



# Beachley



# Echoes

Edition No. 32 ~ April 2026



Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)

### Contents

Committee Members Details .....	2	The Cannon .....	15
President's Thoughts .....	3	Visit to NMA .....	16
Chairman's Report.....	4	Letter from an OC .....	11
Hon Secretary's Report .....	5	Cenotaph Report 2025.....	27
Membership Report .....	6 & 7	Cenotaph 2026.....	28
Standing Order Form.....	8	Reunion 2026.....	29
NOK Form.....	9	Reunion Application.....	30
Heritage Report .....	10 & 11	Old Robots.....	31
Editor's Ramblings.....	12	Our School.....	33
Going Back .....	13	General Information.....	34
John Gray's Story .....	14	BOBA Shop.....	35

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## President's Thoughts for 2026



To all BOBA members I wish you a warm welcome and hope you will enjoy reading the 2026 issue of the Beachley Echoes. This year's issue has been edited by Ken Reader. You will recall Ken previously carried out the role for a number of years before handing the baton over to Ray Armstrong, over the years Ray did a sterling job but felt that due to advancing years he was becoming staid and decided the time was right step aside and allow someone else to fill the role. Thankfully Ken volunteered and has returned with renewed vigour and has produced an excellent newsletter. Can I ask at this juncture that you all support Ken and if you have any articles, pictures, stories about your time at Beachley Camp please pass them on and he will bank them for future use. You may think they are not suitable for publication, but I would suggest that we leave that decision to Ken.

The BOBA committee continues to serve you well in all its activities, e.g. Reunion Weekend, Finance, Cenotaph Parade, Heritage Centre...the list goes on and I'm very grateful for their continuing support. Over recent months the committee has grown in numbers with the welcome addition of John Hatchet and Dave Head, both are from the latter groups that passed through the college, and I understand they will eventually be heavily involved with the Cenotaph Parade and Reunion Weekend. At this juncture I'd like to acknowledge all the work Derek Fox has completed during his time as Membership Secretary, Derek informed us many months ago that he would be retiring in 2026 and he is sticking to his guns!

The reunion weekend of 2025 was a much quieter affair when compared to the previous year which was to be expected as it is not every year that you celebrate your centenary. We had a bit of turbulence as we commenced our reunion planning due to the Treasurer being admitted to hospital for major surgery, but thankfully other committee members stepped in, and all ended well. I'd like to mention Matt Arlow who was one of those members, he took on the bulk of the work, and we owe him a large slice of gratitude. The format of the weekend followed its usual pattern, we located to a different venue for the reunion dinner, and all went well in terms of the food, service, etc, provided to us by the staff of The Mouton Lodge. Joining us at dinner were the CO and RSM of 1 Rifles, now it's a very long time since we had such guests and I thank all who socialised with them, we did received letters of gratitude from both. At dinner I sat next to the CO and personally thanked him for all the support the regiment gave the association, I also broached the subject of the future of Beachley Camp, sorry Barracks. He was reasonably confident the barracks would stay as is for some time as the programmed rebuild of RAF Caerwent where his unit is due to be relocated kept moving to the right in terms of funding and therefore time scales

The weekend was rounded off with the reunion church service at St George's with the Rev Paul Green officiating. Paul has not long left the Army and has plenty to do so it was excellent that he gave up his valuable time to support us. We also thank Gareth and Beccy who support year after year with their organ and bugle playing. Sorry, I nearly forgot to mention the tea/coffee/biscuits we had in The Hub following the church service where it was good to mingle and chat before we said our farewells until next year.

On behalf of BOBA I'd like to say thank you to the two ex-Commandants who joined us for the duration of the reunion weekend. Both Col Alan Holman and Col Chris Haskell are members of the association and were elected Vice President's at the 2024 reunion weekend. Their support shown to the association is invaluable and benefits us all.

As I write this article the committee are scheduled to have a 'face to face' meeting during the last week of February. The aim of the meeting is to produce a plan for 2026, I also believe they are looking at new ways of doing business e.g. E ticketing for the reunion weekend, manning of the Heritage Centre and the possibility of a lunchtime gathering at the National Memorial Arboretum for existing association members and those that are interested in joining.

I believe that's all for the moment; in closing I'd like to wish you all good health for 2026 and hope to see you in September.

Yours Aye

Brian Henderson (65A C Coy) President, BOBA



## Chairman's Report for 2026



For those of you who don't know me please allow me to introduce myself, I'm Gary (Chalky) White 73A (Senior Group!)

I am honoured to have been elected as Chairman of BOBA and will endeavour to carry out my duties to the best of my ability.

I have been on the committee since the inauguration of 'new BOBA' back in 1994, where myself, and Baz Morgan held the dubious title of 'elected vice presidents', the most grandiose and bizarre title I have ever heard, especially when in reality we were merely 'gophers' for the committee, I have since been Welfare Officer and most recently Hon' Secretary.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about my predecessor Chris Ricketts.

Chris has been a stalwart for our association having held a number of roles on the committee for many years, sometimes two of them at once as we were so short of committee members, he has given up so much of his personal time on behalf of BOBA with such things as meeting with the RSM & CO of 1Rifles to maintain positive links with them, meeting management staff at the reunion venue on regular occasions to ensure the reunion goes as smoothly as possible. He has also spent many hours at the Heritage Centre ensuring everything is in good order and opening up for visits by members. All of this alongside his duties as Chairman. We are also extremely grateful to Chris' wife Wendy, she has not only supported Chris in whatever he has done for BOBA, she has also been front and centre in helping with stock at the Heritage Centre and cleaning in the same place, and making lunch for any meetings that took place.

Chris has earned the right to step back from mainstream BOBA duties (although if he thinks he's escaped he's sadly mistaken!)

Our sincere thanks go to both Chris and Wendy.

We were extremely honoured to have Lt Colonel Simon Burkill and WO1 (RSM) Andrew Smith both of 1Rifles present for BOBA's reunion dinner in 2025. They both expressed how delighted they were to have been invited and how they enjoyed the evening immensely.

We as an association are very grateful to 1Rifles for their continued support of BOBA, I personally, along with our President Brian Henderson will work hard to maintain the strong links we have with them to ensure the future of BOBA at Beachley.

With regard to the committee there have been a number of changes, we are really lucky to have two new additions to the ranks, namely Dave Head 87 Squadron who takes over from Matt Arlow organising the Cenotaph Parade, and John Hatchett 83C who has become our Reunion Co-Ordinator, I would like to thank them both for coming on board and look forward to working with them.

I would also like to thank the rest of the committee for their tireless work in ensuring that not only is the reunion a success, but that all the other work they do throughout the year means BOBA itself will continue well into the foreseeable future.

Gary White

Chairman

### **BOBA Website**

Most of you reading this edition of the Echoes will be doing so on our website, however, we are aware that a minority are not aware that the site exists. The site can be accessed through The Army Apprentice site which has a link to the BOBA site or directly (<http://armyapprenticecollege.homestead.com>).



## Secretary's Report for 2026

Dear Members, after 2024's successful centenary reunion we were prepared for a smaller reunion in 2025 owing to the cost of living crisis. We then prepared ourselves for a change of venue. Our reunion dinner therefore took place at the Mounton Brook lodge, Chepstow and was a success. This year was a special occasion as we invited the CO and RSM of the Rifles. Chris (CO) and Andy (RSM) thanked us for the invitation and informed us that they thoroughly enjoyed the event and were pleased to meet the Beachley Old Boys. This was the first time they had attended owing to their deployment to Cyprus and helps to cement our close relationship with the Rifles.

Unfortunately our Chairman was taken ill at the reunion weekend and had to return home for medical attention and Matt Arlow (Vice Chairman) stepped into the breach and saved the day, both at the AGM and Reunion Dinner. He was quite a twinkle toes and looked dashing in his Kilt! Chalky has since recovered and best wishes to him. On the subject of illness, we had three members of the committee go down with various medical problems. Ray Armstrong (Echoes Editor), Stephen Barker (Treasurer), and Derek Fox (Membership Sec ). All have recovered but the spectre of age is still with us. Therefore if younger members feel they could help out the committee, they would be most welcome and given support from all of the committee. A Membership Secretary post is the priority at the moment. Our thanks to Ken Reader for taking over the onerous task of publishing the Beachley Echoes.

During 2025 we had a request from the AANA to send them an update of our Role of Honour for their website. After checking our compliance with the Data Protection Act our Membership Secretary sent the relevant information to update their website.

Matt Arlow once again organised a successful Remembrance Day parade and recruited two new members to the committee. Well done Matt.

So we come to the end of yet another busy year and successful one with the planning of 2026 well in hand.

Any of our members have any concerns or queries regarding BOBA business, or any suggestions' to promote and enhance the association, please contact me via email as a preference, but by all means by regular post. All of my details are on our website and also in the echoes.

My Best Wishes and good health to all of you

Alan Chatt (REME) 59A, A Coy



**Wanted!**

**Willing volunteer to fill an important position:**

**Editor of the Echoes**

**Your Association needs you**

**Please step forward**

**BOBA Membership Secretary's Report ~ by Derek Fox 58B Group****Report Dated 13/02/2026****Membership / New Members:**

There have been 13 new members join since the last edition the Echoes .

Mr	JP	Jonathon	Howlett	89 Sqn
Mr	MP	Michael	James	75C
Mr	VR	Vince	Lock	66A
Mr	GJ	Gordon	McGregor	72C
Mr	G	Geoffrey	Coyne	55A
Mr	R	Roger	Smith	60C
Mr	RM	Richard	Munslow	86 Sqn
Mr	G	George	Carroll	86 Sqn
Mr	AJ	Andrew	Boden	72B
Mr	AC	Adrian	Thorarinsson	66C
Mr	N	Neil	Fowkes	76C/77A
Mr	JC	John	Gay	77A
Mr	TJ	Timothy	Moss	77A

**Mr. Chris Angell is paying subs but has not registered with the association. I have tried contacting him on Facebook but he appears to be ignoring me. I seek him here, I seek him there.**

**Membership Numbers**

Membership numbers have drastically dropped over the years The reasons for this are several and diverse. Paid up members total is currently unclear as I am only advised of member payments at the end of the financial year. The total should be known for the A.G.M.(or whatever)

**Sympathy / Get Well Soon cards**

As previously advised, I am now holding Sympathy and Get Well Soon cards. All I need now is your input as to who has passed away and who is sick. Members will slip through the net but it would be good to show to others that we are here and that we do care.

**In Memoriam**

I have been advised of the following deaths since the last copy of the Echoes.

Mr	N	Norman	Azzopardi	77C	C Coy
Mr	J	John	Bass	44A	A Coy
Mr	C	Colin	Bridgeman	66C	A Coy
Mr	A	Alan	Crawshaw	55A	A Coy
Mr	B	Brian	Davis	58B	C Coy
Mr	D	Dai	Green	76C	A Coy
Major	PH	Peter	Kennett MBE	46A/46B	D Coy
Mr	JD	John	English	46B	C Coy
Mr	WJ	William	Kimber	55B	B Coy
Mr	D	David	Smith	60C	C Coy
Mr	E	Stoker	Stoker	57B	A Coy
Mr	RR	Ron	Marie	46A	B Coy
Mr	EJ	Edward	McArthur	65A	C Coy
Mr	JR		Nutman	69C	B Coy
Mr	AD	Alan David	Wrotchford	64C	B Coy



Mr PJ Phil Zygmant 62B C Coy

**May they rest in peace.**

### **Subscriptions**

Cheques sent to me in regard to annual subscriptions may take some time to be debited from members accounts. This is on account of my having to travel to towns other than that which is nearest in order to access Lloyds Bank. I would ask for your forbearance in this matter.

