



Black Ants 51 Newsletter

Welcome to the first newsletter for Black Ants 51. I do not know how many of these I will be able to produce in a 12 month period because it will depend on having enough news to fill a few pages and how much time it takes for each one.

Most news worthy items are on the website so I hope you will bear with me for reproducing stuff you have already seen on there. Unfortunately there are quite a few people who do not have access to computers so the old news will be aimed at them, and who knows it may be that there are bits that you have missed.

I have produced this in rather large type because many of us are getting a bit old in the tooth and have slightly poorer eyesight than we had 40 years ago.

Since the last reunion we have only had three new contacts. These are:
Malcolm White (Sgt Chalky).
Alastair Brownlie (Jock)
Tony Mitchell (Scouse)

Their details can be sent to any one who would like to catch up with them.

Alan (Beef) Baker

Reunions 2008 and 2009

Here is a picture of our first reunions for your scrap book.

2008



2009



I have not put the old pictures against the up to date ones on this so you will have to try to work it out for your self.

The next reunion should be the weekend of February 27-28 2010 so if you plan on going please make sure you book your Hotel rooms at the King Charles Hotel as early as possible. (I usually book in October) The hotel some times gets booked for other Reunions and events like weddings etc.

Hopefully there will be even more attending this next one because the contact list is growing. Also one or two who could not make it this year because of prior commitments and various illnesses should make it this time.

Singapore Holiday

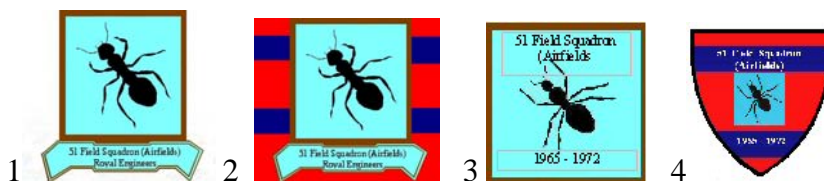
I will be going to Singapore this year in November. The plan is to pop up to Seletar to see if I can get a look around before they destroy the place. The planed demolition is for 2010 so unless they have started earlier I might get one last Look. Keep your fingers crossed for me.

Booklet

For the last two reunions I have produced a booklet with pictures of the Squadron and places we went to. I hope to do the same again this year and with a bit of luck I have learned from the mistakes I made with the first two. When all is said and done I am not a publisher and can only do my best.

Badges

I also produced some pin badges last year and hope to do the same again this year but with a different design. I have several designs in mind and below are the ones so far. If you have any preference please let me know.



Enrolment in the Black Ants 51

We are slowly getting a few members. The take up has been a bit slow but I did start it at the time of year when every one has the Council tax to pay along with water bills etc so I suppose it was a bad time to begin anything new. Membership at the time of writing is up to 12 with the promise from 6 others that their subscription, "is on its way" as soon as they can remember to do it.

Cheques for the Black Ants should be made out to "Black Ants 51" and subscriptions for this initial period are £20.00. If enough money is raised we should be able to drop this next year.

My Address is

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Edmonton
London
N18 1NX

Tel 02088035824

Write To Me

I would like to start a letters page in the next Newsletter so feel free to email, phone. Or write me a letter. It doesn't have to be about the Squadron as long as it is kept clean I will publish anything. Maybe you don't like my style or would just like to sound off about something. Maybe a favourite charity that you would like to advertise the scope is endless. I will edit any obvious spelling mistakes etc. (although some of you may find that my English is lacking and could do with editing before I start editing any one else.)

Pictures on the Website

There are a lot of pictures on the site that do not have names to them or even where they were taken. If there are any that you would like to comment on please do so as your input would be very helpful. I have attempted to fill in the gaps but there is still a great many pictures without names or captions.

That's it folks hope the first newsletter has been OK.



Black Ants 51 Newsletter

This is the second newsletter for Black Ants 51. I have attempted to write this over about one month so that ideas could be put to paper as soon as they come up. Trying to get everything down in a short period of time seems to mean I lose the ideas I get on the spur of the moment. Old age is catching up and I seem to forget things almost as quickly as I think of them.

