



The Beachley Old Boys' Association Newsletter

Edition No. 1 - March 1995

CONFIDENT FIRST STEPS

Sadly, the last Beachley apprentice has gone; seventy proud years of providing the backbone of the technical Corps of the Army have come to an end. But although the college is no more, the spirit lives on in the 'new' Beachley Old Boys Association, which one year on shows every sign of becoming a thriving organisation. Indeed, this first newsletter is a sign of that success.

The newsletter will keep you up to date on developments and give you the chance to make yourself heard. If you've views to air, or stories to tell, let's have them in future issues. Hopefully, we will be able to produce two issues a year.

This first edition is being sent to all current members of BOBA (450+) and also a further 800 or so names on the original mailing list who haven't yet joined the new Association. If you are one of the 800, please think again about joining because if BOBA is to survive we need you so we can operate on a sound financial footing. And if you don't join yourself please pass this newsletter on to any other old boys who might be interested. A reply slip is printed on page 2 for you to return to the Secretary if you would like to become a member.

With the launch of the South Eastern Branch and the excellent Sept 94 Reunion Weekend clearly BOBA can continue to provide us with wonderful echoes of the past. Of course, things will never be the same again, but you won't shake Beachley from our hearts.

THE STORY SO FAR

Our Chairman, Ron Overd, recently wrote to the past Commandants of Beachley to let them know how the Association is getting on (and to 'trawl' for volunteers for the next President). The main text of that letter follows and neatly brings our story up to date.

Self-Funding Association

At the extraordinary meeting in February last year (1994) a committee was appointed to disassociate the Association from the College, which is regrettably now closed. There were some doubts expressed, and I believe that more than a few were sceptical that we could actually get it to work.

It was also decided that we would have to be self funding, and therefore it was unanimously agreed that a £10 annual subscription should be charged.

New HQ

Col. Chris Haskell very kindly made the Old School House available as our HQ, with refurbishment provided as trade training. It is looking quite well and serves our purpose nicely, not the least because it allows us to keep a toe hold on the peninsula. The HQ is the small building located between Beachley House and the parish church and backs onto the military cemetery.

College Boards

We have salvaged some mementos from the College, notably the

name boards of the App RSM's, Commandants, Adjutants and RSM's and we are now proud to have them mounted in our new HQ.

1994 Double Reunion Year

We actually had two reunions in 1994, the first in February when some 450 came and had a tremendous time saying farewell to the College. We decided at that reunion that we could not afford an 18 month gap to the next reunion (in the fall of 95) so we opted for another annual reunion and meeting in 94, reverting as near as possible to the traditional 3rd weekend in September. Under the circumstances the support was outstanding. The weekend was held in The Two Rivers, which we effectively took over. We stuck to the usual format of Dance on the Friday and separate Ladies and Gents dinners on the Saturday. It was a resounding success, and has laid the foundations for our future.

At the AGM Colonel Eric O'Callaghan kindly agreed to be the President for the coming year, but would then like to stand down. Hence, a new President will be needed in 1995.

A Thank You

Finally, thank you all for your support in the past, as Commandants and later. It cannot have been easy managing so many youngsters mostly out to create mischief. The fact that you all did it with such grace and humour is now, in retrospect, much appreciated.

BOBA SHOP

The following may be obtained from the Treasurer.

Ties	£5.00	B	Sweatshirts (V neck)	£9.80	C
Scarves	£5.00	B	Sweatshirts (crew neck)	£8.50	C
Golf Hats	£1.00	B	AA School collar dogs (pr)	£0.50	A
Car Stickers	£0.50	A	1993 Photos	£5.00	A
Lapel Badges	£3.00	A			

Postage and Packing A = 25p B = 50p C = £2.00

Please make cheques payable to BOBA and send to D Chapman, 21 Brynhyfryd Rd, Newport, Gwent, NP9 4FX.

The shop will also be open at the '95 Reunion in September. We are hoping Pat Perry will be kind enough to run it once again. As well as the stock above we still have over 200 BOBA 1 pint lager glasses. Excellent value at £1.00, but as these are unboxed they are not available by post.

THE CHANGING FACE OF BEACHLEY

As you leave Sedbury and swing right at the bottom of the hill for Beachley the red and white road sign points to 'Beachley Barracks'. Until a few weeks ago it still suggested that the Army Apprentices College was your destination. But this is just a 'taster' for what's to come.