### **Post Script**

A heads up to the members who were unable to attend last years AGM, It is with no little sadness that I found it necessary to announce my resignation of the post of Honorary Membership Secretary of this Association. I plead advancing age and deteriorating health as reasons. (I failed to remember to record a members death after his family took time out in their grieving to inform me of their loss. I considered that unforgivable and was it the last contributable factor in my decision}

It has been an Honour to serve all members, I started in the post in 2009, since then I have enrolled 375 members to date, the first and last of which were Royal Engineers. (I am tempted to comment but will refrain as I know they are temperamental)

I would like to thank all of those that wrote to me personally telling me of significant times during their service it was both entertaining an humbling.

To those that phoned me and especially the N.o.K of members, it was an honour to speak with you and to hear of those that had passed on. I found that there was so much dignity in destiny that it was profoundly moving to shed tears with you.

To all of the committee members past and present and all members and their loved ones, Thank You.

Derek Fox (58B)



### **Derek's Relief!**

Derek has done a sterling job as the Membership Secretary and is rightly heading for a rest, thank you Derek. We are sure that he will feel somewhat relieved that there is someone to take his place. Many thanks to Sam Woodger who is taking over as the Membership Secretary.

For future reference Sam's details are:

Mr Sam Woodger (73A)

Home Address ~ 38 Overmead, Shoreham by Sea, West Sussex, BN43 5NS

Telephone No ~ 07802 462736

Email Address ~ [woodgersam@gmail.com](mailto:woodgersam@gmail.com)

### **Chepstow Facts**

- On 23rd November 1940 Wing Commander Guy Gibson, VC, DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar got married to Evelyn Moore. They were married in Penarth, and spent their honeymoon in Chepstow at a hotel overlooking the river..
- Chepstow Castle, situated on a clifftop above the Wye and its bridge, is often cited as the oldest surviving stone castle in Britain.



Your instruction to set up anew, amend or cancel a,

# Standing Order

The easy way to make regular payments from your account

## 1 Your Details

Please write clearly in the white spaces with capital letters or Tick boxes

Your full Name or name of business  Branch name

Your contact telephone number  Sort Code  Account number

All sections must be completed

## 2 Standing Order details

Does this instruction replace any existing standing order or direct debit instructions? Yes  No

How often do you want payments made? Weekly  4 Weekly  Monthly

Quarterly  Half yearly  Yearly

If 'NO' please complete all remaining boxes.

Recipient's name: Beachley Old Boys' Association

Recipient's bank & branch name: Lloyds TSB, CHEPSTOW, 7 Manor Way

Recipient's sort code  Recipient's Account number

First payment amount (if different to usual amount)  First payment date (Month & Year)

Usual amount £ 1 0 Usual payment amount in words TEN POUNDS STERLING

Second payment amount (if different to usual amount)  Second payment date (Fill in year)

Until further notice (X)

### Special instructions

1. Ensure you fill in all dates where asked.
2. Make sure you sign and date this form.
3. When complete, send to your bank not BOBA.

### To Bank

Please note that the second payment and all consequent payments are to be made on 01 April of each year.

Your payment reference (max 18 characters) (Surname, initials & Group)

(e.g. Humperdink,E,27A)

Please allow up to three working days for the funds to reach the recipient's account

## 3 Your agreement with us

Lloyds TSB Bank plc  
Registered office  
25 Gresham St  
London EC2V 7HN  
Registered in England & Wales No 2065

Lloyds TSB Scotland plc  
Registered office  
Henry Duncan House  
120 George St  
Edinburgh EH2 4LH

Registered in Scotland  
No 95237  
Signatories to the Banking Codes

Please note that we will not:  
1. Make any reference to VAT or any other indeterminate element.  
2. Advise your address to the person/organisation you are paying.  
3. Tell the person/organisation you are not able to pay.  
4. Ask the bank of the person/organisation you are paying to tell this person/organisation when payments are received.

I authorise you to debit my/our account, in accordance with the details shown in Section 2.

This request is addressed to the bank which holds my/our account.

### For bank use only

From branch name  Sort Code  Contact name

ID confirmed (for bank use only)

Your signature

Date



This form is to allow an opportunity for members to complete, or submit an update.

## BEACHLEY OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION

### AAC Heritage Centre

Beachley Gate,  
Beachley Road,

Beachley

Glos.

NP16 7YG



### BOBA ~ Membership Secretary

Sam Woodger

38 Overmead,

Shoreham by Sea, West Sussex.

BN43 5NS

Mobile: 07802 462736

email: memsecboba@sky.com

Dear BOBA Member,

### Re: Next of Kin (NOK)

This is a particularly difficult subject, however one that decidedly requires to be addressed. When a BOBA member 'passes on', the Executive Committee are left with a quandary as to if and whom they should contact in the family. If such a contact is desired, please be so kind as to complete the details below and in doing so, assist the Executive Committee to help where they are able. The Data Protection Act will apply to all details given.

#### (Please use block capitals throughout)

NOK Name: ..... NOK Relationship: .....

NOK Address: .....

..... NOK Postcode: .....

NOK Tel. No: ..... NOK Email: .....

**Your Name:** ..... **Membership No:** .....

Please return this information to the Membership Secretary using one of the following means:

**Email:** memsecboba@sky.com

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 7802 462736

**By Royal Mail:** Send to the address above.

Thank you in anticipation.

Sincere Regards,

**Sam Woodger** ~ BOBA Membership Secretary



## **AAC Heritage Centre** **Report for 2025**



The 2024 season had seen a steady flow of visitors to the Heritage Centre, some weeks being busier than others. Although access was significantly restricted during 2025, visitor numbers were not too affected.

During the 2023 and 2024 Operating Periods, 1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> October, the main Volunteers, our Former BOBA Chairman Chris Ricketts and his Wife Wendy had graciously given up much of their spare time to open the Heritage Centre (HC) on Wednesdays and Saturdays each week. With a few exceptions when Chris and Wendy had not been available, my Wife Monica and I had attended the Centre as relief Volunteers. This did prove a little problematic, as we live some 70 + miles away.

With the health issues suffered by Chris over the latter months of 2024, it fell on me as Chair of the Heritage Centre Sub-Committee to take a more active role to organise effective access arrangements for 2025 and beyond.

This meant that some changes had to be made for the 2025 season. Unfortunately for the early part of 2025 this incurred reduced opening times and access. Pre-planned visits by groups were accommodated as agreed, with some scrambled re-arrangements.

To resolve the opening of the Heritage Centre on a regular basis, I had been looking for locally based volunteers to assist in facilitating keeping the Centre open and accessible to ex-boys, ex permanent staff and their families who wish to visit.

Up to March 2025, I had identified a small number of Volunteers, who had indicated they were willing to assist, however this did not provide sufficient flexibility to continue the same level of opening hours as we have had over the last two to three years.

In consultations with the Interim BOBA Chairman, Gary White, it was planned that the Heritage Centre would only open one Saturday per Month, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 between 1100 and 1500 hrs as previous. Unfortunately, this proposal fell foul very quickly, with one of the new volunteers, suffering a broken ankle after a fall, and myself spending two weeks in hospital around Eastertime and two months recovery after an emergency operation.

Eventually, it was able to reopen the Heritage Centre on alternative Saturdays from early July 2025 to the end of October 2025. However, for 2026 the volunteers have agreed to attend on a more frequent basis and the Heritage Centre will be open each Saturday from March to October inclusive. While not as frequent as previous years, it is the best we can achieve with the current volunteers.

Anyone who feels they would like to contribute to supporting the HC, please feel free to contact me by email or mobile, details at the end of this report.

Significant management procedures have been introduced including acceptance of a code of conduct for volunteers, similar to other organisations. This has worked well since its inception, and I wish to maintain the momentum going forward.

I am continually looking to make improvements to ensure the HC continues to run smoothly and provide an excellent reference centre for Ex Apprentices and Permanent Staff and their families who make the effort to visit.

Any Apprentices who may have artifacts or photographs which they may like to donate or loan to the HC, these items will be gratefully received to help extend our displays.

One recent item which has been received over the winter period of 2024 was a Precision Theodolite donated from the estate of a Surveyor Apprentice from my own group 60C. We have also been able to source a tripod for it, and it is now a prominent display item for the future.

Another recently donated item was the Commandants Bugler's "Bugle" which was rescued from a skip, and the Drum Majors Mace which was returned in Autumn 2024 following extensive restoration.



from sales and other donations are all gratefully accepted as they help to keep the centre financially viable.

The Centre has a wide range of enlistment record books and other historical information (such as Issues of the Robot) for perusal by visitors. We have a few missing issues of the Robot's, so if anyone has a copy on the missing list, we would be pleased if they would donate it to the HC to help complete the record.

The Heritage Centre Sub-Committee and its Volunteers continue to work hard to maintain the Heritage Centre for your benefit.

### VISITS

The Heritage Centre will of course be open on the Saturday Morning of the Annual BOBA Reunion between 10.00 and 1230 hours.

I would request that any Groups holding their Special Year Reunions, i.e. 30<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> etc, and who wish to incorporate a visit to the Heritage Centre, please ensure their Visit coincides with a normal Opening Day. Requests for visits to the Barracks now that the Rifles are back in occupation, when visiting the Heritage Centre, must be made through BOBA using the email address below. Direct enquiries to the Barracks will not be accepted by the Regimental Staff.

Any requests, help or queries can be addressed to me via the following email address, this includes enquiries for Barracks Visits, information on Ex Apprentices or for shop item purchases:

[beachleyhcenquiries@btinternet.com](mailto:beachleyhcenquiries@btinternet.com)

I will do my best to respond by return within one to two days.

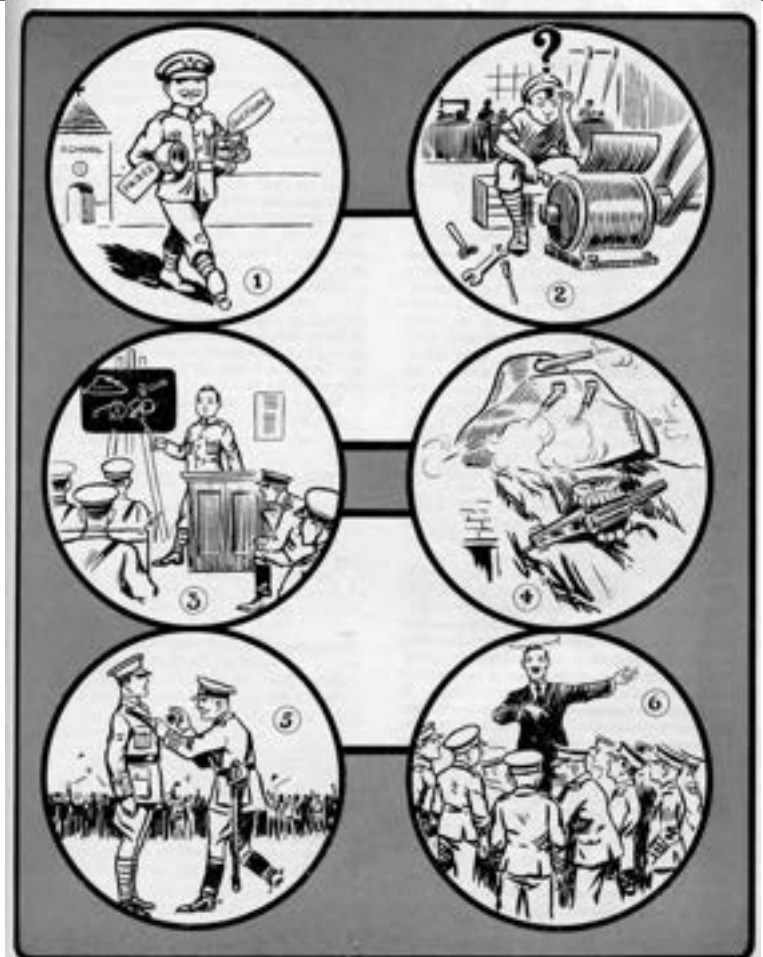
Anthony M Waite 60C C Coy  
Chair – AAC Heritage Centre Sub-Committee (BOBA)

Mobile No: 07788 581775

### The Robots Progress

1. *Retires*
2. *Aspires*
3. *Diagramires*
4. *Tank fires*
5. *Acquires*
6. *Inspires*

This is a cartoon from the June 1926 edition of the Robot; although the trades changed over the years the ethos did not!