I get some very informative emails from time to time so the plan from now on is to incorporate them in to the newsletter (with the permission of the people concerned of course).

Some of the lads have been around a bit and most have had interesting jobs so it should be worth putting the details down on paper for posterity.

The Jalan Kayu Trail

This is a copy of an email from Daniel Lim who I have been in contact with as I try to find out what is happening to Seletar.

He lives in Jalan Kayu and is part of the school history project for the Village.

I logged on to the Jalan Kayu trail website and ended up sending him some photos from our time there

***Dear Alan,
The pictures were wonderful.***

The Seletar camp isn't going to be totally demolished. The government of Singapore has decided to preserve part of the camp.

***You can read the report here in our blog:
<http://jalankayutrail.blogspot.com/2007/06/jalan-kayu-and-seletar-camp-are-set-to.html>***

In a nutshell, the place will still maintain some of its old charm but it will be completely commercialised for the area near the airstrip and the area where the black and white bungalows stand. Many aerospace companies like Eurocopter will be setting up their Asian operations here at Seletar.

A part of the camp will still be out of bounds because it is occupied by the Singapore military. I believe that would be the area where the

Seletar Sailing Club used to be. So that area is out of bounds to all civilians.

Do take a look at the link above.

Best Regards,

Daniel Lim

News from Round and about

Gareth Davies

I got a phone call from Gareth (Taff) Davies. He was working in India and I lost contact with him for a while because he had changed jobs. He went to Huston for a while but he has now moved to Singapore for nine months. I hope to meet up with him when I go for my Holiday in November.

Trying to find Jeep Jackson

I have been trying for some time to find (amongst others) Jeep Jackson.

During a conversation with Frank Hughes we sort of came to the conclusion that Jeeps real name was Stan. After finishing the conversation I did the usual (for me) check of the phone listings. I discovered that there were at least two pages of S Jacksons in the lists. So rather than plough through this I looked up the local news/radio for the Wythenshawe area of Manchester and left an email at each one I found.

The result of this was a live interview with one of the presenters. If anything comes of this I will let you all know.

I search websites, check phone books and look into family names on genealogy sites to check on names we are looking for. It takes time but I enjoy doing it. Sometimes it is frustrating when I think I have found some one and it turns out to be an old lady who tells me her life story. I do enjoy chatting to people but it sidetracks me from the main objective.

John (Nobby) Clark

John and his wife went to Singapore at the beginning of June and managed to get what may be the last look at the old Seletar. A Singapore Engineer Officer escorted him round the camp. The Officer wine and dined John and his wife in the Officers Mess later. The Officers mess stands where the old RAF yacht club used to be.

John sent me this account of his visit .

On arrival at Seletar, The Singapore Army Forces guardroom is a long way down Piccadilly Road from the original guardroom as we know it, incidentally the old guardroom come fire

piquet is not being knockdown, nor the admin block next to it, at this moment it time it's going to part of the history of Seletar.

One of the eye openers is between Jalan Kayu & entering the gate of Seletar, you have two lane express motorway which is underneath a large roundabout build I think on a bridge, mind bogging!

On arriving at the guardroom my wife & I are asked to show our passports & hand over our camera's plus do some admin before we are allowed in. It must have been our lucky day, apart from the fact it was June very hot & even the locals don't like it because the sergeant on duty was able to get someone to take us around the camp in a car, this gentleman was the maintenance camp commandant.

Of the buildings still standing that I saw as of 1968 are The Medical Office, still used as a medical office,

the cinema, Block B & D, Cook House still used as it was built for, Malcolm Club use now by the local military for their recreation. The yacht club now has been rebuilt as the officer mess, my wife & I were invited in for cold drinks, we met the military commander of Seletar & the military commanding officer of the Bridging Engineers, we were most welcome. The sports ground is a little smaller than it was, the swimming pool I'm sorry to say is in a bad state, wired fenced around & decaying rapidly. The church that most people got married in, including myself still stands but I don't know what it's used for.