As you pass Beachley Post Office a shock awaits. For the last thirty five years or so the new playing fields have lain behind the hedge on the right as you approach the camp. But no more soldier! All you see is houses, houses, new quarters, new quarters. And yet, I can remember when those playing fields were laid; the Saturday mornings in 1960 spent filling a small pack with stones, for what seemed a thousand times, to clear the ground. (Perhaps if we hadn't used false bottomed packs to fill our quotas more quickly the cricket pitches and outfielders would have been better down the years?).

Into camp, and if you've attended reunions in the past two or three decades you might well have had the

pleasure of sleeping in the 1960's nightmare known as BLOCK 50. Well, glass, plywood and the odd metal support that kept it up have all gone, swept to oblivion, unloved and forgotten.

But you might be sentimental about the Workshops of your youth. Who knows how many apprentices have marched into those caverns of learning callow youths and left two or three years later as the best of British? Well they won't anymore because the Workshops have gone, flattened, razed to the ground, lost.

So those are some of the changes you'll find at Beachley when you go there again; a lot of destruction, but of course rebuilding too. It will never be the same, but then nothing remains the same for ever. It doesn't seem long ago that the new barrack blocks went up and the original huts came down does it?

COMPUTER SUPPORT

Until very recently all of the work of recording the details of 'new' BOBA members and setting up the BOBA database has fallen to the Secretary, Syd Thomas. Using his own PC and printer Syd (and his son) have entered thousands of items of information so that now BOBA has a fuller record of its members than ever before.

We have recently purchased a second hand computer and printer onto which the records will be transferred. Frank Pickering, the Membership Secretary, has now taken over the computer and will carry the work forward. The Association owes a real debt of gratitude to Syd for his tireless efforts and hundred of hours spent in getting the computerised records off the ground.

Well done Colonel!

LEST WE FORGET SCHOOL AWARDS

We all hear of the Wynn Sword and the Cuddon Cup, but few recall who the donors of the awards were. There are five major awards in the School, viz

The Ford Medal - Brig. V T R Ford DSO, was the first commandant of the School. He lies buried in the churchyard within the boundary of the School he loved so much. The medal was presented by Mrs Ford shortly after the death of her husband and is awarded to the best all-round athlete.

The Wynn Sword - Col A H Wynn, OBE, REME came to the School with No 5 Group and was Apprentice Sgt. Major from June 15 1927 - January 10, 1928. He presented the sword to the School for use by the Apprentice Tradesman RSM for use on ceremonial occasions.

Gunnell Stick - S/Sgt L D Gunnell RE was the Apprentice Tradesman RSM of 23 Group. All his friends were deeply grieved when he died in the Middle East in 1945. As a tribute to his memory his mother presented a silver mounted stick for use by the Apprentice Tradesman RSM. Each successive holder of the stick is commemorated by a small silver shield mounted on it.

Cuddon Cup - Brig P B Cuddon CBE MC was Commandant of the School from March 1943 - March 1949. He was responsible for the famous

Cuddon Report dealing with the organisation of Army Apprentices' Schools. His influence on all Apprentice Schools not only in Chepstow, has been immense. The Cuddon Cup is awarded to the best all-round Apprentice of each intake, at the end of his first term at the School

The Wavell Prize - Major The earl Wavell MC son of Field marshal the Earl Wavell, after losing an arm during the Chindit operations in Burma, became very interested in Army Education. He saw that Army Education in its widest sense could develop in young men courage, endurance, resourcefulness, vigour and an open, inquiring mind. It was a tragedy when he was killed in action against the Mau Mau on Christmas Eve 1955. A memorial fund was opened, and it was decided that the memorial should take the form of cups to be competed for by young men in Army Apprentice Schools and Junior Leaders Schools. Each individual winner is given, in addition, a copy of "Other Men's Flowers" - Field Marshal Earl Wavell's anthology of poems.

Individual Athlete's Cup - This cup was presented by the civilian instructional staff in 1950. It is awarded to the apprentice tradesman adjudged to be the best all round athlete. A replica of the cup is given to the winner.

I'm sure lots of you won these, unfortunately I didn't. Any stories!

SNIPPETS FROM THE RECORDS

There are now (March) 486 paid up members of BOBA.

The youngest member is Chris Thompson (82C).

The oldest member is Vic Mealyer (1Gp)

42A Group have the most members. 37.

RE VETERAN'S WEEKEND

The Royal Engineers Veteran's Weekend will this year be held on Sept 8/9/10. The SE Branch of BOBA are hoping to have a stall on the Saturday and aim to recruit a number of new members. Every 10th veteran or serving sapper is probably a Beachley Boy, so we are hopeful of a good catch!