Show the  
Beachley spirit  
and step forward  
BOBA needs you!



## The Editors Mumblings



It is very strange to back in the editor's seat, I obviously forgot the old rule about volunteering! Our thanks must go to Ray Armstrong for his sterling work over the last 9 years. He is now released and on track for some 'him' time, possibly with his railway – no pun intended! Regrettably this edition will not be as voluminous as Ray's productions, I have only a few articles and not too many photographs.

Apart from forgetting how time consuming it can be putting the Echoes together I had lost touch with using MS Publisher (the programme that we use to produce the Echoes). However, all the re-learning is to be of little use! Microsoft are removing Publisher from service in October of this year. This means that, at present, we do not know what next years edition will look like. Almost certainly a new publishing programme will be required. I was only signed up for two editions but think that we need someone savvy enough to take over as editor for next year, old codgers like me take eons to learn new technology (Hence the notice on Page 5).

I am looking forward to this year's reunion; I missed last year's because I had to attend an important wedding (no, not mine). The groom was is an ex Sapper but not a Beachley Boy, I forgave him.. Seeing old mates and friends is always an excuse for swinging the lamps and having a great time all round. Please do try and make the effort to come along, I am sure that you won't regret it.

There is an interesting article about the cannon that sits outside of our heritage centre. Well it is interesting to me as I was part of the 62C A Coy mob that dragged it and dumped it on flat Holm beach ready for the next party to ship it to Beachley. After being positioned in many parts of the barracks it now sits proudly outside our Heritage Centre. I noticed that it has not had any Coke cans shoved down the barrel—many were when it sat outside the QM's old building. Funny how certain things evoke memories! Our group were the last to be put into the 'H' blocks, luckily we had to spend only one term in them and then we were of on leave, only to meet the Big Freeze. We were happy to be in the new 'J' block where we did have to go on coal raids to keep us warm.

In 1926 (wow, a hundred years ago!) The Robot magazine published the rules for the Old Robots Society. This was the start of what eventually became the Beachley Old Boys' Association. Two pages covering this are included at page 31. Also included on page 33 is what the Commandant at the time (Lieutenant Colonel V. T.R. Ford DSO) had to say about the school.

If you have any stories (I know you have which ex service person doesn't) or photographs that you want to contribute for next year's edition of the Echoes please sent them to me.

I enjoyed being the editor in the past and I would have been happy to carry on but technology has called a halt for me. I do hope you enjoy this years reading.

**Ken Reader 62C A Coy**



### **Wanted!**

A willing volunteer to take over as the editor of our newsletter ,the Beachley Echoes. Unfortunately, you would need to set up the look of the newsletter as the current programme used is being withdrawn . On the bright side the new editor would have the chance to make a real mark for himself. Please apply to the chairman of BOBA.

#### **Paper Copy of the Beachley Echoes**

If you require a paper copy of the newsletter please drop the Editor a line stating name, group and address. His contact details are on page 33.



## Visit to Beachley – December 2025

After I left Chepstow in 1988 as a Class Two Engineering Surveyor (apart from a short week teaching there in 1994) I never had an opportunity to revisit where it all began. I left the UK when I was demobbed in 2000 and ended up in Australia (via 17 years in the Middle East,) never really thinking I'd make it back.

That changed last Christmas (2025) when I returned to the UK for the first time in years. I thought to myself, it's now or never for my best mate, Ray Smith, fellow Troop member Nick Diamond, and I to revisit our youth.

My first port of call was the [Beachley Old Boys Chepstow](#) Facebook page. My enquiry generated several helpful replies, all of which ultimately led me to Anthony Waite who was instrumental in facilitating our visit. Anthony ensured the Rifles Guard Commander in the Guardroom was aware of our plans and kindly arranged permission for us to conduct an extensive walk around the camp.

He also facilitated access to the Heritage Centre making sure Steve Morgan (who was in the same Troop as us back in 1986 - now a local in Sedbury) had the keys to let us in.

We were extremely impressed with the Heritage Centre. It is thoughtfully laid out and provided a wonderful trip down memory lane — a real credit to the curators. While there, I took some photographs for Paul Woodford of 42C (probably BOBA's oldest member), who lives just down the road from me in Melbourne. Remarkably, 84 years later, he was able to recognise some of the faces in the 1942 album.

Walking around the camp brought back a flood of memories, although much has changed since we left in 1988. Large parts of the camp have been demolished and are, in military terms, in "rag order". In our day, there certainly wasn't a blade of grass out of place - and whatever happened to the Cookhouse, NAAFI, Block 50 and the Education Block?

Afterwards, we stayed overnight at the Beaufort Hotel in town and revisited a few of our old haunts and I'm pleased to report that (unlike 40 years ago) I managed to stay out of trouble!

I would like to personally thank Anthony for arranging our visit and Steve for hosting us and opening up the Centre. It was a long journey to make, but absolutely worth it.

Mike (Sly) Silvester

86 Intake / 89 Sqn - Engineering Surveyor



*Editor's Note: I remember that Sly had a marvellous motorbike when he was serving at High Wycombe. He also submitted a piece for the Echoes when living in Dubai—a man of many talents.*





*Editor's Note: This piece was written by our Treasurer's wife Clare. Her father was not an Army Apprentice but the tale does tell us something of the exploits of those serving during WW2 and the bravery of civilians aiding them.*

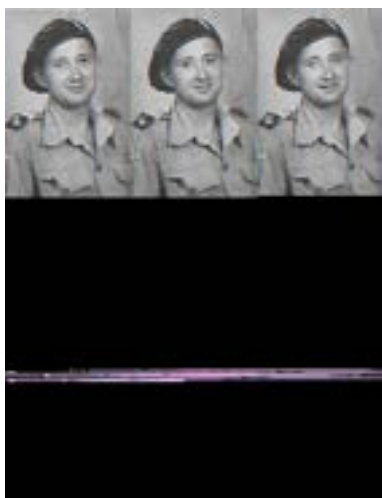
The following is a true story. Some of the detail from 1944 is sadly lacking because my dad died suddenly aged 53 and I didn't get the chance to question him about it. How I wish I had!

At the outbreak of WW2 my dad joined up and eventually he joined Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and was posted to the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division in September 1940. The 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured went to North Africa and fought there until the German's surrendered in 1943. In the first few months of 1944 my dad was one of thousands of allied troops who landed in southern Italy and who subsequently fought in the Battle of Monte Cassino. He was a dispatch rider and afterwards his division advanced towards Rome, which was captured by the allies on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1944. At some point after this my dad became separated from his unit and was at risk of being captured by the Germans who were in retreat. He ended up in Padova (Padua) and was taken in by a local family – the Coppola family - and 'hidden'. I am unsure how long he stayed with them, but it was long enough for him to learn Italian and apparently, they passed him off as a cousin from the countryside if anyone asked. The family consisted of parents Emma and Pietro and their three children Bruno, Anita and Paolo. Pietro was a Professor at Padua University. Eventually dad was able to rejoin British troops and finally his unit and proceeded to Trieste. From there they made their way through Austria back towards Blighty and home. My mum always said he was one of the last to return from Europe.

Fast forward then to 1961. Thomas Cook had begun package holidays to the sunshine and as a family we flew to Rimini on the Adriatic coast of Italy. I was 10 years old. I now understand why my dad wanted to go back to a country that had left such an impression on him. As part of the 'package' coach excursions were offered to various places like Rome, San Marino and Padua. We did all three, but it was obviously the trip to Padua that my dad wanted to do most. We arrived in the city at the Basilica of Saint Anthony. My mum and I went inside but my dad said he just wanted to walk the streets and see if he found anywhere that looked familiar. My sister went with him. As he was walking down one street, which he thought he recognised, he saw a woman coming towards him with her shopping. He told my sister he would ask the woman if she knew the Coppola family. However, as the woman got close, she suddenly dropped her shopping and screamed "Giacomo, Giacomo!". My dad's name was John, but everyone called him Jack. It turned out that she was a cousin who remembered him! The next few hours were a whirl of dad finding me and mum, going to buy the biggest bunch of Gladioli I had ever seen and then being taken to the apartment where Mama Coppola, as my dad always called her, now lived. I will never forget her face when she saw my dad for the first time since he had left all those years before. The family had moved house and contact had been lost. She admitted she thought he had maybe been killed after leaving them. At one point in the afternoon, she went to a drawer and pulled out an army blanket which my dad had given her and which she still used to protect her best cutlery. The Coppola children, who were adults by then, were summoned. The youngest, Paolo, was a professional footballer for Fermo and I remember when we went out with him, he was treated like a local celebrity and the drinks were free! For the next 12 years dad drove to Italy every year with mum. My sister and I went on most trips, and Stephen joined us too on a couple of occasions. Sadly, my dad's sudden death put an end to the visits and ultimately my mum lost touch with the family.

Fast forward again to 2025. On April 9<sup>th</sup> King Charles addressed the Italian Parliament. During that speech he said, "Let me also record our profound gratitude to the many hundreds of brave Italian civilians who gave refuge to British and Allied soldiers, thereby risking their own lives". That prompted me to remember the Coppola family

because without them I might not be here! I googled Paolo's name because I thought as a professional footballer there might be some history of his career recorded. At the time of writing this I have yet to verify what I discovered but he may well be still alive aged 89. Our daughter in law speaks fluent Italian and is much more social media savvy than me so she is going to investigate further. Who knows there may be a young relative of the family who has heard the story of the British soldier and who gets in touch. I hope so!





## Finding the Missing Flat Holm Cannon

Flat Holm is a tiny island 5 miles from Cardiff in the Bristol Channel. I've been involved as a volunteer there for nearly 40 years and am currently the Chairman of the Flat Holm Society, a charity set up to support the island.

Back in the Victorian era and with Palmerston anticipating an invasion by the French, the island was fortified with 4 sets of gun emplacements which housed 7" RML cannons, each mounted on a Moncrieff Disappearing Carriage. I've always had a keen interest in the Palmerston forts and so my interest was piqued when I was given a photo last year of what looked like one of our cannons dumped on the side of a car park at Beachley Head. The photo had been taken from the Severn Bridge by an archaeologist who had worked extensively on the island, and she was surprised how similar it looked to the island cannons. I asked the current island Manager if she had information about it and was told that, yes, a group from the Army Apprentice college there had taken one, but nobody really knew any more about it. I had to investigate further!

A quick Google search led me to the Heritage Centre at Beachley Head and there in the photographs was our cannon, which by now had been mounted and was smartly painted in black enamel with a plaque stating it had come from Flat Holm in 1964. Bingo! I emailed for more information, not really expecting a reply, so was delighted to hear from Anthony Waite who confirmed that it did indeed come from Flat Holm and would I like to see it? A date was arranged and I have to say the cannon does look very impressive in the front of the Heritage Centre. Anthony had kindly contacted a friend in Australia who had been involved in the exercise to bring the cannon from Flat Holm to Beachley Barracks and he had even been able to obtain some photographs. It seems that a new intake had been given the task to "Retrieve a cannon from Flat Holm and bring it to the college via the Severn estuary". I came away very happy and with a printed document with the information and photographs.

I have since been told that there is potentially another cannon somewhere in Chepstow that was obtained the same way. If anyone knows where it's located, please let me know at [flatholmsociety@gmail.com](mailto:flatholmsociety@gmail.com)

Bridget Box  
Chairman, Flat Holm Society



*Editor's Note: The cannon was dragged over part of the island and dropped onto the beach by 62C A Coy. Second from in the photo left is me with Ted Price.*





## Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum

On the Friday 24th April a small group of us (5 BOBA and 2 partners) met up at the Bradley Arms on the outskirts of Lichfield, for a few drinks and curry dinner.

