



The Beachley Old Boys' Association Newsletter

Edition No. 3 - April 1997

96 REUNION

BOBA's 50th Birthday Bash !

Yet Another Winner At The Old Course Hotel

BOBA UPDATE

The Echoes editorial always tries to look on the bright side because we need to be optimistic about the future of BOBA. We must also be enthusiastic: always on the lookout for new members; old boys who for one reason or another haven't joined the new Association. Please spread the word and keep coming back to the annual Reunion yourselves. We also need replacement Association officers on a regular basis to carry the torch forward and make things happen in the future.

If we don't act in this proactive way I believe BOBA could quickly lose members, leading to a spiralling down in interest as the military connection fades into the past.

The great news is that paid-up members currently total more than 550! But some don't renew their membership each year and it's likely that the initial rapid growth in membership of new BOBA has peaked. So numbers could easily fall - especially as we are not attracting many new members of groups after 1950.

Financially new BOBA is a success; we don't have money problems and this is due to the generosity of its members. **You dug into your pockets and paid the subs which made us strong. Thank you.**

Your Executive Committee is keen to look closely at just what subs, if any, we need in the future. There is no point in BOBA getting richer in the short term. Perhaps we should be looking to safeguard the future while making membership much less costly?

If we can get the post-initial structure right, then we should be able to keep up our numbers, keep the annual Reunion going, and keep more new members coming in.

There's a lot of life left in the old boys yet

The annual reunion of The Beachley Old Boys' Association was held over the weekend of 12th / 14th September 1996 and for the third year running the festivities were held at The Old Course Hotel in Chepstow. The weekend was an important one for BOBA members as they were celebrating the 50th. birthday of the Association, which was officially formed just after WW2.

211 members attended the Reunion in 1996; a figure slightly down on the 229 who made it back to Chepstow in 1995. Additionally, 91 ladies attended the event, making over 300 in all. The President, Brigadier Mike Addison, was unable to make it in 1995 but attended the whole weekend this time.

The weekend marked not only BOBA's half century but also that of the 46 Groups and Alan Ball's considerable effort in rounding up new members was very fruitful. However, a few eyebrows were raised when 46 Group members successfully held their own social event separately on the Friday evening.

The weekend followed the tried and tested format of a Friday night social with dancing, followed the next evening by the Reunion dinner for members while the ladies enjoyed their meal but well away from the 'stags'.

The quality of the buffet on Friday evening was acceptable, (further improvements are forecast by Peter Burrige for 97). On Saturday the dinner was again of a very high quality. Taking into account the numbers at dinner (nearly 300), the price, and the fact that there were two dining rooms in operation at the same time, there were few causes for complaint.

In recognition of the half century of BOBA the Executive Committee agreed to put-on a free half-bottle of wine per head for dinner. No complaints there!

On the Saturday morning the BOBA Open Golf Championship proved another winner (see inside for a full report from Ken Standen), and the HQ at Beachley was again open for members and wives to dig into the archives. Saturday afternoon saw the annual AGM held inside Beachley Barracks at St. Georges Chapel.

On Sunday morning everybody was back in the camp again for the church service after which most of the old boys said their farewells and departed for another year. Some stayed on for the BOBA Sunday Lunch at the Old Course Hotel; a function which is rapidly growing in popularity.

Please note this is the last year that the Echoes and Reunion Pack will be posted to BOBA's full mailing list. From 1998 only members with up to date subscriptions will receive it

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President :	Brig (Retd) W M R Addison	
Elected Vice-Presidents	Lt Col (Retd) R J Overd	
	Mr G H Gasser	
	Mr M Murtagh	
	Mr D Fowle	
Life President	Mr A Jeffs	
		<u>Telephone</u>
Chairman :	Lt Col (Retd) S Thomas	01656 661180
Treasurer :	Maj (Retd) D C Chapman	01633 666669
Secretary :	Capt (Retd) B Henderson	01291 620140
Membership Secretary :	Mr F Pickering	
Chepstow Liaison :	Capt (Retd) D Knight	01291 622441
97 Reunion :	Mr P B H Burridge	01747 825270
Newsletter and BOBA Shop	Maj (Retd) D C Chapman	01633 666669

ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION

If you have anything you want to say via the BOBA Newsletter then please send your copy to Dave Chapman at 21 Brynhyfryd Road, Newport, South Wales, NP9 4FX. We are always looking for stories, news, views and letters for publication. You might also use the newsletter to trawl for information on friends with whom you have lost touch. You can also place an advert free of charge.

Your copy for publication can be handwritten or typed. However, if you are able to send it on floppy disc to be read into Microsoft Word, so much the better.