I would have liked to have stayed longer but didn't want to impose ourselves on the generosity on the gentleman as it was his dinner break, so we left & went to Jalan Kayu.

One other thing I forgot to say, outside of the military section of Seletar there are building & roadwork's on the Piccadilly Road, so this could be in preparation of the large construction & demolition to come of Seletar.

I would suggest to anyone who went to Seletar before the end of the year, to take a camera in with your escort & take as many photographs as you can, because this was my great mistake, as I was allowed to have a camera but being taken around in a car didn't have the opportunity to take any.

Taken from an email from John Clark June 09

Below are two of the photos John emailed to me.



Paul Coddington



This is the picture I got off the councils web site of paul.

I managed to track Paul down after a few leads from John Farrow. We exchanged emails and this is an extract from Paul's email to me.

I left Waterbeach in 1969 and went on to Barton Stacey with the specialist teams. Managed to avoid Long Kesh and elected to go to Germany again - having just got married!

Left the Army in 1971 and moved back to my hometown of Doncaster. Went to Leeds University and then joined the Probation Service retiring early at the age of 56 some 9 years ago. I still do some counselling work in schools and I visit Doncaster Prison as a part-time chaplain!

In 1999 I was elected as a Councillor in Doncaster, and, from May 2008 to June 2009 (last Friday actually) was the Civic Mayor of Doncaster! Quite an elevation for a Sapper!

We had some fun dining in with "B" Battery Royal Horse Artillery officers at Larkhill a few months ago. My Civic chauffeur was a Sgt in the RHA so it was great having him to drive us for the year in office! Still a councillor and recently elected to become leader of our Liberal Democrat group on Doncaster Council.

I sent a few email addresses to Paul and I think he is now busy renewing old acquaintances.

Black Ants 51

The membership has grown to 19 members with promises of more to come. To be honest I did not expect too much when I started "***Black Ants 51***" as most people do not really like things that entail cash payments of any kind. It's a built in mechanism that keeps most of us solvent and able to pay our bills. So I have been impressed by the response so far. It will all help with the payments for the hotel venue for the reunion.

I hope that the membership cards I have sent out do not look too amateurish.

Latest additions to our contacts list

I have at last managed to contact Pip Harris thanks to some help from Len Millward. I spoke to him on the phone and he seemed quite chirpy considering he is a bit older than some of us. He says that all being well he will be at the next reunion.

During a telephone conversation with Bill Renton he mentioned that he might be able to contact the following people, Jock Hogan, Ricky Richardson and Alan Warne. So with a bit of luck we will have a few more contacts for the next newsletter. I know from conversations at the reunion that these are lads that several people would like to connect up with

I had an email from the USA. It was Tony Allen's Son. He was trying to get his Dad into computers and in the process of showing him what could be done with a computer they came across the web site. Tony was staying with his Son in America at the time but is now back in UK. I have spoken to him on the phone and he seems in fine spirits. As of yet he is not on line but I have a phone number and address if any one would like to contact him. Tony was a Cpl on MT when we were in Singapore but left the Army when we came back to Waterbeach.

Spot The Difference

I have long been a fan of this kind of thing when I have time to waste in doctor's waiting rooms or for interviews. They will usually have some thing like it in the cheap magazines or newspapers. Some things are a bit harder than others to spot but there are 5 differences.

The original photo on the left is from Taff Fisher's photo collection. It was taken at the end of our trip in the Malayan Jungle.



A few notes

This is the end of our second newsletter and I hope it has been worth reading and looking at.

I am not the world's best writer so there may be those of you out there who can do a better job or, at least contribute a few stories that would help make future letters a little more interesting, please feel free to submit stuff for publication. If you have something to add but do not want to write long stories etc, just send me a few facts and I will pad them out for the newsletter.

Any ideas for the future newsletters would be welcome.

During the time I have been putting this together there have been quite a few lads in Killed in action. My heart goes out to their Families. I feel myself torn between what a good job the lads are doing and the question of us being there in the first place. As usual British troops work with less than adequate equipment while politicians speak platitudes and shed crocodile tears while denying them the money to do a better job. We need a few more politicians that have forces

experience before things can change. You will notice that very few (If Any) politicians have Sons or Daughters who are in the front line.