On the Saturday morning we had a total of 10 Beachley Old Boys in attendance, with a further 6 partners. Although slightly lower numbers than registered, we met at 10.15am before spending a few hours wandering the grounds and exploring all the poignant and thought provoking memorials. After lunch, we all met up at the Army Apprentices Memorial for a few words of welcome and photos.

We were very lucky with the weather and sat on the veranda for tea and cake prior to everyone heading their separate ways. A day to remember for all.

The day was appreciated by all in attendance and I have received emails and Facebook messages by attendees expressing their thanks for BOBA putting on this event.

Matt Arlow





10th May 2026

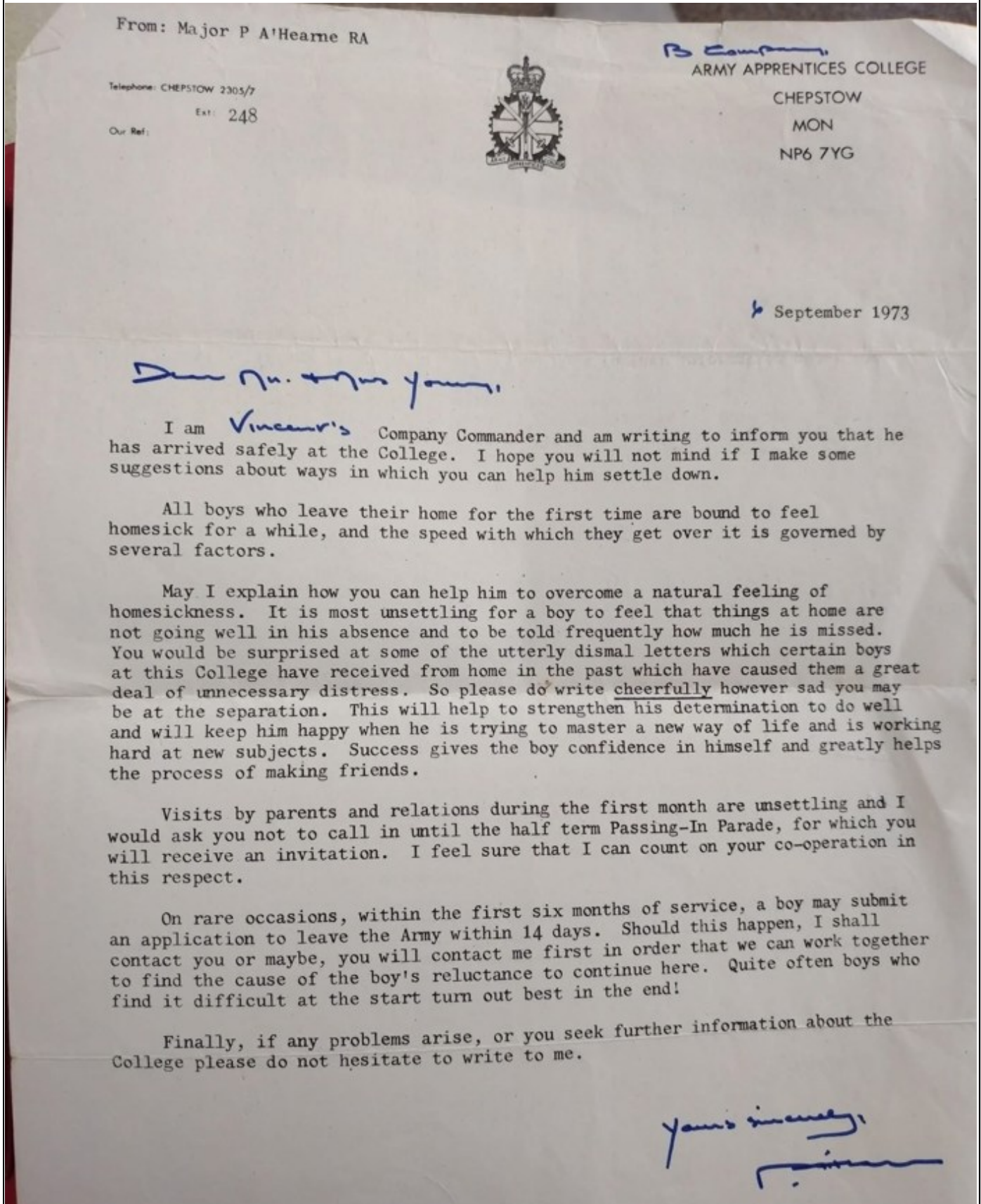
Went very well today. Four Standards in attendance, unfortunately the Arborfield carrier was not fit enough to perform so theirs's was draped. We also had two pipers supporting us.





## An OC's Letter

This letter was found on Facebook. How many of our members parents received such letters?





## The Boy Soldiers

by

F C Baker 42A Group

The air was filled with the pungent smell of steam, and a greyish smoke billowed into the compartment every time the door opened. The compartment was almost filled with bodies, luggage, kitbags, but still the door opened to admit another passenger.

To these people catching a train, it was probably a regular occurrence, but to me it was the beginning of a new venture, an exciting new life lay before me, and no matter how crushed I was, my enthusiasm could not be curbed.

I had waited nine months for this very moment, ever since I had applied to join the Regular Army as an Apprentice, and here I was, barely fifteen years old, on my way to an Army Technical School to be trained as an Armament Artificer in the Royal Artillery.

Gone were the days of 7.30 to 5.30, with an hour for lunch. Gone were the mundane tasks in the dust filled air of the tailoring factory, no more cutting and trimming of cloth, canvas, silks and pocketing. I had worked on Khaki Uniforms and now I was going to wear one, and the thought of saying farewell to it all cheered me up, despite the long journey ahead. It was April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1942, a day I would remember all my life.

It was two and half years since war had been declared and my only involvement to date was as a messenger in the Home Guard, a firefighter at the Tailoring Factory, and a budding Airman in the local Air Defence Cadet Corps. This was still enough to make me want to join one of the Services.

As I signed my attestation papers that morning, the Recruiting Sergeant said, "Right Son, you are now in the Army; here is your first pay" and he gave me a shilling. "This is what we call the 'Kings Shilling', and since you are now a regular soldier, you are entitled to it. Here is your railway warrant – your train leaves for Gloucester en- route to Chepstow at 10.30 from Leeds City Station, so hop to it, and the best of luck".

So here I was on my way to Chepstow with a stomach full of apprehension and excitement. There was a tinge of sorrow in it all as I remembered my mother's tears as I said goodbye. I wondered how many times my fellow passengers had said goodbye, as judging by the number of uniforms in the compartment and corridor, there were bound to be one or two veterans.

A young civilian sat in the far corner opposite me, he looked to be about twenty years old and seemed to be trying to make himself as small as possible, maybe he feels out of place with all these uniforms about, I thought. Suddenly there was a commotion in the corridor and two uniformed figures peered into the compartment. They were in khaki uniforms with red flat tops - Red Caps, somebody said, and the young man almost disappeared behind the soldier sat next to him. The leading Red-Cap looked round the compartment and finally settled his gaze on the young man. Can I see your leave pass? He said. "I'm not in the forces" replied the young man. The Red-Cap grunted, and turned to leave the compartment:

Suddenly, he turned and snapped out, "Can I see your Paybook, please". The young man's hand instantly flew to his left breast pocket. Without hesitation, the Redcaps grabbed the young man and dragged him out of the compartment. That's a smart copper said one of the soldiers, a civilian would not have reached for a paybook, he must be a deserter. I felt somehow there was a lesson to be learnt from the incident, and one which would stand me in good stead in the future.

Within a few minutes the train pulled away, and soon we had left the outskirts of Leeds, and were speeding through open country. What a wonderful feeling to see the changing colours of the landscape with the variety of crops in the fields. The trees and hedges were just showing their leaves and the sun shone brightly on the train windows. It gave me a wonderful feeling, and I felt as though I had been released from prison. The rest of the journey was uneventful and three hours later I arrived at Gloucester. I had to change trains for Chepstow, so I crossed over the station to the Great Western Railway.

If I had imagined for one moment that I was the only one travelling to Chepstow that day, I was in for a shock. The platform was packed with young lads about my age – all carrying suitcases, and I found out later that they were all potential Army Tradesmen like me. When the train eventually arrived, we all piled into the carriages. It wasn't a long train which meant that ten of us finished up in a carriage compartment made for six passengers, and to make



things worse there was no corridor, nor any means of access to any of the other compartments. I thought at the time how embarrassing it could be if any of us were taken short on the journey.

The lad next to me was from Plymouth and I couldn't tell a word he said, nor could he understand me, and somehow the same thing applied throughout our small group. They were a mixed bunch from Glasgow, London, Coventry, Newcastle, even from Ireland. We were like a bunch of foreigners without an interpreter.

One chap stood out from the rest, both for his stature and attitude. He was a big lad with shoulders like a boxer, standing nearly six feet, with a heavy jowled face and a thick neck. His name was Phil Clayton, and I could see he was going to be a handful to anybody with whom he came in contact. His first antic was to try and remove the mirror from the carriage wall, and if his penknife blade hadn't snapped, he would have been the proud owner of a Great Western Railway mirror.

He came from Northampton, and somehow, we could all understand what he said. He said he had been given the choice of either the Army or Borstal, (this being a bad boys school), and since he had had enough of Borstal, he thought he would like to reorganise the Army. Oddly enough, he was the only one organised enough to bring anything to eat. He had a great pile of sandwiches and generously shared them out. By the way he said, my nickname is "D K" and since we will all end up with nicknames for each other, mine is "D K" which means Dead Keen. Sure enough, from that day his nickname stuck with him.

The approach to Chepstow was extremely memorable, after travelling beside the River Severn for some time, the train eventually entered a gorge and burst out to a spot which I can only describe as breathtaking. The train passed over a steel bridge which straddled the River Wye. On one side of the carriage, steep cliffs with wooded tops which overhung the river. On the other side of the river, a grassy bank sloped away towards a row of cottages. Below us was a road bridge, the road itself winding up through the village. On the right of this bridge was a castle, with its gate nestling on a mound and its walls winding their way up to the steep cliffs overhanging the river. The river wound its way in the distance between fields and woodland and formed almost a frame to a picture of rural beauty. I thought that if first impressions count that I would be happy here in such an idyllic spot.

The train pulled up in the station, and I noticed immediately the fresh air, the quietness and the atmosphere of the country, in contrast to the smoky, noisy town I had left that morning. Outside the station was a small courtyard and neatly drawn up to the boundary fence were eight or nine Army Trucks with tailboards down and canvas flaps neatly rolled back. This was our transport to the camp.

We were guided to the trucks in parties of twenty by soldiers with three stripes on their arms. "Do not sit on the wagon sides or tailboards" yelled our Sergeant, unless you want your backs breaking. What a wonderful welcome I thought. With tailboards up, we set off for what I learnt was a four-mile journey to the camp.

The route wound itself down a steep hill amid small cottages, past a church, through a valley dominated by the castle and then over a bridge spanning the River Wye. Once clear of the village the road ran alongside the River Wye, and we once caught a glimpse of another river on the opposite side. We soon realised that the camp was situated at the tip of a peninsula between the River Wye and the River Severn.

The trucks stopped at the camp gate and the guard checked the number of boys in each truck. One guard shouted "Did you enjoy the villages and the countryside? Well, forget it for at least three months". We looked at each other, was he joking? Were we really to be confined for three months? Why say it if it were not true? I know I suddenly felt depressed. I don't know how the others felt but by the look on their faces, their thoughts were similar to mine. The silence in the truck as we drove through the camp was poignant.