BOBA BENEVOLENT FUND

The Benevolent Fund currently still stands at £991. It is available to provide help to ex-Beachley apprentices or their families who have fallen on hard times or need a little help over a temporary problem. Please direct any enquiries to the Chairman in the first instance.

BOBA HQ

BOBA's Headquarters are now permanently located in The Old School House, adjacent to Beachley Church. Many of the wall-mounted rolls/lists from the College have been fitted in the main room of the building. All the records including nominal rolls and copies of Robot are also available. Access to the HQ is arranged through Derek Knight, (phone number above).

PAYMENT OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION BY STANDING ORDER

Over 300 members have now registered to pay their annual £10 subscription by standing order direct from their bank account. This has proved to be very successful for those who used this payment method in previous years and is very easily administered. So if you haven't filled in the form yet, please do it this year. They can be obtained from the Treasurer or Membership Secretary (see above).

THE CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

1996 Reunion. The 50th Reunion of BOBA was, by the large number of letters of thanks, very well received by those attending. The Committee do listen to your views, and where we can, we incorporate some of the suggestions you raise, but as you are well aware, we just can't please everyone.

1997 Reunion. Arrangements are well in hand for the 51st Reunion over the weekend 12/14 Sep 97. You should find full details enclosed with this newsletter. My thanks again to Peter Burrige for his fine efforts as Reunion organiser.

1947 A&B. As one of 'the Class of 47' I would ask all members of both A and B groups to make a special effort to attend and see if they can locate at least one non-member - get him to join and attend the Reunion. I hope we can get something in the region of 75 of the 350 originals there - please work at it - *IT CAN BE DONE!*

The 1997 AGM

The President. Colonel Alan Holman has been nominated by your committee to be our next President - your confirmation is expected at the AGM.

Vice President. Due to the very sad demise of Lt. Col. Arthur Hall on the 9th March 1997 we shall be voting at the AGM to replace him on the Executive Committee as an Elected Vice President. Nominations should be forwarded to the Secretary asap (please ensure your nomination is willing to stand and to attend committee meetings).

Membership Secretary. Frank Pickering is moving away from Chepstow and is not sure that he will be able to continue as our Membership Secretary - We **NEED** a volunteer **NOW** to cover for Frank. The time involved is not all that much and the 'job' comes complete with a modern computer and printer which can be used for personal use. It is essential that you can attend about four committee meetings throughout the year - normally on a Tuesday evening, 1900 hrs at Chepstow. If you can help out please give me a call on 01656 661180.

Investments. David Chapman has presented a paper to the Executive Committee, as requested at the last AGM, showing projected cash flows and investment options. The Committee authorised him to invest £15,000 in Government Securities, giving us a steady return of about 7.5% over 5 to 10 years.

Membership Fees. In conjunction with David's cash flow paper the Committee discussed at length the question of Membership Fees. A motion will be put before the AGM as follows : 'that BOBA Membership Fees of £10.00 per annum should be paid for five years, after which no further fees would be due unless the Executive Committee considered that there was a severe cash crisis'. (A single payment of £50.00 would be acceptable instead of 5 annual payments.) For members who have paid £10 annually since 1994 their payments would cease after the 1998 payment. I commend you to support this motion.

Membership. We still need to recruit new members - there is a noticeable shortage of the younger element. Please do all you can to convince non-members that BOBA lives on and needs their support.

Newsletter. David Chapman has once again worked extremely hard to produce the Newsletter; I can recommend its contents and hope you will get the same pleasure from reading these pages as I have.

Golf. Ken Standen is the man to contact with your entry for the BOBA Open Championship - an 18 hole stableford competition held on the Saturday morning. It is open to all members, if there are ladies who wish to play I am sure Ken can make arrangements for them. **Caddies and spectators are very welcome.**

Looking forward to seeing you in September.

Syd Thomas

From the Hon Secretary

May I begin by thanking all those members who attended the Reunion last year, it was great to see you all in such good health and fine form. The planning for the reunion this year is well in hand; I'm sure it will be another excellent weekend and I look forward to meeting you again for a chat and a drink!!

Those of you who attended the Founder's Day service will remember that St. George's Chapel had very few spare seats. Indeed, the offertory raised the princely sum of £243.38, an increase on last year's collection of £33. The monies were donated to the Army Benevolent Fund. The trustees of the Fund responded with a most generous letter applauding your generosity and continued support. They have assured BOBA that the money will be used wisely to help the many soldiers, ex-soldiers and their families who are in need. Thank you.