I am not sure when the next news letter will be published as it depends largely on what new material I can come up with. I will try to do something every two months or so as long as I have something to write about.

Telephone 02088035824 Website www.beef-51.britishforces.com email alan.baker55@yahoo.com

Black Ants 51

Issue No 3

Newsletter



Welcome to the third issue of the newsletter. I hope you all enjoyed the first two issues. Some people said they did not recognise all of the people mentioned in the newsletters. This is understandable because depending on the years you were with the Squadron and also on the places you went would dictate the people you knew.

It was possible to be in the Squadron for 3 or 4 years and not get to meet everyone because of detachments, Annual Leave and courses. This said there are Characters that everyone appears to remember like Billy Eathorne, George Dempster, Ned Needham and of course SSM Kean to name but a few. Some are remembered for the parties and some for their prominence in various escapades that are burned into our memories.

I try to put in as big a cross section of Squadron interest as possible. This will probably include stuff from the website. Not every one has access to a computer so this kind of content is for them. So bear with me because I am sure you will find something of interest from some part of the letters sooner or later.

The Website has a few new pictures on it over the last month or so and I have promises of more to come. I will try at some future date to compile a sort of album with as many pictures as I can cram in. I am not sure yet if it will be just an electronic album or if I will be able to print it out. As I now have a lot of pictures a print out could work out very costly.

Keep the photos coming and send me emails on what you have done since leaving the Squadron. It doesn't matter if you have been round the world or just plodded along in a boring job we would all like to find out what you have been up to and its just nice to hear from people who were part of our formative years. It's over forty years ago since we were in Singapore and we need to swap memories before it gets too late.

While looking round a few sites on the web I found these pictures of Seletar that were taken last year some time. I am not sure of the copyrights on the pictures but if any one wants to sue me I will give them 100% of the money I make on them. (So they would get zero).



The Expressway Seletar Gate



Two pics of Seletar gate looks like these were taken at a different time to the others

As you can see, “the times they are a changing” The expressway apparently runs through part of the old west camp. I hope to be able to give a more informed view after my visit in November.

Steam Engines

Roy Pinnock went to a steam exhibition for a day out and came across an engine with a Royal Engineers badge on the front. He made a few enquires but as of yet we do not have a lot of information about it. Roy went to the RE museum to see if he could find out more about it and after discussing it with the people there, they are keen to acquire it for the museum. On the next page are three of the photos he sent to me.



Camping trip Hadrian's Wall

I was not sure I should put this into the newsletter, as strictly speaking it has nothing to do with 51 or the Royal engineers. However it is undoubtedly an Engineering project although it was built some 2000 years ago.

I was foolish enough to commit myself to a camping holiday in the area of the wall. I must say that the joys of the actual camping were totally lost on me. The upside of the holiday was that I got to see the wall and one or two old roman sites. As I had never seen the area before it was all "new" to me.

The wall its self is quite an achievement and you look at it and marvel at the sheer scope of the project. When walking round some of the old ruins of roman villas, forts and towns you can see civil and military engineering at its best. Apparently it took decades to complete. (I guess that's because they did not have 51 on the job)

Below are some of the pictures taken at Hadrian's wall.



Me, and I felt twice as bad as I look



The photos do not really do justice to the site. All I can say is if you have not seen the wall and it is well worth a visit.

Here are some more of john Clarks photos taken when he was on Holiday in Singapore earlier on this year. This time they are of Jalan Kayu.



New Contacts

I have spoken to our old Sgt Major from Singapore Mr Keane. He and his wife appear to be well and he will be 86 this year. He retired as Captain so he had a successful Career. They live in Yorkshire.

He remembers 51 Sqn with fondness and in particular our very good football team in Singapore.

His Son Stephen contacted me first and I have had several emails and a long telephone conversation with him. He says He may get down to our next reunion as a representative of his family. He will of course be welcome as families were still a part of 51. Indeed the support of families is what helped make the whole Army experience so enjoyable.