The trucks eventually pulled up on a concrete square adjoining some wooden huts, and we piled out to the chanting of the Sergeant, "Get Fell In". Of course, we didn't know what he meant and I thought his grammar was atrocious. We were soon to find out that "Get Fell In" was to line up in three ranks. We were hustled into three lines and the Sergeant passed down each line, ticking off our names on a long list.

Having assured himself that he had checked everyone's name, he started to talk to us all in that cryptic type of speech used by Sergeant Majors, as though it was well rehearsed, we were all deaf, and as if he couldn't care less, whether we could understand him or not.

He bellowed "Welcome to Beachley Camp. You are some of the 300 boys who are joining the camp today". He paused and gazed along the lines. "The last intake at this camp was three years ago, they are still here, but on leave for a fortnight, so it gives us a chance to concentrate on making you into some semblance of soldiers before



they return". A much longer pause, and then in an almost threatening tone he continued. "You will be here for three years, we'll get to know everyone of you, make no mistake about that. There are normally 1000 boys in this camp, and we know exactly what they are doing every minute of the day. So, if you think you can get away with anything, you have a big shock coming to you".

"You will be confined to Barracks for a few weeks, until we are satisfied you can walk, dress and behave like soldiers. You will now be taken for a meal and then we will show you your barrack rooms. Lead off in single file, front file leading, to a door in the large building in the corner of the square, which is the Dining Hall".

The interior of the dining hall consisted of two long lines of benches, scrubbed to almost white, supported by black wrought iron frames, and perfectly lined up with an aisle down the middle. In the middle of the dining hall was a long row of hot plates, and behind them another row of tables and benches. The hotplates were filled with gleaming aluminium trays and facing us, spaced equally apart were ATS girls in white aprons and caps. Behind them stood a Sergeant in a gleaming white suit and a peaked cap. He was a giant and dominated the scene.

We were directed by our Sergeant to sit at the tables, twelve to each table and we just sat silently as if waiting for the action to begin. The Cook Sergeant walked down between the benches and pointed to the first two boys on each table and then pointed to the hot plates. No words were spoken, his expression meant "MOVE" and move they did, including D K. They were back in no time with trays of food, bacon, eggs, potato mash and bread. I was going to say slices of bread, but they were more like doorsteps, but they were a welcome sight. They dumped the food and returned to the hotplates for pots of tea, plates and cutlery. (I soon learnt they call them mugs and eating irons, not cutlery).

As D K served the food out, he was grinning all over his face and I guessed he was up to something. I had never had an egg in my life, but I had two and I ate both of them. I hadn't eaten for eleven hours apart from the sandwiches that D K had given us. We were just finishing our meal when the Cook Sergeant came striding down the aisle looking under the tables. When he came to ours, he counted the trays under the table and bellowed, "Here it is, right you two", he said, pointing to D K and the lad next to him, "report to me every evening for a week, I'll teach you not to pinch extra food. So that was it, D K had pinched an extra tray, no wonder we had two eggs.

As soon as the meal was over, we were led towards the wooden huts adjoining the square. The Sergeant called out our names and twenty-four of us trooped towards the first hut. "When you get in your barrack room, I want each of you to stand by the side of a bed and stay there until the Barrack NCO comes to you". So, we entered the barrack room. The floor was wooden and gleamed like a sheet of glass, it seemed almost a sacrilege to walk on it. There was a line of beds ranged down each side of the room, with a single steel locker at the side of each. The centre of the room had a table and benches like ones in the dining hall and scrubbed just as white. The centre-piece of the room was a brick structure with a fireplace either side which I later learned was called a 'Cenotaph'.

In the corner of the room there was a separate smaller room and printed on the door was "CSM" which meant nothing to us, but we were soon to find out.

We stood in awe looking at the sparseness of the room, but any thoughts we had on the place were soon interrupted. The door burst open and a khaki clad figure in a peak cap made his entrance. "Stand by your beds", he bellowed and there was a mad rush to oblige him. He was fearsome.

On each sleeve he had three stripes. Not the conventional ones of khaki and white, these were black stripes with red inserts and above them was a gold crown. "What's your name" he bellowed to one of the boys. "Dawson", he said. "Dawson what?" "Just Dawson" he said in a terrified voice. "What do you think these are?" pointing to his stripes. "Er Sergeant, Sir" he said. "Sergeant" he shouted, "I'm a Company Sergeant Major, three stripes and a crown indicate that. I was glad it wasn't me he had addressed; I would have called him Staff Sergeant. I had a lot to learn.

"I am a boy Company Sergeant Major" he said, "you are all in my barrack room, so from now on address me as Sergeant Major, GOT IT?". A chorus rang out, Yes Sergeant Major. Right, sit on your beds and I will put you in the picture.

"Normally there are a thousand Apprentice Tradesmen in this camp. Over six hundred are Seniors, with almost three years' service; and they are on leave".

"Draft Numbers are given to each group when they arrive, you are 42A draft. The next intake will be 42B in six months' time. You are in "C" Company, A Wing, which consists of 100 Apprentices, all of you will be trained to be



Artificers in the Royal Artillery. The remainder of today's intake have been sent to A, B and D Companies for training as Electricians, Vehicle Mechanics, Joiners, Blacksmiths, Sheet Metal Workers and Bricklayers for the Royal Engineers and Ordnance Corps. All of you are 'Rookies' and don't ever forget that".

"The Camp Staff consists of a Colonel and his Adjutant, each Company is run by a Major or Captain, beneath him is a man, Sergeant Major. There are four Army Sergeants. The Sergeant who sent you here was your Army Sergeant, and you will be responsible to him. That is roughly the men who run the admin side of the Camp".

"In addition to the senior staff, there are boy NCO's who are in charge of the Barrack Rooms. I am Sergeant Major Pierce. There are four Sergeants, eight Corporals and twelve Lance Corporals under me. They are also training to be craftsmen, but you will obey them as much as you do the men. By the way, you will address all Camp Staff as 'Sir' even if they are only Privates, and that includes the Camp Police and Buglers".

"What do we call the ATS, Sergeant Major?" said a voice at the end of the Barrack Room. I didn't need to look round to know who had said that.

"Stand to Attention when you address me" the Sergeant Major bellowed, and D K slid off his bed and stood upright. The Sergeant Major strode down to him and stared straight in his eyes, with his nose only inches away. "Oh, I see we have a clever one here, well lad, by the time I have finished with you, you won't have any interest in the ATS or girls of any kind for that matter". "Yes, Sergeant Major", said D K without blinking an eye. Well, I thought D K was going to re-organise the Army, but up to now he had crossed the Sergeant and the Sergeant Major, and we hadn't been in the Camp two hours.

The Barrack Room by this time was getting darker, "Right", said the Sergeant Major, "it is getting time for 'Lights On' so put the Blackout Boards on the windows". There were some plywood frames at the base of each window, so we proceeded to secure the frames onto the windows, and then the lights were switched on.

"Right, now that we can see better, I will teach you how to make your beds when you get up tomorrow morning".

He pulled the blankets and sheets off one of the beds and proceeded to fold each of them. By the time he had finished there was a neat pile of blankets like a tiered chocolate round cream cake. Three Brown Blankets with two white sheets sandwiched between with a Blanket wrapped round and the pillow placed on top.

He removed the mattress which consisted of two halves and said "These biscuits are arranged, one on top of the other and then the bed pushed in. He pushed in the base of the bed which halved its length, laid the Biscuits on the base and placed the blanket and sheet unit in the rear centre, it looked so smart.

"Now we will sort out your room jobs for tomorrow". He asked each of us our names and wrote them on a list on the wall of his bunk. Next, he said, "read the list and do whatever job you are allocated each day for one week, next week I will move you to the next position so that each has a change.

We had one chap amongst us who looked alien to the rest. He had a large hooked nose, big ears and bottle necked shoulders. He talked with a lisp and appeared to be frightened to death.

Sergeant Major Pierce spotted him and said, "What's your name?", "Watkins", he replied. "Well, Watkins, you are twelfth on the list and therefore the reserve. You fill in if anyone goes sick, understand?" "Yes, Sergeant Major" said the lad in a stuttering, frightened way. "And" said the Sergeant Major, "you will blanco the Last Post until it is gleaming white, understand?" "Yes", said the lad. I thought the 'Last Post' was a bugle call, but who am I to doubt the Sergeant Major.

"Right, now I will show you what we do every morning". He grabbed a piece of equipment that was leaning against the table. It had a long handle and a rectangular base which appeared to be of steel. "This is called a 'Bumper', and every morning you will Bumper the deck. What will you do", "Bumper the deck, Sergeant Major", chorused the room, we were learning.

He gave a tin of polish to one of the lads and a piece of cloth. "I want you to spread a thin layer of polish over two square yards of floor". After several bellows of too much, too slow, etc, he had completed the task. "Now" said the Sergeant Major, "we polish it with the Bumper", and he proceeded to swing the handle first left, then right, so that the base swung backwards and forwards. Its base must have been like a felt pad due to the shiny finish which appeared. "Do this until all the signs of polish have been removed", he said. "Any questions? well, that's what you will all do after you have swept the bed areas and the floor centre, and I don't want to see any stains or marks when I inspect tomorrow morning".



"Now you can practice folding your blankets until 'Lights Out'. Within seconds, the floor was drowned in blankets, and slowly some resemblance of the chocolate sandwich appeared on the beds, but not very much like the original. After the Sergeant Major had pulled a few on the floor and said, "Do it again", the correct folding and shaping began to take place.

"Right Lads, make your beds down and get ready for bed. Lights out will be blown in a couple of minutes".

The beds were pulled out to full length and remade. Then we all started undressing. It was unbelievable, the antics that some got up to just to take off their trousers, hiding behind blankets and towels. Some of them almost climbed into their lockers to get changed. It was obvious that they had lived very sheltered lives. For my part, living with four brothers and being at camp with the Air Cadets had removed any modesty. Suddenly a bugle call rent the air and in a flash the lights were out.

"No talking or noise" said the Sergeant Major as he closed the door of his room.

I lay in bed and although I was tired, I knew it would be a long time before I would fall asleep. The bed was hard, the blankets heavy, but the main reason for my discomfort was my thoughts. I suppose in the quietness of the room, all our thoughts were on similar lines; "What the hell are we doing here?" "Is this the Army or Prison?". Everything said was a threat, there was no promise of anything that might be enjoyable or interesting, and to think we had signed on for at least eight years. I wondered how many, given the chance, would have left and gone home. I think even D K would have led the rush.

Suddenly the air was rent with a bugle call, the Sergeant Major's door burst open.

"Right, get out of it, get your feet on the deck" he yelled.

I couldn't believe the night had gone, and I couldn't tell whether it was morning or night, with the blackout boards still in place. On went the lights and some bleary-eyed faces peered over the blankets, trying to adjust their minds as to where they were. "Move yourselves" he yelled, "last out of bed is on a 252. We didn't know what he meant, but we didn't wait to find out.

Bloody hell, someone cried, its only six o'clock, do we get up at this time every morning? "You will" said the Sergeant Major, "And what's more, you have only one hour to dress, wash, make your beds, clean up this Barrack Room, and then I'll check that all the room jobs have been done".

I've never seen such chaos in all my life. There were sixteen lads running out of the door to the wash house, which also catered for the adjoining Barrack Room. There were six washbasins, and six toilets, so instead of queuing, they were dashing back to make up their beds. One lad bobbed his head round the door and shouted - "There's only cold water and its bloody freezing in that washhouse". "It's bloody freezing in this Barrack Room" somebody shouted back, and it was.

The Barrack Room walls were only made of wood and the draught from the door was like an Icelandic Gale. Crikey, I thought, its only April now, so what is it going to be like in winter? To crown it all, right in the middle of the room were two fireplaces, which were black-leaded as though a fire had never been lit in them.

Beds were being made and some lads were sweeping and putting polish down, only to have it covered over by somebody's blankets. But somehow, forty-five minutes later, a miracle had occurred, the place looked like a palace, or we thought it did.