Beachley Barracks. As I live within sight of Beachley Barracks and drive over it every day on my way to work, I thought the members would like to be kept abreast of the changes that are still taking place in the camp.

Work on all the new and existing married quarters appears to be complete although modifications to the remaining buildings e.g. Survey Block, are still being made to meet the needs of the new occupants. The most significant change has been the demolition of the indoor swimming pool. As I was part of the team that filled in the outdoor pool many years ago, the demise of this facility is regretted, especially as it was well used by both the military and civilian community alike.

Brian Henderson

The Ladies Column

This newsletter gives me, as the other half of the Chairman, the chance to say on behalf of wives/partners how much we enjoy the BOBA Reunions; they are so well organised by Peter Burrige and the BOBA Committee. And we really enjoy the chance to meet old friends again - indeed, some are now very 'old' friends indeed!

Chepstow is a lovely venue for the weekend. A perfect setting for socialising, sightseeing, and of course, shopping. However, we find that time just flies with so much to do. While the men are reliving their youth, the ladies get a chance to engage in some genteel conversation! For the more energetic there is the chance to join the men on Saturday morning for a round of golf, perhaps to caddie or just wander around as a spectator. A fine way to get an appetite for lunch!

To those ladies who have not yet experienced a BOBA Reunion weekend - please do try to join us this year; you will be made very welcome. You will meet old friends and make new ones, enjoy the fine food and have the chance to 'trip the light fantastic' at the social evening on Friday and again after dinner on Saturday.

Without wishing to get involved in the 'ladies at dinner discussion' - I for one am very happy for the men to have their dinner separately on Saturday evening, after all it is their reunion. This leaves the ladies to enjoy their meal (and wine) in peace, before we all join up later on for dancing.

God bless all, - see you in September.

Jo Thomas

Snippets from Robot

Presentation of A/T RSM's Stick

Friends of S/Sergt. L D Gunnell RE will be grieved to learn of his death through illness at No1. General Hospital, MEF.

S/Sergt. Gunnell was A/T RSM of 23 Group, and as a tribute to his memory, his mother has presented to the school a silver-mounted stick for use by the A/T RSM. Each successive holder of the stick is to be commemorated by a small silver shield to be mounted on it.

Nov 1945

The Rookies Dirge

*In Beachley, land of wind and rain,
Where rookies groan and sigh,
The nearest way to Heaven's door,
Is the waters of the Wye.*

*The waters of the Wye run deep,
But only at high tide,
So if you want to drown yourself,
Wait till the river's wide.*

*And when you're going under, boys,
You'll have, despite all fears,
The knowledge that, though all is lost,
You didn't do three years.*

*To foil all efforts of the staff
To make your life a hell,
Just leap into the River Wye,
You'll drown, and you'll drown well.*

A/T Nunn P Nov 1945

46 Groups - 50th Reunion

Fifty seven members of 46A and 46B Groups, many accompanied by their partners or friends, mustered at the Royal British Legion Hall, Sedbury on Friday, 13th September 1996 for a 50th. anniversary reunion. They travelled from all corners of the UK, including a number from overseas. A further twenty one old boys apologised for absence due to health, residence overseas or other commitments.

Before proceedings got under way, a roll call was called of known group members who had passed away, followed by a two minute silence. For the majority this was their first contact with each other since their apprenticeship days. Company and 'hut' groups quickly formed to recount tales of far-off days. After a buffet meal and a couple of drinks, a lively social evening with disco got under way. The DJ played dance tunes from the 40's and 50's and at the end of the night even congratulated all on their enthusiasm!

The evening finished with everybody linking-up and singing Auld Lang Syne, followed by the National Anthem.

A grand reunion - Enjoyed by all.

Ron Marie

Tracing Beachley Boys

In order to organise the 46 Groups Reunion in 1996, Alan Ball initially and later assisted by others, spent considerable time attempting to trace the group members. It is not an easy task to undertake; the Services are changing and doors which were once open are closing fast.

I hope these notes will at least provide a starting point if you decide to trace your group. The notes assume you are tracing earlier groups who have reached military retirement age.

Initial Reset

Arrange to research the records kept at the BOBA HQ. For this you will need to contact Derek Knight (phone number page 2). You should be able to complete a nominal roll of the group including service number, name, initials, date of birth, arm of service posted to and address listed for each member on completion of apprenticeship.

Check with the BOBA Membership Secretary, currently Frank Pickering, for the names and details of any of the group enrolled as current BOBA members.