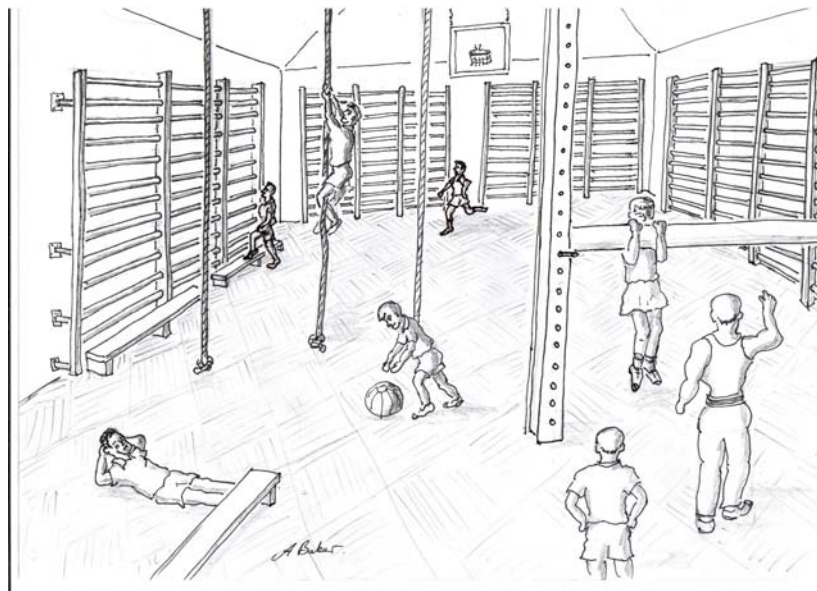
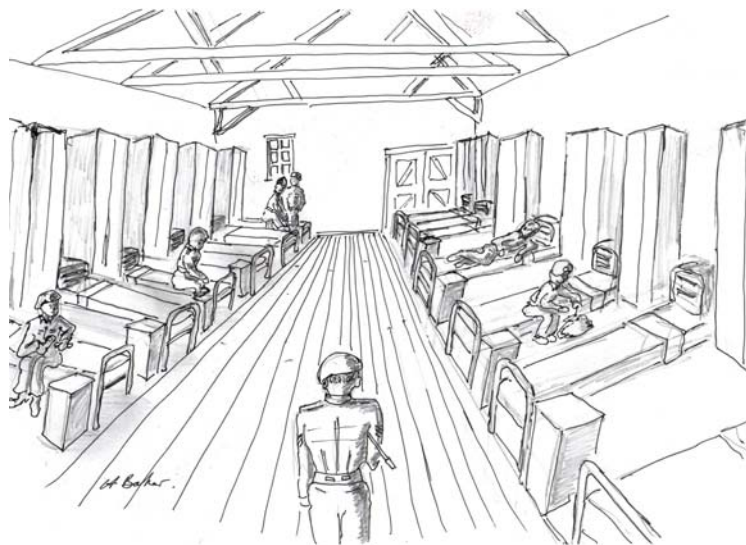
Gordon (Jock) Hoggan is the latest addition to our contacts list. Bill Renton had already got contact with him and he kindly passed on my email to him.

Spot the difference

Well some of you liked the last one so I thought I would try another. This time there are 6 changes. The original is on the Top and is a photo of George Dempster and Ned Needham in their pipe band regalia.



One of my Hobbies is doodling and drawing pictures. Along with many other married men I have to suffer the nightly torture of CorrieEndersDale on the TV. Usually I turn my back on the TV and go on the computer but occasionally I sit down and rough out a picture of some sort. I do not claim to be any kind of an artist but some of the stuff I do may bring back a few memories for people. Below are two of the ones I did recently.



Black Ants 51

We have a total of 27 members now so things are looking up.

The next reunion is Saturday 27th February 2010 at the King Charles Hotel Gillingham. The intention is to show a few slides and anything else we may come up with to give the day a bit of interest. We will have a buffet meal during the day and for those that want it there will be a proper sit down meal in the Hotel restaurant on the Saturday evening. Ron has been able to negotiate a few discounts for the 51 Reunion on the Hotel rooms and maybe on the evening meal if there are enough of us. Don't forget to book early as the Hotel gets quite busy with all kinds of functions and Reunions.