"Right, stand by your beds" came the yell, as the Sergeant Major came out of his bunk. He walked slowly down the room, he checked locker tops for dust, disarranged blankets, inspected the table legs for dust.

"Its bloody filthy" he said. "Tonight, I want the people on the tables to scrub them white. I want the windows cleaning with metal polish, inside and out, the wash-house floors and toilet seats scrubbed. and before you go out on parade the scuff marks removed on the Barrack Room floor".

"Right, inside your locker, you will find a mug and some eating irons. I want you to get fell in outside on the square for breakfast. By the way, watch these mugs, if you break one, it will cost you 3/-, 1/- for the one you break, 1/- for the new one from stores and 1/- for one to replace the one you take from stores, - get it?" "Yes, Sergeant Major", but for the life of me I couldn't work that one out.

Breakfast was much the same as the meal when we arrived, but with the addition of sausages. We were all so full that we made a sandwich with the spare sausages and pushed them into our empty mugs to take back to the



Barrack Room for later. The one thing I did notice during the meal was that D K sat well away from the end of the table, he'd had enough of serving I thought.

I left the cookhouse and was just walking away from the square, when a voice like grated nutmeg bellowed out, "Come here lad". I looked around and there was this thick necked Sergeant Major with a stick tucked under his arm. His peaked cap was pulled almost over his eyes and his head held back as if he was shouting to someone in a plane. I thought he meant me, but he yelled, "You with the sandwich in your hand". The lad next to me walked towards him, "Double" shouted the Sergeant Major. The lad nearly fell over to run to him. "Right, lad, stand to attention while I collect some more culprits". He pulled out a small writing pad from his breast pocket and in a loud voice shouted, "My Name's James and I'm taking Names, you do not remove food from the cookhouse". He colared three or four more with sandwiches.

By this time a small crowd had gathered, and he shouted again, "My Name's James and I'm taking Names". Just then, a little lad popped his head round the corner of the cookhouse and shouted, "My name's Brown, have you got me down". He then disappeared.

The Sergeant Major was left with a red face, and a bad temper, he chased after the lad which was fatal, because when he turned round, the Barrack Square had emptied, and 'Brown' was never caught.

"I bet we are in for it now" somebody said, "Here comes the Bomber", who is the Bomber? "He's our Wing Sargeant, he's in the Royal Artillery and they wear 'Buzz Bombs' on their lapels". So, a new nickname was born, 'Bomber' and somehow it suited him.

"Right lads, first thing this morning, we are going to the Quartermaster's Stores to get you into something that will make you resemble soldiers. You will receive all your kit except your walking-out uniform as you won't need them for a while". There it was again, that underlying threat to our freedom. "After that you will all be going for a haircut. I'm sure most of you won't think you need one, but I reckon the Camp Barber will have different ideas", - there again, another threat.

"Right, Eyes Front, - Atten---tion", there was a shuffling of feet. "Move to the right in threes", another shuffling of feet, "Right turn, Quick March", and off we marched to the Quartermaster's Stores. "Left Right, Left Right", I don't know why he bothered, we were without doubt a disorganised rabble, and it was more of a hop and skip for some, trying to get into step.

The stores were situated well away from the Barracks themselves, and we were all lined up in a courtyard. Bomber went in a door marked "QM". Presently a Sergeant Major came out and directed the first three lads into the stores. After a few minutes, he sent three more in, just as another door opened at the other end, and the first three stumbled out with a kit bag each. They dropped them on the floor as if they weighed a ton.

Presently, it came to my turn, and as I entered the building, I saw a counter running the whole length of the room. As we moved along, items of clothing, footwear, etc were handed over by ATS girls, "What size cap"? Asked one of the girls, "six and three quarter", I said, and received a forage type of khaki cap, and I thought it would be a peaked cap.

If the method used for the cap had been used for the clothing, we might have been kitted out better, "These should fit you" was the comment, as a pair of denim trousers came over the counter. Same applied to the jackets. Then there was a button stick, button brushes, shoe brushes, socks, pants, vests, braces, boots, gym shoes, shorts and even woollen underwear, razors, shaving brush, and then came the webbing, belt, haversack, valise, ammunition pouches and finally a kit bag.

I bunged it all, or as much as I could in the kit bag, and with the rest over my shoulder I struggled out to join the rest of the lads outside. We stood silently waiting for the rest to be kitted out. I felt there was something very wrong somehow. Here we were, a hundred lads with no real spirit of the occasion. We were like zombies, taking everything that was given to us without a murmur, no jokes being cracked, it was unnatural. I could only give the Army ten out of ten for brainwashing us. When they said jump, we jumped. Already home seemed a thousand miles and ages away.

As soon as all the lads were kitted out, we, I was going to say marched, but let's say, we stumbled back to our hut. As soon as we arrived there, the Sargeant sent us off to our barrack rooms to stow our kit away and to report back on the square in half an hour with our denim suits, caps and boots on. I take back all I said about loss of a sense of humour. When we started to put the denim uniforms on, we laughed until the tears almost ran. Talk about fit, they fit where they touched. We looked like something out of a tramp's ball. Then we started to swap clothes. We



were falling over the beds laughing. All our troubles seemed to melt away, and within half an hour, we began to look like soldiers on fatigue duties.

I had some string with small lead weights on, which I had used in the Home Guard. They fitted in the trousers above the gaiters. The weights held the trousers neatly in place. As soon as I put them on, there was a spontaneous shout of "Where did you get them from? How is it your trousers look so smart"? as honestly some of them looked awful. They had tucked their trousers over their canvas gaiters but every time they bent their legs, their trousers just pulled up and the look like navvies on a building site.

Eventually we paraded for the 'Bomber'. He looked down the ranks and for the first time his face broke into a grin. "God", he said, "What a mess, what have I done to deserve this"? He walked slowly down the ranks and examined each of us. Periodically he would ask a lad to fall out and stand at the side of the square. By the time he had finished, there were about twenty lads remaining. "Right" he said, "Close up together and I'll march you back to the QM, we'll get some of these uniforms changed. In the meantime, you others can go back to the barrack room and tidy up your kit". I went into the washroom and lit up a cigarette, no sooner had I puffed on it, than there was a shout you could have heard across the river.

"Put that cigarette out and report to me". It was Sergeant Major Pierce, he was standing in the barrack room door and could see me in the washroom. I nicked my cig and went to where he stood. "Right lad, have you got any more cigarettes"? I showed him the packet with 15 Players left in it. He took them from me, dropped them on the floor and ground his boot on them. "You are not allowed a smoking pass until you are sixteen. If I catch you again, you will be on a '252' and you'll get seven days confined to barracks, right clean up this mess".

I started to pick up the remnants of the cigs when D K joined me, "Keep it clean" he said, "I have some cig papers, and we will roll some from it". Anyway, whose worried about being confined to barracks, we are confined anyway. Little did we know that seven day 'CB' meant a lot more than confinement, but I suppose we had to learn everything the hard way.

Through the window of the barrack room, I could see Watkins kneeling down on the pavement, and he appeared to be brushing something. "What's he doing, D K"? "Silly bugger's painting the last post", said D K. "He thinks that's the one the Sergeant Major want's doing, so don't you let on it's a late-night bugle call. I bet they try it on with all the rookies, only this time it's going to work. Even if he whitens it for the next three years. Watkins asked me why he had to whiten it, and I told him it was so people could see it in the blackout and know they were at the barrack room, so he will make sure it's done, I'll bet".

Within half an hour the others returned and this time their denim suits were a much better fit.

"Right lads, fall in outside with your mugs", said the Sergeant Major. I wondered what this was for, as it was only 10.30 in the morning. He marched us to the cookhouse, and we were each given a pint of milk in our mugs. This was to be a morning routine. "It's to build you up to be strong soldiers", said the Sergeant Major. "More like a lot of milk sops" said somebody at the back. Anyway, we had a quarter of an hour break to drink our milk. In exactly fifteen minutes, a thunderous voice shouted "A Wing, outside on parade. "Here we go for our haircuts" said D K, and there were moans all round.

We were marched to a small wooden hut, and three lads at a time went in. We timed them as they came out, three minutes between each batch, three minutes to have a haircut, no wonder they looked like convicts. They were bald two inches above each ear and their hair was about half an inch long on top. There was a burst of laughter as they tried to crush their forage caps over what was left of their hair. "You needn't laugh" said the Sergeant Major, "as you will all look the same", two inches above the ear belong to the army, and also, every bit over one inch, the rest you can

keep". It seems we were being branded and to me, it was a blessing we could not out for three months, who would want to? I didn't know then that this fiasco was repeated every fortnight.

Whilst we were waiting to go in, I was talking to D K, he said "Listen Yorkie, I bet my hair is only bald for an inch above the ear after my haircut, it's a trick I learnt at Borstal". "What is it"? I said. "You wait, Yorkie and see if it works first, then I'll tell you". It eventually came to D K's turn and in he went, in less than no time he came out grinning all over his face, "See I told you". His hair was sheared to the scalp only one inch above each ear, and from then on, it tapered to one inch long. It didn't look bad at all.

"There you are Yorkie, next time you go in for a haircut, plaster your hair with Vaseline and put a parting one and a quarter inch above the ear. They are not allowed to shave through a parting, and they have to make the other side the same. "Don't tell anyone else, that's between you and me. I quickly combed my hair with a very low parting,



just before my turn. The Barber did say my parting was rather low, but he cut it just like D K said!

*Footnote: - The above first impressions from a 42A Apprentice were sent to me as Chair of the Heritage Centre by the author's daughter for inclusion as an exhibit in the Centre. Having read through the tale, it hadn't changed much when I arrived in September 1960 (60 C Group). The only disappointing differences were the ATS Girls were no longer serving in the Cookhouse or working in the QM Stores, the only notable female on the camp apart from a couple of girls in the NAAFI, was Miss Heffer the WRVS Lady, who was old enough to be my grandmother, nice lady though. Consequently, my group had to resort to dating local Chepstow area girls, and several marriages ensued.*

*I have a feeling standards began to relax somewhat after my group passed out as the following Senior Group (61A) were permitted to have Cars / Motorcycles on camp. This was probably down to the fact that about a dozen of my Group including an Apprentice CSM (who was busted) were caught with vehicles being parked up at the Youth Hostel Association facility in Chepstow about 10 days before Passing Out Parade. I could say for definite whether this event caused a relaxation of rules, but it might have had a slight bearing to influence the change. 60C, A groundbreaking Group.*

*Anthony M Waite, 60C C Coy. Chair AAC Heritage Centre.*

*Editors Note: The last Group to occupy the wooden H blocks was 62C and even then we only had one term in them, things were changing!*



**Beachley Barracks 1930s**



## CENOTAPH REPORT 2025

**Matt Arlow**

**Cenotaph Organiser**

As with previous years the planning for this years parade started early. Following last years extremely successful 100th Anniversary of Army Apprentices, I was initially unsure of the allocation we might receive from the RBL. But my fears were soon dismissed when I received confirmation the association had this year been given 60 spaces for our contingent. The application form was sent out early and within days we had received over 45 responses. Again this year posting on various social media platforms helped us reach many Beachley Old Boys, many of whom had never marched with us before. Once all applications had been received we had a full marching contingent of 60 BOBA on parade at the Cenotaph.

This year myself and Jez Dykes travelled up on the Saturday afternoon, meeting Nigel Furness and Dick Tyers at Twickenham for a BOBA Rugby get together. We set off bright and early to get to Horse Guards Parade ready for the 0830hrs opening of the entrance gates. Once again every BOBA Member in attendance was impeccably turned out, it's good to see those values and standards instilled in us all at Chepstow are still so strong today.

Having manoeuvred ourselves out onto Whitehall, we gathered and chatted for some time waiting for the formalities to begin. The sense of pride and belonging felt by all as the bands play and the National Anthem is sung at the top of our voices is one of the most powerful things to behold.