Those of you who made it to the Sept AGM in Beachley Chapel will remember John Bass who proposed that we might run a funny stories competition with suitable prizes.

The best efforts would appear in this newsletter. Anyway, there was a fair bit of discussion about the idea, with John proposing a £10 entrance fee, subsequently reduced under pressure to £5 and then £2! It was decided, I think, that although no competition would be run for the present that any worthy 'novelettes' should be forwarded for publication.

No sooner was the Reunion over than John, true to his promises, directed a weighty letter through the postal system from his retreat deep within Deutschland.

He suggested three types of stories which could be judged - "Beachley times", "Regular times", "Civvy Street/BOBA" with sub-divisions of funny, romantic and sad. The entry fee John suggests is £3 with prizes in kind, rather than cash, down to 4th place. A short story to run to 2500 words or 10 pages with a maximum of 4000 words. There would need to be a panel of readers to judge the efforts. He suggests that we start thinking about the competition and give it some real time for discussion at the 95 Reunion, with first winners being chosen for the 96 Reunion.

Anyway, not only did he set out his thoughts about the story competition, he also threw in little story for publication as well. Here it is photocopied from his original.

Thanks John.

My old mucker was telling of the umpteen days he spent living in the hull of a Half-Track, eating from tins of Lease-Lend-stewed-steak & syrup-pud, somewhere in Europe. Since I'd heard it before my concentration drifted and the story going on behind seemed more interesting. I never saw the bar proper but I could not avoid the eavesdropping. It went so:

BarPropper:

"Was at this Vehicle Holding Depot to pick up a Bedford QL. It was a disused civvy aerodrome with hundreds & hundreds of lorries and staff-cars all parked up on the different runways. Put my reg & papers in to the Admin office, at 0900, and just sat around waiting. I'd missed getting something for midday because I kept thinking I'd better wait where the WO2 said ... and he said my QL wouldn't be long.

Been there all ***** day and at about 1500 hours comes a NAAFI wagon to park & open up. Was starving hungry and belted over to be fifth in the queue. Then this little ATS girl - dressed in fatigue dungarees, far too large for her - comes and pushes in; directly in front of me.

Then she calls to her mates who appeared from nowhere. I counted that I was now twentieth in the line-up and chances of a hot steak&kidney pie were receding fast. I kicked at her heel and when she turned I said,

'You little tyke. Pushing in like that. All yer perishin' mates too. Tain't fair.'

Her reply was pithy & full of guts,

'Hold yer lip big feller. We're regular staff here see. You are temporary. Got it?'

I muttered something to the effect of having got it.

Of course, she bought the last steak & kidney pie. Big juicy ones they was. Sandwiches & rolls had all gone too, so I had two sick-looking jam tarts. The girls were sitting, in a group on the grass and several squaddies mingled in with them. I felt pretty miserable & lonely at about a hundreds yards distant. Very temporary like. I turned to face the warm sun and gazed out over the great sea of olive-drab vehicles. Got out my book when the shock came. Her shadow was across my book. She stood in front & asked if she could sit by me. I said of course, why not. She broke her pie in two and handing over half said,

'Swap fer a 'jam-tart.' As we did so she continued, 'Of course, we are all temporary. Passing ships and all that. Nothing's permanent, not with the way this stupid war is going....' We got into depths of poetry, literature & philosophy with me interspersing snippets of compliments about her beauty and how she must look in a frock, on the dance-floor and so on when a loud voice ordered the girls back to their duties. I realized then, she was holding my book. 'You want it, take it,' I said, as the loud voice bellowed at her personally. She called, as she ran off, that she'd send it back to me; my name was on the flyleaf and she knew my unit address.'

Bar Propper's listener asked,

'And did you get the book back?'

'Oh yes. Not straightaway. Took about two years. Was in Port Said Transit Camp, waiting on a posting, when it arrived. I'd missed it: Kipling yer knows. It had followed me around; thousands of miles. In the package was a letter & her home address. Said she didn't go much on a lot of Kipling poems - or Jingles, as she said they were. Women are funny ain't they. No appreciation of the finer things --- "Boots boots marchin' hup an' darn ag-inn --- " lovely stuff.'

My old mucker's audience consisting two of '63 Group were reliving a half-track demolishing a Belgian chicken-coop and it was necessary to strain nerve & sinew to get what Bar-Propper was at:

'... War was over & the mail better so we got into regularly corresponding.'