Below is a menu from the Hotel.

KING CHARLES

HOTEL

Suggested Buffet Menus

Prices valid January - November 2009

The following are recommended as suitable for any evening function:

Finger Buffet 1.

- Assorted Cocktail Sandwiches
(Prawns, Ham, Beef, Cheese, Egg, Tuna and Salad)
- Cocktail Sausage Rolls
- Breaded Party Eggs
- Mini Sausages
- Golden Chicken Fingers
- Cheese & Onion Goujons
- Pork Pie
- Crisps & Tortilla Chips

£6.75 per person

Finger Buffet 3.

- Open Cocktail Rolls
- Sausage Rolls
- Cocktail Chicken Sate with Peanut Sauce
- Cocktail Vegetable Sate
- Golden Chicken Fingers
- Assorted Quiche
- Crudites with Garlic Dip
(Strips of raw Carrots, Celery, Cucumber and Peppers)
- Crisps and Tortillas
- Mini Patisserie Dessert Platter or Fresh Fruit Bowl

£8.50 per person

Finger Buffet 2.

- Assorted Cocktail Sandwiches
- Cocktail Sausage Rolls
- Mini Vegetable Spring Rolls
- BBQ Chicken Drumsticks
- Potato Skins with Sour Cream & Chive Dip
- Crudities & Dips
- Cheese and Fruit on Sticks
- Crisps and Tortilla Chips

£7.50 per person

Fork Buffet 4.

- French Bread and Butter
- Cheese Board
- Ham Cornets
- Japanese Breaded Prawns
- Tomato & Basil Quiche
- Wings of Fire
- Hot Buttered New Potatoes
- Chef's Garden Salad
- Mini Dessert Platter or Fresh Fruit Bowl
- Crisps and Tortilla Chips

£10.75 per person

To enhance your function, we can provide arrival drinks for your guests:

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------|
| Bucks Fizz (sparkling wine & orange juice) - £2.80 per glass | House Champagne | £29.50 |
| Kir (sparkling wine & blackcurrant) - £3.30 | Laurent Perrier | £42.50 |
| Pimm no. 1 (with lemonade, fruit, ice and mint) - £3.30 per glass | Moet | £47.90 |
| Sparkling Wine (Asti) - £15.00 per bottle (approx 6 glasses) | Bollinger Special Cuvee | £56.50 |
| Jug of Fresh Orange Juice - £5.50 per jug (approx 6 glasses) | Pink Champagne | £67.50 |
| Red or White Wine by the bottle from £11.50 per bottle (approx 6 glasses) | (Laurent Perrier) | |

The following items may be added to any of the above buffets:

| | | | |
|---|--------|--|------------|
| Whole Dressed Salmon (serves approx 80) | £90.00 | Crisps & Savoury Snacks (per table) | £4.50 |
| Smoked Salmon (approx 15 ptns side cut) | £40.00 | Sweets (per table) | £4.00 |
| Tiger Prawns with Marie Rose Dip (70) | £43.00 | | |
| Sushi (36 pieces with dips) | £55.00 | <u>Desserts</u> | |
| Seafood Sticks (per 60) | £22.00 | Chocolate Profiteroles (per 24) | £25.00 |
| | | Mini Dessert Platter (3 per ptn) | £ 1.80 ptn |
| Mixed Garden Salad (approx. 25 ptns) | £15.00 | Chocolate Fudge Cake (16 ptns) | £22.00 |
| Vegetable Pasta Salad (25 ptns) | £15.00 | Black Forest Gateau (18 ptns) | £24.00 |
| Coleslaw (25 ptns) | £18.00 | Strawberry Gateau (18 ptns) | £24.00 |
| Waldorf Salad (25 ptns) | £22.00 | Cheesecake (16 ptns) | £22.00 |
| Buttered New Potatoes (25 ptns) | £25.00 | (strawberry, chocolate, blueberry or mandarin) | |

The next newsletter should be in time for Christmas. (as long as I can find enough to make it interesting.)

www.beef-51.britishforces.com

Black Ants 51 News letter

Issue No 4



Welcome once again to the newsletter for Ex 51 members. Again some of you will find that a lot of the content is already on the website but there are still a lot of people who have not got access to a computer so they only see what is in the newsletter.

