculture, got further qualifications and joined Bayer Agrochem which meant a lot of travelling around Seed Mills in the West Country. We moved to Gloucester as it was more central for his job. During his Army Service he had been at Gloucester Barracks during the hard winter of 1962/63, rescuing sheep and vehicles from snowdrifts. The Persian Gulf must have made a nice change.

He retired at 60, after a year at home doing all the jobs he wanted to do, he got bored and I found him a 6-week job at the RAF Station where I worked. The 6 weeks turned to 5 years, and then we both retired and took to travelling extensively in our campervan. We spent much time in Portugal and had a holiday home in France until 2017. He was a keen cyclist and we often watched the Tour de France.

Parkinsons Disease was diagnosed in 2016 so we gave up travelling overseas though still active, apart from Covid lockdowns, until 2023 when Bernard's mobility got too difficult for him to be at home. He was in a beautiful Care home, close by and I visited about 5 times each week staying many hours. Sometimes he came home for the day. The staff used to enjoy his tales of Army life and also how when he was 11 years old, he was living at Highcliffe, near Bournemouth and on his way home from school he went to the cliff edge and saw all these hundreds of boats in the sea. He went home and told his ex-Army father, who gave him a clip around the ear for being late, the date was 5 June 1944. The next day all the boats had gone.

I hope you found this interesting.

Ann Gardner