Tracing of the remainder then falls into three categories:

Service Pensioners - Retired Officers - Non-Service Pensioners

Service Pensioners

- Send a detailed nominal roll to Enquiries Wing, Pension Division, Army Personnel Centre, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow, G2 8EX in order to establish if any are in receipt of service pension.
- From 1st July 1997 this procedure will be simplified as the Army will have restructured its fixed centre personnel administration support from various Regimental Pay Offices throughout the country into a single site at Kentigern House and becomes the focal point for all enquiries.

- Next, seek Enquiries Wing permission to follow up and submit an open letter explaining the reunion together with a stamped envelope for the Wing to forward to any pensioner confirmed in the reply to your enquiry. Note that they will not disclose any pensioners' addresses directly to enquirers.

Retired Officers

- If information reveals the ex-boy was 'discharged to a commission' obtain details from the Retired Army Officers List - Part 2. This can be consulted at most large public libraries. You will need officer's number, final rank and date of discharge.
- It is recommended that a retired officer should then forward the enquiry together with a stamped envelope to his own Officers Pension Office with a request to forward it on to the former officer colleague he personally wishes to contact.

Non-Service Pensioners

- From experience it is likely you will find these represent the largest proportion of post-war ex-boys and the most difficult to trace.
- A request, together with an open letter explaining the reunion aspect of the enquiry and a stamped envelope, should be forwarded to the branch which deals with army service records for forwarding to last known addresses. The address is Army Records Office, Ministry of Defence CS(RM)2b, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 1RF.
- Such enquiries are deemed to have low priority as the department's main function is the tracing of next-of-kin or welfare matters. To assist them, they require actual date of discharge and NHI number in preference to regimental number and corps / regiment.
- For the department to conduct a search from their computer records may entail a fee of £20 for four persons.

Other Channels

- As an alternative to the Service channels, placing adverts in the commercial media may bring some replies.
 1. 'Service Pals', Teletext Ltd., POBox 297, London SW6 1XT. Tel: 0171 973 0633.
Adverts placed appear on Page 676 on Channel 4.
 2. The Legion, Magazine of the Royal British Legion, 48 Pall Mall, London, SW17 5JY
 3. Corps and Regimental magazines such as the Sapper and the Craftsman.
 4. National newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express.
 5. Monthly periodicals such as Mature Times, Sycamore House, PO Box 25, Cowbridge, South Glamorgan, CF7 7XU.
 6. Saga Magazine, Sage Publishing Ltd., Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1BR.

Timescales

- If you are thinking of undertaking research for a particular reunion you should be prepared for a lengthy process. It is certainly advisable to begin your work at least two years prior to the event.

Ron Marie

From the Membership Secretary

It seems like only yesterday that I was writing my piece for last year's newsletter but on looking back I realise things are moving on - and that includes my wife and me! We are planning to move down to Hampshire, and are in the process of negotiating the switch.

As I cannot at this time give a firm address for my future mail, I would advise members who are forwarding membership subscriptions for 97/98 to send them direct to the Treasurer, who will inform me of the payment so that I can maintain the records (address bottom page 12).

While on the topic of subscriptions, may I repeat the suggestions I made last year and advise *all members* to physically check they have paid their subs for the current year. I mention this because there is a large number of

you who joined originally and have not kept up your payments. If this applies to you, and you don't wish to remain on the membership list, please let me, or the Treasurer, know one way or the other, so that we can get an honest picture of BOBA's membership.

When our move is complete, (and I'm keeping busy watching the ships go up and down the Solent), I'll let you know my new address through the Association. Time permitting, I'm hoping I will be able to continue looking after membership matters from Southampton.

The only part of this job that I don't enjoy is the recording of deaths and I always regret reporting these events to you. Since the AGM in September I have the following deaths to report.

Frank Pickering

Maj. Charles Rogers MBE - 5 Group - Oct 96.

Gordon Todd - 43A Group - Nov 96

Bill White - 43A Group - date not known.

Sam Curran - 8 Group - Mar 97.

'Bob' Owen - 21 Group - Mar 97.

Lt Col Arthur Hall - 25 Group - Mar 97 - see separate obituary.

'Peter' Godbehear - 35 Group - Mar 97 - see separate obituary.

Maj. Stanley Waite - Oct 96 - see separate obituary.

Peter Godbehear

You may recall prayers were said for Peter at the 1996 Founder's Day Service; he was then suffering terminal cancer.

He will be remembered by many at BOBA Reunions for his remarkably white hair and beard, but more for his great and happy personality, his humour and outgoing nature. He will be sadly missed by those who knew him as close friends; not least by myself, for he and I have been friends since the age of ten when we were school mates in Egypt.