Bar-propper stopped in order to accept a drink. Then:

'Cheers! Strange ole-life ennit! Fifty two years married with lovely grandkids and She still refers to me as her "TEMPORARY-FIXTURE" ...'

Maybe we get lucky and have that one again. Probably Bar-Propper was one of those who also served by standing & waiting: as an ex-Boy I doubt that. He could probably make it longer - than 700 words (I never bothered to count ...) with additions of his Regular & War-time experiences ---

But I prefer it as is!

It is with deep regret that since the last reunion the Association has been informed of the death of the following:

Tony Stunnell	39 Group
Arthur McGahan	16 Group

ALF JELFS (16 Group)

Alf Jeffs, a long-standing elected Vice President, BOBA has decided that the time is now right to stand down from active involvement in running the Association.

The Executive Committee has unanimously agreed that in recognition of Alf's many contributions to BOBA that he should be invited to become an Honorary Vice President, a post that holds no executive responsibilities. Good luck Alf, thanks for all you've done for BOBA.

Three elected Vice Presidents remain. They are:

Maurice Murtagh 43B : Arthur Hall 27 Gp : George Gasser 39 Gp

Election of a new fourth Vice President will take place at the next AGM in September.

BOBA MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Probably the best way to boost membership is 'word of mouth'.

WHY NOT MAKE A RESOLUTION TO INTRODUCE AT LEAST ONE NEW MEMBER THIS YEAR?

HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

I have a very well appointed holiday home in a quiet Suffolk village available for rent for periods as short as a single weekend. A 25% reduction on the normal fees for BOBA members. For more details/brochure give me a ring on 01633 243869 - Dave Chapman (60A).

Following is an interesting extract from Robot published in December 1959. It reproduces a newspaper article from 1946 reporting the first meeting of BOBA. This means that next year will be BOBA's 50th anniversary, surely a cause for celebration.

"BEACHLEY BOYS" HOLD RE-UNION, FORM ASSOCIATION

(The following article, which appeared in the "Weekly Argus" on September 21, 1946, is reproduced as it appeared.—Editor.)

Shortly before the War it was suggested by Lt.-Col. P. Shears, then Commandant of Beachley Army Technical School, that an Old Boys' Association should be formed and a re-union dinner held. The outbreak of War caused the idea to be postponed but not abandoned, and the dinner was duly held on Saturday.

It was a proud moment for Brigadier P. J. Shears, D.S.O., C.B. (the former Commandant's fine work in the war years earned him promotion and recognition) and Lt.-Col. V. T. R. Ford, the first Commandant, when they faced a large company of Old Boys, many of them Officers and Warrant Officers, at dinner, and later recalled their days at Beachley.

Earlier in the evening the Association envisaged seven years ago was launched and officers elected.

The guests came from as far afield as Glasgow, and all expressed pleasure at the decision that when the School moves to Malvern to make way for the Severn Bridge, it will still be known as Beachley Army Technical School, a title very close and dear to the hearts of past and present Officers and Boys.

180 WERE LOST

Before dinner, at the Institute, a One Minute's Silence was observed in memory of those who fell in the War, including 180 whose names are inscribed in the School Roll of Honour.

In the absence, through illness, of the Commandant (Lt.-Col. P. D. Cuddon, M.C.) the chair was taken by Major F. E. Garland. With him at the head of the table were Brigadier Shears, D.S.O., C.B., and Lt.-Col. V. T. R. Ford, past Commandants, Major Shield, M.O.H., Lt.-Col. Cox, Major Vyvian, Captain Taylor and Captain Maxwell Cooper, C.F.

The Chairman, who read messages of congratulation and expressed pleasure at the inauguration of the Association, was followed by Lt.-Col. Ford, who recalled how, 23 years ago, he marched into the Camp with a small body of men of the Third Group. He was delighted to see present one of the original Quartermasters, Q.M.S. Adamson, who travelled all the way from Glasgow.

FIRM FOUNDATION

It was a genuine pleasure to re-visit scenes of cherished memories and to be an eye-witness of the foundation of an Old Boys' Association.

First re-unions were a little difficult. Everything was against them, but he wanted those who had attended the School to feel that their time had not been wasted. It was a wonderful opportunity to get the Association firmly established.

He concluded with a kindly reference to Brigadier Shears and a tribute to the wonderful work of Major Shield.

The present Commandant sent the following message: "The quality of a School may be judged by that of its Old Boys, by the vitality of its Association, and by the affection of its Old Boys for the School. The sight of Old Boys gathering at the School has a profound effect upon the Boys at present at the School."