I have just been to Singapore for a holiday and below is a copy of the blog that I put on the website and I have added a few photos so illustrate the blog.

Back in Blighty

Well here I am back in Old Blighty and the winter weather. I had a great 30 days in Singapore and loved every minute of it.

As I reported in the last blog I had a trip round some of our old haunts and things have changed quite a lot. The old camp at Seletar has shrunk to about a 16th of its old size. Part of the old runway is used as a small airfield but most of the land has been taken over by civilian firms for various enterprises. Around the area of the old C of E Church is a country club with a swimming pool.

The old RAF headquarters is still standing and will be kept as part of the heritage programme as will the old Guard room. The remaining bit of the camp still has a few of the old blocks and a few of the old buildings like the Sgts Mess, the NAAFI with the cookhouse below and the Malcolm Club. The Cookhouse is still used by the Singapore Engineers who are billeted there.

The trip to Serangoon Gardens was a bit of a disappointment in some ways as new development seems to be creeping in at a fast rate but it is still recognisable.

The top part of Jalan Kayu nearest the camp has gone to make way for new Road works. However the bottom part remains and is still more or less the same.

I will be making a page with all the new pictures sometime this week so you will get a better idea of the changes from them.

I met up with Keith Thomas and his wife Anne who were on a three-day stopover on his way to Bali. We took a trip to the Kanji War memorial and the old ford

factory where the British signed their surrender in WW2.

I also met up with Gareth (Taff) Davies and his wife in China town. Gareth is on a nine-month posting after coming out of retirement for the third time.

A trip to Changi proved to be a bit of a disappointment as it is now called Changi Village and is used to milk tourists of their hard earned cash. It is quite pleasant to walk round the place and sit down to the kind of meals we used to have after a night on the booze in the old days.

Most of the coastline of Singapore has changed because of land reclamation projects and I reckon there is growth in land area of about 10%. The east coast has changed but it has been made into a long beautiful beach where you can take walks or bike rides and stop at food areas for some wonderful Makan.

There are now a total of three causeways into Malaya and discussions for another some time in the future. Singapore does not have to rely on Malaya for water now as they have built several new reservoirs and are even using desalination plants.

Overall it was a very nice stay in Singapore and at the end of it we were reluctant to come home. In the end though its nice to have your own bed back and the family round you.

Beef



Old Gate



New Gate



Showing my Son my old Billet





Cook House



D block (Sgts Mess to Right)



All that remains of the Swimming pool



The Sports field



Gareth (Taff) Davies & Wife



Keith Thomas & Anne

These are just a few of the photos that can be seen on the website. My apologies to Gareth and his wife, I have forgotten his wife's name. I will rectify that as soon as possible.

The venue at the King Charles Hotel has been confirmed. If you are staying over one or two nights at the Hotel there will be a small discount on the room for members of 51 as long as you tell them when you book in. Also slight savings on the buffet and the evening meal. The idea being that those of us that want a sit down evening meal could pre order and get discounts.

Again we will have a few slides and pictures and hopefully a little booklet with some of the latest pics that have been supplied by members. If I can come up with anything else to provide an interest I will do so.

The actual date of the Reunion is the Saturday 27th February 2010. Start time 1000hrs. I have booked in at the Hotel for the nights of, Friday 26th and Saturday 27th.

Keith Thomas sent me a picture of his Grandson who has joined the Engineers. Keith is quite rightly proud of his Grandson but wondered if I could spot something odd in the picture. So there are no prizes but see if you can notice anything.



To be fair his NCOs should have spotted something before the photo was taken. Good luck to the lad and all our best wishes for his future. Hope he enjoys his time with the Engineers.

On this page I have put another spot the difference as some people did say they liked the last two. There are at least 7 differences. The original Picture is NAAFI break during operation Pipe Major.