In addition to British WWII medals, Peter wore three American decorations including the Purple Heart. He is survived by Mary, his wife.

Bob Carrington - 36 Group D Coy

Major Stanley Waite

Stan represented the British Army many times at soccer and was capped for the Welsh amateur side in the 1930's. He joined Beachley at 14 and went on to RASC. He played for the famous amateur side Wycombe Wanderers and was headhunted by Spurs, and Cardiff City. His Welsh amateur cap is on display at the Military Museum in Aldershot.

He saw war service in Africa, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, and later became a boxing judge officiating at fights involving Joe Bugner and John Conteh. He was also an active member of CoveCricket Club as an umpire and club treasurer.

From an article sent by Harold Cox 40 Gp D Coy

THE 1996 BOBA OPEN GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

The BOBA Open, in the form of an 18 hole Stableford competition, took place on the Valley Course of Dewstow Golf Club on Saturday 14th September 1996. An excellent turnout of 24 golfers turned up on the day and included our first lady. Well done Mrs Coombes!

Everybody enjoyed an excellent days golf in superb summer sunshine, although it was evident that some were suffering from the effects of the Friday thrash in the Old Course Hotel. After a certain amount of commotion at the first tee, due mainly to the absence of a measuring tape for the 'nearest to the pin' and

'longest drive', tfirst three-ball led by the current BOBA Champion and Chairman, Syd Thomas, teed off at 0900, approximately.

A great deal of huffing and puffing went on during the next 4 hours in an attempt to reach the clubhouse in time to down a pint or two before attending the BOBA AGM at Beachley. The results indicated a good standard of golf generally. In fact 13 of the 24 starters scored 30 points or more. Any one of the combatants with a little luck on their side could have won the shiny new and highly coveted BOBA golf trophy. However, after many recounts the following were declared winners as follows:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|
| • BOBA Champion 1996 - Glen Charmers | 56B | 39 Points |
| (Please note Glen did not come out to play on Friday night.) | | |
| • Runner Up - | David Samuels | 63B 38 Points |
| (Placed second after a count-back with Adrian Picken 66A.) | | |
| • Nearest The Pin - | George Murray | 43A |
| • Longest Drive - | Adrian Picken | 66A |
| • Best Gross Par 3s - | John Green | 73B (After a count-back with Eric Coombes.) |

The new trophy which was kindly donated by the BOBA Committee was reluctantly presented by the 1995 Champion together with the minor prizes.

We are all looking forward to BOBA 97 when I hope you

will make an effort to enter the next BOBA Open. Individuals who have played previously will automatically receive details of the 97 event. Any golfer who wishes to join us for the first time should ring me, Ken Standen, on 01291 624022

and I will send you the necessary papers.

In the meantime keep your heads down and I look forward to seeing you all in September.

Ken Standen

A Fishy Tale

Ex Beachley Boys of 35 - 38 vintage will doubtless remember Sgt 'Snips' Lingard, RAEC. To him 'Everything was a Snip'! He often told his classes this fish story, and went into fits of laughter before the end of it, he knowing what the ending was to be.

A boy went fishing and caught a small fish which he put into a tin can of water, to take it home. However, the can leaked, and

when he got home he found it was empty. Undeterred, the boy put the fish into a bucket of water, and miraculously it fully recovered. Realizing the fish had survived a period without water and had survived, he decided to take it out of the water once again. This he did daily, and each day for a little longer, and to his delight the fish continued to survive.

Eventually the fish was able to stay out of the water altogether, and the boy would take it for walks, until one day, when passing over a rustic bridge, the fish fell

through a gap into the river and drowned!

All present were obliged to laugh at the joke, as if it were the first time of telling, and so keep 'Our Snips' in good form.

Gordon Rickard 36C

Accommodation

Mrs Brown, 2A inner Loop Rd.,
Beachley, Tel 01291 620283.

2 Doubles: £16 B & B

A GOSPORT WALLAH

I joined the Army as an apprentice tradesman on 1st September 1931. I was sent to a unit named (you have to believe this) the School of Electric Light for training as a carpenter and joiner. The school was located in Fort Monkton on the seafront at Gosport, and for administration purposes was 122 (Fortress) Coy Royal Engineers. Most of the boys in training were enlisted RE boys. The School had only recently admitted General Service boys, of which I was one. My number was 117.

The school closed in 1932; I suppose the 'Geddes Axe' descended on it. I believe the RE Boys went to Chatham, and we GS lads were sent to Chesham. I was one of those incorporated into the existing 27 Group, and being a chippie, in B Coy. We were immediately dubbed the 'Gosport Wallahs'.