On Sunday there was a Church Parade and a cricket match between Old Boys and present pupils.

INAUGURATION MEETING

At the inauguration of the Old Boys' Association, Brigadier V. T. R. Ford, D.S.O., who presided, was supported by Major-General P. J. Shears, Major F. E. Garland, W.O. J. S. Powell (Secretary), R.S.M. J. Spence and R.S.M. Gibbs.

Major Garland said it was greatly regretted that the Commandant, Lt.-Col. P. B. Cuddon, M.C., who had been the moving spirit in the revival, was in hospital.

The report of the Executive Committee stated that the response of ex-pupils was very gratifying. Hundreds of letters had been received from all parts.

A letter of acceptance of the office of Vice-President was read from Lt.-Col. H. W. Baker, M.C., who considered the School of national importance.

The following members offered to form branches: W.O. L. W. Reading, RE Depot, Chatham; S/Sgt. P. Russell, REME, Arborfield; W.O.I. Hatten, No. 1 SME, Ripon; W.O.I. Rickard, Army Mechanical Traction School, Bordon. Branches were also suggested at RAC School, Bovington; RASC, Catterick; Aldershot; No. 1 TBRE, Malvern; and in Malta, Egypt and India. Old Boys will be asked to form branches and communicate with the Hon. Secretary.

There is to be a Headquarters Branch, consisting of Old Boys serving on the Staff of the School, with Captain Cottingham as Chairman and Sgt. Wilson Branch Secretary.

The meeting approved of the suggestion that a memorial should consist of a Book of Remembrance to be kept in the School Chapel, and a subscription fund is to be opened to defray the cost. Any money in excess of the required amount will be used to furnish the Chapel, and General Shears suggested panels in the Chapel walls containing the names of ex-pupils killed in the War.

Please send all comment, letters and stories for future editions of Beachley Echoes to D.C. Chapman, 21 Brynhyfryd Road, Newport, Gwent, NP9 4FX.

SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH OF BOBA FORMED

It took us about 6 months of hard work to get the first regional branch of the 'new' BOBA off the ground.

Firstly, it took some time to get the South East names and addresses from the current list. And then it took an awful lot of letter writing, photocopying, addressing envelopes etc. But at last the day came when I'd got sufficient members interested in forming a branch. I wrote to the Executive Committee asking for their approval, and then waited with baited breath for their next meeting. After two weeks, but what seemed like an eternity, the answer came - "Go ahead, and Good Luck!"

So, the Beachley Old Boys Association (South Eastern Branch) was formed. I re-wrote to all who had responded to my original letter, about 18 in all, and told them the good news. By the time we'd organised our first meeting, held at the Sgt's Mess in

Brompton Barracks Chatham, on 8th October 1994, I'd actually got 27 names on the books, of whom 24 turned up. We were in business! We elected a small committee with myself as Hon Secretary and Barrie Owens (61B) as Chairman, got to know each other, and generally talked over old times and future plans. All in all, the first meeting was a great success. The Branch is self-supporting with income coming from membership fees and donations; so far we are keeping our heads above water.

Now we're into the New Year we have 32 members and are still looking for more. So if you are reading this, and live within the boundaries of Kent, Essex and Sussex, and you haven't heard from us, please drop me a line or call me on 01634 850043. See you all in September, if not before at one of our local meetings.

Rocky Evershed (61C) Hon Sec SE Branch

NEW!

BOBA NAME BADGES

Rocky Evershed and Barrie Owens have have designed an exclusive and attractive name badge for all ex-Beachley Boys which has received Executive Committee approval. It measures 35cm x 70cm and comes in red laminate with a white border. A college badge is depicted, with the letters BOBA beneath it. To the right of the badge will be inscribed your name, group and company.

We hope that all members will purchase one at a cost of £3.50 each, so that by the next reunion in September 1995, we will all know who is who, at a glance! The profits generated will be ploughed back into the Association and the new SE Branch. If you wish to purchase one of these exclusive badges, please fill in and return the proforma attached.



BOBA NAME BADGE APPLICATION

Dear Rocky,

I would like to order an exclusive BOBA name badge.

The details required are as follows:-

NAME GROUP COMPANY.....

* I enclose my cheque for £3.50, made payable to BOBA (S.E. Branch)

Date Signature

Please send to: Mr L F Evershed, 19 Sturdee Avenue, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 2JL.

p.s. If badge is required before the next reunion in September, please enclose 30p S.A.E. for return.