Eventually we were given to go and along with all the other veterans we stood tall and marched our way towards the Cenotaph. There is always a calming moment where the band pulls everyone together, the step aligns and the eyes left is given. A real privilege and moment all that attend savour.

I would like to thank all that marched with us, it has been a real pleasure to have organised another year and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible next year.

Finally, a call for anyone reading this article that would like to join us in 2026. We would love to see new faces as well as those returning alike. I have again applied for 60 places for 2026, fingers and toes crossed we get the allocation. Each year the RBL look to increase numbers for anniversary groups and other associations have events this year. I have said this previously, we may be the Beachley Old Boys by name, but I would urge those younger members to consider joining us. As time passes our numbers sadly reduce, all Ex Beachley-Boys are needed to keep our association strong. Whatever the year you passed through the gates of Beachley, you are part of the future of the Association, and we would love to grow our active membership.





## INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR TICKETS FOR THE CENOTAPH PARADE

### SUNDAY 8th NOVEMBER 2026

To apply for tickets this year we are again using the following links for a more modern and efficient way to apply. Please use the first link if you have previously attended any year since 2020. If you are applying for the very first time, please use the second link for New Applicants. Beachley Old Boys Cenotaph Parade Application 2026 – Fill out form Beachley Old Boys Cenotaph Parade Application 2026 - New Applicant – Fill out form.

If you are unsure or would prefer to complete a hard copy, please email [mattarlow@hotmail.com](mailto:mattarlow@hotmail.com) who will answer any question or send you the application form via email.

Assuming we are allocated enough Tickets and you are allocated a Ticket, you will be issued with a NAMED Electronic "E"Ticket which you will need to bring with you for admission to Horse Guards Parade, (No Ticket and No Photo ID = No Entry).

I will be requesting 60 Tickets for 2026, but if I do not have enough to go round, the tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis to BOBA Members and those who confirmed they wish to attend in 2026. Applicant Names of those who applied last year (2025), will be carried forward as a priority for the 2026 Parade. If you are not a BOBA Member and wish to attend, please request a BOBA application form from me using the email above.

Security has been tightened considerably over the last few years and will no doubt continue to be tightened further in the future. 2026 will be no exception. Your details will need to be submitted to me no later than the end of Aug 2026 hence the defined date for closure of applications.

If you are initially allocated a ticket and then find you cannot attend, please let me know by Phone / Email as soon as possible, so that the place can possibly be allocated to the next person on the Reserve List. Likewise, if you find that you cannot attend during the last couple of weeks before the parade, and even on the day, as we need to have an accurate register on the day.

Matt Arlow

Tel: 07474447554

Cenotaph Parade Co-ordinator 2026 – Beachley Old Boys' Association



### The BOBA Standard

Readers may like to know that, should the family wish it, the BOBA Standard can be present at the funeral of members who have passed on. This is of course subject to the availability of a standard bearer. Please note that where we can assist a donation of £0.30 per mile may be requested to offset the standard bearer's motor vehicle expenses, other than this their services are entirely free of charge. Where a bearer is not available a BOBA member friend can carry out the role.

Alternatively a BOBA flag can be sent directly to the nominated undertaker for use as a coffin drape. Please contact any committee member.

The BOBA standard can be seen on the left of this page; it was paraded at the opening of the Army Apprentice Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum by Ex WO2 (AQMS), Lou Walker, REME, 55A Group.

### Another Chepstow Fact

- The Aust Severn Powerline Crossing runs over the river at Beachley to Aust. A tunnel also runs under the River Severn between Beachley and Aust carrying electric cables.



### Reunion 2026 Booklet

This is available on the "[armyapprenticecollegechepstow.co.uk](https://armyapprenticecollegechepstow.co.uk)" website ready to download.

You will find it on the BOBA membership link.

Those receiving a printed copy of the Echoes will have received the booklet also in printed format.

*Make sure to book your place at the event of the year!*

*BOBA Reunion—18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>st</sup> September 2026*



## BEACHLEY OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REUNIONS

For many years, BOBA members, many with their Ladies, have met annually, usually on the third weekend in September, in the Chepstow area.

In order that you can attend any of the BOBA activities held during the reunion weekend you must be a Member of The Association, The forms for Membership are in the *Army Apprentices College and Beachley Old Boys Association Webpage* "<https://armyapprenticecollegechepstow.co.uk/>" and should be returned to the Membership Secretary, Derek Fox, his details are on the Committee page.

### Reunion Friday

Friday is a social evening, including supper, where Members can enjoy each others company, chat or swing the lamp over a drink or two.

### Reunion Saturday

Saturday the BOBA Heritage Display takes place in the Heritage Centre which is just inside the old School Gate.

Beachley Gate, Beachley Road, Beachley, Glos NP16 7YG

The BOBA AGM will be held at the Beaufort Hotel at 13:30, where BOBA business from the previous and coming year, is discussed and voted upon.

In the evening the **BOBA ANNUAL DINNER** takes place when pre-booked members, including Ladies, Guests and Families sit down for a pleasant three course meal at The Mounon Brook Lodge

. Many have a great time just chatting, reminiscing and enjoying a social drink.

### Reunion Sunday

Sunday rounds off the weekend with a mini 'Parade and March Past' on the parade ground in Beachley Barracks (weather permitting).

The parade is followed by our Founders Day church service in St George's Church.



## **Beachley Old Boys' Association Annual Reunion Weekend 2026**

Applications are now open via the link below for this year's Reunion weekend over the dates 18-20th September 2026. Please ensure you provide all relevant details, including names of any guests you attend to bring.

[Beachley Old Boys Reunion 2026 Application – Fill out form](#)

A hard copy of this form can be requested by emailing: [johnhatchett.home@btinternet.com](mailto:johnhatchett.home@btinternet.com)

Please be advised that this year tickets for the weekend will be sent out via email once payment has been received using one of the following methods:

Bank Transfer (Preferred) – Please use your name and year group as a Ref for this payment.

Bank Account Name. Beachley Old Boys Association

Sort Code. 30-91-89

Account Number. 00098852

Cheque – Made payable to "BEACHLEY OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION"

This year's reunion will consist of the following events:

Friday – Social Supper at Beaufort Hotel (15pp)

Saturday – Heritage Centre Visit, AGM & Formal Dinner at Mounton Brook Lodge (£45pp)

Sunday – Parade and Church Service at Beachley Barracks

The committee are working hard to ensure this year's event is a success and any questions you might have can be directed to the reunion organiser John Hatchet on the email above.

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### **More Chepstow Facts**

- From mediaeval times, Chepstow was the largest port in Wales; its ships sailed as far as Iceland and Turkey, as well as to France and Portugal, and the town was known for its imports of wine..
- Before the 9th century, the Beachley peninsula and the mouth of the Wye were part of the Welsh kingdom of Gwent. A small chapel was founded at what was then the southernmost point of the peninsula - now a tidal island known as St Twrog's Island - traditionally in the 4th century by Tecla, a princess of Gwynedd who retired there as a hermit before being murdered by raiders from the sea. A chapel dedicated to St Twrog, perhaps containing a navigation light, was later built on the rock but was ruined before the 18th century.
- Able Seaman William Charles Williams, who was born in Shropshire but raised in Chepstow, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in World War I. A gun from a captured German U-boat was presented to the town to mark his bravery, and stands in the town's main square beside the War Memorial.
- The old ferry slipway is now used by the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), whose Beachley lifeboat station is next to the slipway. SARA has been established for over 40 years and is considered to be the second largest UK lifeboat association (the largest being the RNLI). SARA currently operates six lifeboat rescue stations on the Severn between Newport and Kidderminster and is staffed entirely by vol-



### OLD ROBOTS.

"Sentimentalists oft tell us that our school days are the best,  
I own I think they are of sense bereft,  
But I'm ready to acknowledge what must always be confessed,  
That they're pleasant to look back on when one's left."

THOSE words, or words to that effect, were published with additional verses in a school magazine of twenty years or more ago. If we do not treat them too seriously, nor yet too lightly, they may serve to illustrate a truth—viz., that most of us enjoy our school days sufficiently well and form such friendships that when the time comes for us to break up with no new term ahead, in many respects at least we regret the parting, and desire as far as possible to keep in touch with the old foundation and the associations there formed.

In September the first batch of Robots are launched out into the bigger world and join their respective stations and units.

This makes the question of an "Old Robot Society" one of immediate concern, for it is obviously an advantage to commence any good thing at the very beginning.

Perhaps the soundest argument and justification for a "Boys' Technical School, Old Boys' Society" is the fact that there is probably no well known school or college in the United Kingdom that has not felt the need and already formed a club of this description.

No doubt it has a sentimental side, but it also contains a decidedly practical one. It provides the necessary machinery for retaining contact with the School itself, as well as between old contemporaries, and assists in the preservation of our much valued *esprit de corps*.

It will support our successors, in that they will know that their progress is watched and that the School honour and traditions are jealously guarded.

It will be the means of assisting in reunions at Beachley and in the various Commands where Robots find themselves.

It will simplify the labours of those who it is hoped will bring old boys' cricket, rugby, and soccer teams to play the School in "past versus present" matches.

As the School grows in age, the Association will grow in numbers.

Her present full complement of acting tradesmen in round figures is a thousand, and each year she will be exporting and importing a third of that total.

Thus she is bound to become an increasing influence in all branches of the Army's life—social, sporting, and technical.

In four years' time there will be a minimum of thirteen hundred Robots, who have passed their apprenticeship and qualified as tradesmen under the aegis of the B.T.S., in His Majesty's Army, and each succeeding year will see those numbers augmented.

When the time comes, twenty, thirty, forty years on, for some to leave the Service, but let us hope all on pension, they will be Robots still, and we believe no more ready than now to sever the old connections, for "once a Robot always a Robot" is the slogan of the B.T.S.

NOTE.—It is suggested we join the "Old Robot Society" at the end of our last term.

### THE OLD ROBOT SOCIETY, 1926.

#### President :

Lieut.-Colonel V. T. R. FORD, D.S.O.

#### Vice-Presidents :

Major F. P. BARNES, D.S.O., O.B.E.

#### Committee :

Lieut. B. R. GOOD.

Capt. H. DANIELS, V.C., M.C.

A/Cpl. S. HAGGER.

#### Hon. Secretaries :

Rev. H. W. HUTCHINGS, M.A., M.C., C.F.

W.O.I. G. A. WOOLGAR.

#### Treasurer :

Capt. H. M. CADELL.

#### RULES AND REGULATIONS.

1. The Society shall be called "The Old Robot Society" and shall consist of past members of the Boys' Technical School and such present members of the Staff as are necessary for filling offices in the Society.

2. The objects of the Society shall be the following :—

- (a) The retention of fellowship among past members of the School.
- (b) The keeping in touch with the School.
- (c) The promoting of anything that may make for the School's welfare.



## THE BOYS' TECHNICAL SCHOOL JOURNAL.

101

3. An Annual General Meeting of the Society, of which fourteen days' notice is to be given, shall be held in the month of July at the School.

4. The Annual General Meeting shall appoint for the ensuing year the Committee necessary for carrying out the objects of the Society.

5. The Committee shall hold meetings once a quarter to transact the business of the Society. Three members shall form a quorum.

6. In the case of a vacancy in any office, the Committee may appoint a member of the Society to fill the position up to the time of the Annual General Meeting.

7. Any Old Robot can become a member of the Society by signifying his wish to do so to the Secretary and by paying the annual subscription, subject, however, to election by the Committee.

8. The Committee shall have power to elect past and present members of the Staff, who shall be balloted for at their next meeting.

9. Honorary members may be elected other than members of the School or Staff.

10. Members shall be responsible for notifying the Hon. Secretary of their address and any change of the same.

11. The subscription of the Society shall be 2s. 6d. per annum, and shall become due on Jan. 1st each year, and allowance shall be made for members joining between March and December.