In retrospect, the living conditions we endured at Fort Monkton would not now be allowed in a penal establishment! Huge Napoleonic era barrack rooms; no hot water; march half a mile to Haslar Barracks for

every meal, and the same for a bath every week. The staff, however, both Regimental and Trade, were, I remember, very good. Perhaps they felt a little sorry for us?

There were compensations. The Fort was within walking distance of Gosport, and a one penny ride took us into Portsmouth. During my stay there we saw Great Britain win the last Schneider Trophy Race: the visit of the German Dornier 12 engined flying boat, the Dornier Dox, and the liner 'Bremen' arrive in Spithead after winning the Blue Riband of the Atlantic.

I wonder if there are any other old boys of the School of Electric Light out there somewhere? If there are any still around they will be the wrong side of 80. Perhaps this little item might turn something up? Or maybe, and perish the thought, I am the sole survivor of the School of Electric Light, the last 'Gosport Wallah'. If you know better please contact me to put me right at Marine Villa, 27 Marine Drive, Olgemore by Sea, CF32 0PJ.

Maj. James (Hendy) Henderson (REME retired)

Leaving Beachley in 1948, I joined the infantry and lost touch with my group, 45B D Coy. However, in Gibraltar Joe Pomfret's mother, a philatelist, wrote to me asking me to send a certain stamp. Thereafter I sent her stamps from various places around the world.

In Korea we commandeered a war-torn post office so I selected some stamps and sent them to Mrs Pomfret. The reply came "Thank you. Joe's out there, ask him to write." I made enquiries and met Joe the very next day and after showing him the letter he said he would write. Two days later I went to Tokyo for 5 days R&R and naturally bought some stamps and sent them off saying I had seen Joe and he would write.

Sadly, I later received a letter saying mine had arrived the very same day as a telegram from the War Office saying Joe had been killed in action.

Bill Williams

Sutherland's Swim

Not to belittle the achievements of Captain Daniels VC who swam the Severn from Beachley to Aust, and back (Echoes 96), later to be repeated by Major Bill Atherton RAEC there is the feat of A/T Cpl Sutherland of B Coy, around 1936.

As I recall, he swam the River Wye from 'Suicide Point', where there are extremely dangerous currents, coupled with a 32 foot rise and fall of tide. He then climbed the recently erected electricity pylon to unfurl a sheet to show the company slogan - 'Up 36 B Coy'!

The Brass-Topped Chimney

In 1955 the Workshops heating was supplied from a boiler house with a 150 foot brick chimney. One morning towards the end of term, the large Guard Room brass bell was seen to be perched on top of it! The Adjutant volunteered to recover the bell by

climbing up inside the soot encrusted chimney but quickly backed out when he found many of the ladder rungs inside the chimney were loose or missing.

Later the A/T RSM was summoned to School HQ and was told that if he could organise the return of the bell that night no questions would be asked. However, the Adjutant arranged for the RPs to lie in wait for the errant boys recovering the bell. The lads were chased, caught and locked up.

This perfidy did not go down well with the apprentices and next day an air of general discontent developed. Representations by ex-boy officers were made to the Commandant but to no avail. A 'work to rule' and passive acts of non co-operation followed. A complete silence was maintained at morning prayers. The action continued for three days, after which the charges were dropped against the small number of boys involved and camp life returned to normal.

Gordon Rickard 36C

Can't Keep Him Away?

Remember Geoff Winter (66C) claimed in last year's Echoes that he had attended 23 (now 24) reunions in succession. We asked if it was a record.

James Freeman (45B) of Bristol has something to say on the matter:

"I claim the best attendance record of any old boy. I came back in 1949 then in 1958 and every year thereafter. 38 reunions all told without a break. Beat that!"

Can you?

BEACHLEY BAND MEMORIES

The following is an edited extract from the memoirs of John V Lewis 34 Group. The original article ran to four A4 sides and I'm afraid we can't run it all John. (Editor)

As far back as I can remember as a kid in India I had desired to be a drummer. But although I was at the Military School in Dover for four years from 1930 I never touched a drum. My time was spent training for gunnery! I had expected to join the Royal Regiment as an apprentice artificer but failed selection and ended up at Chepstow.

I found out that the part-time band members got three days extra leave a year. Before long I was the bass drummer. We had a succession of bandmasters during my time at Beachley for it seemed that the bandmaster was any member of staff that possessed a fair knowledge of music. Initially we had an infantry WOII known as 'Piggy'; he was eventually succeeded by an RE acting sergeant called 'Nev'. Both these turned out to be 'ear clippers' i.e. never put chaps on a charge when a good cuff round the ear would suffice. Nev was replaced by a large infantry private whose size ensured discipline! My last bandmaster was a sergeant from another rifle regiment.

It was during the reign of Nev that I burst the drum. One day while on sick parade nursing a swollen ankle, (wet towel wrapped round and tapped hard with a spoon), I met with Bert, the civilian medical orderly. You had to get past Bert before you could tell your story to the elderly, retired but still in uniform TA medical officer. Bert's favourite medicine for anyone he considered was on the scrounge were No.9's; these pills guaranteed you would be lingering in the vicinity of a toilet for the remainder of the day.

Half way to the bottle he hesitated. "Aren't you the big drummer in the band?" On my affirmative nod: "Poorest big drummer I've ever known." I felt deflated. "Most big drummers I've known have burst the skin at least once on parade. What are you doing - tapping it?" I felt dejected. "Tell you what," he continued. "You break the skin on Sunday and I'll give you ten Woodbines. In you go." The ancient MO glanced at me over his pince-nez and gave me three days ex-boots.

For two Woodbines an accomplice 'fixed' the left skin for an easy break on the Sunday. What worried me was Nev marching steadfastly in line with me as we marched to church. As we approached the NAAFI however, fellow players Squinty and Kit came to my rescue with with a jazz rendering of 'With Sword and Lance'. Nev pounced on them and I clobbered the left skin so hard the stick landed inside the drum and rattled all the way to church.

We came to the conclusion of the piece. Nev approached, his face bright red with anger. "So you did what you told the NAAFI tarts you'd do!" As I hadn't, I glanced at my 'fixer' who turned quickly away. In the NAAFI the previous evening he had boasted about the part he was to play in our escapade. He didn't know one of the girls was a sister-in-law to an instructor!

I entered the MI Room for my reward. Bert reached for the No.9's as he spoke: "Never seen such an unsoldierly drumming perform....." I was long gone before the tablet left the box.

John Lewis

"The Last Weekend" - Video Offer

Copies of Keith Underwood's acclaimed video of the last BOBA Reunion before the College closed (25/26/27 Feb 94) are still available at a cost of £16.50 each.

Please write to Keith at 1 Madocke Road, Sedbury, Chepstow, Mon, NP6 7AY for more details and an order form.

Home Thoughts From Abroad: *John Bass, from the unlikely Bergisch Gladbach in Germany, keeps the editor's in-tray pretty full with his reflections on life in general, Beachley in the 1940's in particular and of course, the Germanic peoples. His latest thoughts about the Teutonic race are culled from several diverse pages of his output.*

What is an ex-boy, much retired yet not ex--- (I only feel old when looking in the mirror!!) doing in Germany against his better beliefs - or I suppose will? Enough is enough: roll on Blighty when the missus retires.

I've been working as an EXPERT for the German Govt Group, SES, Senior Experten Service in Bonn. There are so many stories to tell in the 10 assignments to Africa, 3 to China, Yemen and Columbia. Kenya I knew well; looking at Nairobi brought back a few happy memories. What was really nostalgic was thinking of the Army time long ago and the hyena that had my gall bladder (after the quack had removed it) following a year of hell after typhoid at Mckinnon Road.

Anyway, up in Nakuri, Kenya there was this large overweight German, Big T, who on the pretence of helping the Africans, got me cheap through the Relief Aid Agencies and wanted an ersatz-manager to run his agricultural equipment factory. Our SES function was to teach the locals self-reliance and independence by teaching them to teach their fellows. "Teach THEM!" shouted Big-T, accompanied by a well-used British expletive, "You can't teach these black idiots nutinks. And ... you godda shout at 'em - all the f...g time." I argued about that and reported Big T's foulness to Bonn - which cut short the 6 month assignment to half its length.

I reckon three years at Beachley was unique - nothing in a lifetime can be quite the same. The Germans express surprise: "you verr a poy-soljier! Vee t'ought only our glorious Wermacht had such Jung in die armys..." Then to go on and explain it was something very special has them quite in awe.

In an African transport company we needed a special tool for five sick trucks all suffering the same disease, and such tools not only cost 'arm and a leg' but took months to obtain. So from various bits of scrap I hacked, cut, drilled, turned and welded until the special tool was made. Later, while I was sitting at a computer terminal, rehashing their maintenance procedures software, the Big Bossman came and said, "Vee knew it was right to have you: City & Guilds... is such a marvelous qualification. When did you get it and where?"

Again amazement. "1946 at ATS (Boys) when I was sixteen and a half" had him surprised.... So much for those fancy titles! I got the Big Boss to accept new inspection procedures learnt while in RASC Workshops in Palestine & Kenya in 1948/49!