12. The Club subscription shall entitle members to the School Magazine.

13. Subscribers may, if they prefer, become life members upon payment of a fee of £2 10s., if at any time they desire so to compound.

14. Any member whose subscription shall be more than three months in arrear shall be liable to have his name removed from the list of members by the Committee, at their discretion.

15. The Committee shall have power to refuse election of any potential member without disclosing any reason.

16. At Committee meetings the chair shall be taken by the President or by a Vice-President, or in their absence by a member of the Committee chosen for the occasion.

In the event of votes being equally divided on any question, the Chairman shall be

entitled to a casting vote in addition to his own.

17. In the event of any member's conduct being considered detrimental to the interest of the Society, a majority of two-thirds of the members present at the Annual or a Special General Meeting shall have power to expel such member and all subscriptions paid by him shall be forfeited.

18. An Annual Reunion of Old Robots shall be held at the School in the month of July and the Annual General Meeting shall take place at the same date.

19. These Rules and Regulations may be altered at any General Meeting.

HON. SEC.

**"THE BEECHLEE REGATTER."**

BY BILLY BUNTER.

The Beachlee Regatter iz an annual event witch only cums off wunce inn a year. Wilst the Bee-Tea-Ess has been heer, only too times has it cum off.

The best event at the regatter iz orr waz the wether. The goled orr silver prize band iz the nekst best item on the profeshunal Gramme (I don't no wye peepel always shorten that wurd). Wherr thay gets the prizes I can't tell 'ee. Ennyhow they provise the musick.

Thay who run the show hav hud the commin gump to put inn sum thing witch iz the thurd best event about the 'gatter. It iz knone az tuggowarr, witch I thines meeself iz a miss-inn-ter-pretted name for it, cawse when tuggowarr was inventid a Skotch man (at the furst internashunal) must hav showted: "Tugg awa', tug awa'" and so it waz miss-etc. etc.

Ennyways wether a Skotch man did orr did not showt that out, itz a Skotch man's platune witch wins thiss event.

Ices arr, offcorss verree promenand at the gatter and the merchants sing merree chants az folloes:—

Mudd and watter evrywherr  
Wherr boise (and girls) do gaize  
At the feets of sum posh diver  
Wilst the goleden prize band plaize.

EDITOR: "Look here, what's all this patter."  
"Oh! Don't you kno, sir? The grate regatter."



# Our School

BY THE COMMANDANT.

## OUR SCHOOL.

I have had a really hard time of it lately, wracking my brains as to what on earth I can write about for this issue.

You see, there's not very much left concerning the School for me to discuss, as we now have so many willing scribes who give you full details of the various sports and matters of personal interest. So it seems that my role must be that of moralising, which I am sure bores you horribly.

But the Editor is a jolly good chap and I know he would be the first to tell me to "quit pulling the sob stuff," as they say on the movies, if he really thought the space my article occupied was required for other things.

Anyhow, I will let you off lightly this time and limit myself to just a wee bit towards the end, which you can forget during Christmas leave.

I will first outline what I consider the chief features in what appears to me to have been an unusually uninteresting term.

You will pardon my referring to the weather, but I simply must include it as one of the outstanding causes of defective vision, which has made most of us see everything in colours of blue—varying in shade according to the volume of the downpour. We are fairly acclimatised to Beachley weather by now, but even the cheeriest optimists are apt to experience a certain dilution of spirits when rain falls incessantly day after day and week after week.

However, it takes a great deal to damp the spirits of our lads, and as long as the cross-bars were visible and waders were not necessary, games carried on.

It is going to be an interesting eliminating competition for the Army Cup this season amongst our teams, and I should not like to say now which one I fancy to represent the School. The Staff teams are not experiencing the same run of fortune as last season, but that is only to be expected.

Each team has gone up into a higher league where the standard of football is superior to what they experienced before.

The Seniors have been meeting some good

class teams and have had thoroughly enjoyable games and a good reception.

Their mantle in the local league has fallen on the Juniors, who last season had runaway victories to their account in its Junior Division, but find the opposition now much stronger.

However, if a team monopolises a competition, interest is soon killed and a change of position does no harm.

The game's the main thing, and suffice it to say that both teams are maintaining the reputation of the School for sportsmanship.

The re-organisation of companies has temporarily upset the Platoon Championship owing to platoons having to be re-numbered, but it will soon get going again with redoubled interest.

The new system has many advantages. With the exception of "A" Company, which is now entirely composed of apprentices of 18 years of age, who have their own competitions and get some games, which formerly they did not do, owing to being barred from the platoon competitions, each company contains a senior, a middle, and a junior group.

Each is thereby enabled to have an interest in both senior and junior competitions, instead of it being a foregone conclusion.

Furthermore, a company will always maintain a percentage of senior boys instead of being reduced entirely to newly joined ones every three years and having to build up its prestige all over again. The transfer of senior boys as non-commissioned officers from one company to another is also avoided, as material is available in each.

It has been impossible to adopt this system before, as the Staff only arrived with each group. But I am certain that once the new order of things has been got used to, the benefits will be felt.

The inspection by the G.O.C. was very creditable, both to Staff and Boys, and was one of the most thorough we have had.

Naturally there is not sufficient time to go into much detail with a large unit such as ours, but practically every department of the administrative branch was visited and the General expressed himself as highly satisfied.



### New Robots for Old

Do you ever wish that you had held onto The Robots covering your time at Beachley? Well you can now get them in PDF (Portable Document Format) on a disc. As the result of a request there is now an ongoing project to scan all of the issues of The Robot from the first edition in 1924. The scanned copies covering your time will be put on a CD along with the first three years worth of issues. The cost of the CD including P&P is £6.00, an element of which will go towards repairing the books holding the original copies.

To obtain a CD with the issues covering your time at Beachley please send your cheque for £6.00 (made Payable to 'Beachley Old Boys' Association') with

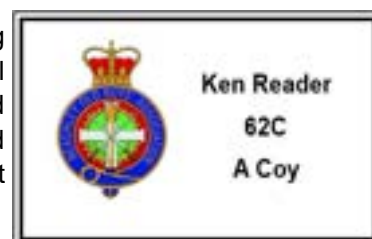
- ◆ Your name and group
- ◆ Address
- ◆ Month and year of arrival—month and year of departure

to Ken Reader (contact details below). Please note that there may be a delay if the editions covering your time have not yet been scanned.



### 2026 Reunion ID Badge and Holder

Once again we will be producing a reunion name holder for members attending the reunion this year. They are of a simple design on laminated card, which will be inserted into the clear plastic sleeve envelope with a press frog clip and secure safety pin mounting. At £1.50 each they are good quality with a coloured badge and border. Order yours on the reunion application form please and pick it up when you arrive for registration at the Beaufort Hotel.



**Lt Col (Retd) Ken Reader OBE BEM Minst RE**  
**Carrick House, 8 Cross Lane, Little Downham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2TJ**  
**Telephone: 01353 699096 Mobile: 07752209941**  
**email ~ kenreader@msn.com**

**Photos and Memorabilia.** It is hoped that the members of **76 Groups** can search their attics and albums for items and send them to Tony Waite for display at their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion in September 2026.

**Honours and Awards Book.** We maintain a record of the Honours and Awards presented to ex-Beachley boys, GC, MM, OBE, MSM, MBE, BEM and MiD etc. It records the individual and his years of service at Beachley. Anyone having decorations please notify a Committee member with the details.

**Missing Passing out Parade Programmes.** Our earliest held programme is for 45B's Passing Out where **Field Marshall Montgomery** was the Reviewing Officer. **We are still looking for** any programmes prior to 45B and for 47A, 48A – 49A, 51A, 52A, 59A – 62C, 63A, 64A, 64B, 64C, 65B, 65C, 66A, 66B, 68A, 69C, 70B - 81, 83 - 84 and 86-87. We are happy to copy any that you might have so that you can retain the original.

**Missing Robots.** We are missing the Spring 1977 issue, Summer 1979 issue, Summer 1980 issue and Spring 1981 issue. Any copies would be appreciated.

**Anthony Waite**  
**Sutton Lodge, 22 Seymour Street, Wellington, Somerset TA21 8JU**  
**Telephone: 01823 669336 Mobile: 07788 581775**  
**email ~ Anthony.waite22ss@btinternet.com**



**The BOBA Shop**

The following items are available from our shop.

Item	Notes	Price
Fleece Jackets	Sizes M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL	
"The Beachley Boys" Book	A story written by Brian Elks	
The Beachley Apprentices Story	Anecdotes by Apprentices compiled by Brian Elks	
The Story of the Army Apprentices at Beachley Camp 1924-1994	Official College History	
Tidenham Parish Churches Book *	Edited by Carol Clammer & Keith Underwood (£3.00 P&P)	
Mugs	Single Badge AAS / BOBA , Dual Badge	
Embroidered BOBA Blazer Badges		
Embroidered BOBA Blazer Badges	(Patch Pocket)	
BOBA Lapel Badges		
Cap Badge GSC		
Cap Badge KC		
Cap Badge QC		
Cap Badge QC. Anodised		
Wall Plaques	AAS or AAC	
Wall Plaques	BOBA	
BOBA Car Sticker		
BOBA Wire Wound Blazer Badge		
AAS Wire Wound Blazer Badge		
AAC Wire Wound Blazer Badge		
BOBA Ties		
BOBA Bow Ties		

Prices are published on the web page.

\* Covers all Beachley Churches.

All items can be viewed on the BOBA website and are available from the BOBA Shop Manager. Payment must be made with the order and can be:

- Cash
- Cheque (payable to "Beachley Old boys' Association")
- PayPal transfer

Extra fees apply for packing & postage and PayPal use.

Place orders at [admin@beachley.org](mailto:admin@beachley.org)

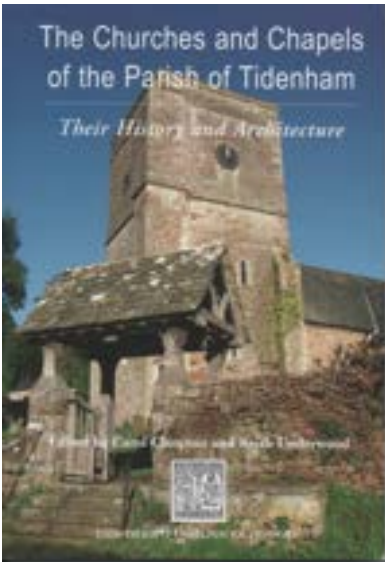
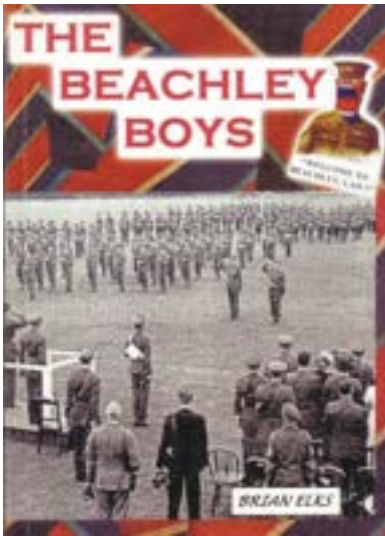
Additional items  
illustrated on page 53

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Details of Robot CDs on  
page 48

Contact: Chris Rickets if you are unable to use the internet (details on Page 2).





Latest additions to the Shop List are as follows, all to order + £3.00 p&p (Small quantity of some items in stock)



- BOBA T Shirts @ £10.00 each in Navy & other Colours, S,M,L, XL, XXL
- BOBA Polo Shirts @ £12.00 each in Navy & other Colours, S,M,L, XL, XXL
- BOBA Sweat Shirts @ £15.00 each in Navy & other Colours, S,M,L, XL, XXL
- The New Car Stickers @ £2.00 + £1.00 p&p (8.7cm/2.5inch dia—see photo on right)