My old buddy, Ed Edwards, 44A A Coy - never lets me forget about BOBA.. Yes, Ed was, & is, a FRIEND. Explaining that my best friend had already been in the Army four years before coming to Beachley, with us both at 14, had the Germans truly doubtful of my integrity. Ed was a 'Dukey' (Duke of Yorks..) An old soldier at fourteen and a half!

John Bass

BEDROCK

The initial dinner / social evening of BEDROCK was held at BOBA's 'home from home' - The Old Course Hotel, Chepstow on 18th October 1996. But what does this wonderful acronym stand for?

Simple enough : **B**eachley **E**ducation **D**epartment **R**eunion for **O**fficers **C**ivilians & **K**infolk. In other words anyone who was at some time on the staff of the School / College Education Dept. Some sixty members and wives / partners attended and had an excellent evening renewing acquaintances and bemoaning the folly of closing the College.

Unfortunately, the meal was not up to the standard BOBA has come to expect for the Reunion Dinner!

BOBA members attending were Derek Knight, Phil Kitchen and Dave Chapman. Many of you will also remember Nina, Ken Taylor's widow, who also attended.

If you qualify as a BEDROCK member, or know of someone who might be interested in this year's function please contact George Crump on 01291 623347.

Dave Chapman

Lieutenant Colonel A W Hall OBE

Arthur Hall, 25 Group, highly respected elected vice-president of BOBA died unexpectedly on 6th March 1997 while on his local golf course, where he was a keen and active member. Latterly he lived in the village of Walton near Clevedon, not far from Bristol, where he was involved in a number of diverse activities. Amongst these he organised and operated a local WRVS Books on Wheels Service and held various posts in the local branch of Probus. Always active, Arthur never missed a BOBA Executive Committee meeting. The loss of his wisdom, experience and humour leaves a gap which will be difficult to fill.

Arthur was born in 1916, the son of a Gunner RSM who won the Military Medal in WW1. He joined Beachley as an apprentice at age 14 in 1930. His forty year Army career took him to many parts of the world. He married Edith in 1940 while at the Military College of Science and shortly after in 1941 was commissioned in the RAOC, later transferring to REME on its formation. He went into Europe immediately after D Day and stayed on in Germany after the war until 1950 when he returned to England. After service at Bicester, Arthur next found himself in Korea and Japan at the closing stages of the Korean War. This was followed by two tours in Singapore interrupted by a spell at the Repository in Woolwich. UK tours in Shornecliffe and Ashford, where Arthur was CO of 14 Command Wksp, followed before he retired from Bordon in 1970. The move West came when Arthur took up an RO's post at the Army Careers Office in Bristol, finally retiring in 1976.

Arthur was a keen sportsman and during his long service was responsible for organising many unit sides; a highlight being in 1951 when 4 Trg Bn. Aldershot won the Army Soccer Cup under his guidance.

The church of St. Mary at Walton and the nearby church hall were filled to overflowing with mourners who came from as far afield as Australia to pay their last respects to a popular, kindly and well-loved man - an officer who lived his life to the full. Arthur is survived by his widow and three daughters to whom The Association extends its sincere sympathy.

Thinking Ahead

Please remember if you intend to come to the reunion in September you will need to have paid your annual subscription by the time you apply for your tickets.

Chepstow Museum

We hope that Anne Rainsbury from Chepstow Museum will be at the Old Course Hotel on the morning of Saturday 13th September 1997 with a number

of items (possibly photos) from the former Beachley Museum.

WO2 (AQMS) R G 'Jamie' Jamieson

Jamie came to Beachley in 1946 as a Royal Armoured Corps sergeant after war service in Germany. He served on the staff until 1951 and then went into REME.

Many of the staff and apprentices of those days will

remember Jamie and his dog called Boris. It was Boris who used to get the boys out of bed at reveille by climbing on to their beds and pulling off the bedclothes!

At that time, regulations forbade NCOs from owning dogs so he sold Boris to the Company 2IC for one penny on the understanding that he had to take care of him.

Jamie died in Guernsey on Boxing Day 1995 aged 81.

BOBA SHOP The following may be obtained from the Treasurer

Ties	£5.00 B	Scarves	£5.00 B
Golf Hats	£1.00 B	Car Stickers	£0.50 A
Lapel Badges	£3.00 A	Sweatshirts (V neck)	£9.80 C
AA Coll Plaques	£18.00 B	Sweatshirts (Crew neck)	£8.50 C

Postage and packing : A = 25p B = 50p C = £2.00

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