As Christmas and New Year draw near I would like to send all our best wishes for the season and the coming year to all the Lads and Lassies serving overseas. Hope you all get home safely. For those of us that still say a prayer, include a few extra for them all.

*Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year to
everyone*

Web site. www.beef-51.britishforces.com

Phone. 02088035824



Newsletter

Welcome to issue no 5 of our newsletter.

Another year has passed and we have just held our third reunion at the King Charles Hotel Gillingham. The number attending this year was 33 Ex 51 Squadron members and several of them brought partners and friends making the total around 50 altogether.

I did much the same as last year showing slides etc using the computer and a projector. This year we also had a video of Len Millward's wedding loaned to us by Len and his wife Joyce.

We also had a video from Joe Ellis of China rock and a few other places. Both videos were a bit grainy because of the age of the film but they still added to our memories and I certainly enjoyed watching them.

The only other person I remember taking 8 mm Cine Film was Geoff Logan. I am in contact with Geoff by email and he will get a copy of this Newsletter, so Geoff if you still have copies we would love to see them.

New contacts since the last newsletter.

Ken Bradshaw
Mike Scott
Malcolm Scott
Mick (Geordie) Marshall
Richard (Lt Construction Troop) Sandy

Of the above only Mick Marshall is not on email but I do have a phone number for him.

Ken Bradshaw lives in the Dover area.
Mick Scott. Northampton Area
Malcolm Scott. Milton Keynes Area
Mick Marshall Newcastle

Not sure where Richard Sandy lives as I only have email and phone.

Group Photograph.

The group photo proved to be a bit difficult this year as two were out on a smoke break when it was taken and several others did not arrive until much later on. So I am printing out the real picture and then one where I have merged in other photos. The only one I could not do this for was Les Wilson, as I never manage to get his photo.



Back Row L/R Taff Fisher, Pete Edwards, Chalky White, Joe Ellis, Terry Nolan, Les James, Bernie Barber, John Farrow, Pip Harris, Len Millward.
 Middle Row L/R Beef Baker, Tony Allen, Ron Snook, John Collins, Mike Scott, Frank Hughes, Malcolm Scott, Colin Brandrick.
 Front Row. L/R Harry Cook, Mick Bardell, Bernie McPhee, John Davey, Ron Field, Tony Mitchell, Alastair Brownlie, Trev Rilatt, Kevin Justin, Dave Hamilton.
 Fore ground L/R Steve Olsen, Ken Bradshaw, Roy Pinnock.

Here is a selection of Photographs taken during the day.



L/R Keith Thomas, Bernie McPhee, Mike Scott, John Davey.



John Davey, Mick Bardell, Ron Snook.



Joe Ellis, Bernie McPhee.



Keith Thomas, Tony Allen.



Chalky White, Alastair Brownlie, John Farrow.



Pip Harris and Dave Hamilton.

Sorry pip I have 3 pics of you but you have a bottle to your lips in every one



Taff Fisher and Harry Cook



Pete Edwards and Bernie Barber.



Ken Bradshaw and his wife Daisy.



Ron Field



L/R Kevin Justin, Terry Kirby, Trev Rilatt, Frank Hughes.

There were of course many more people at the Reunion. Time and space dictate that I can only put a few in this newsletter also not all of the photo came out as good as I would have liked.

Result of the Vote on the Venue for the next Reunion

We took a vote on the venue for the next reunion and it was a close run thing.

17 for keeping the venue at the King Charles
12 For the midlands or somewhere North
4 not bothered where we hold it.

However despite the vote we will still look into other venues further north particularly if we can find a better deal.

Ron Snook

Ron Thanked me for my efforts at the reunion and I did not get chance to explain that he was the one who booked the Venue and did a lot of running around to make sure things went well. He also paid for the venue up front and had to wait before I could sign a cheque for him. Well done Ron and thanks from all of us.

Black Ants 51

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Total Monies collected for Year 2009 to February 2010 | £820.00 |
| Less: Cost of Meeting Room, Coffee, and Buffet | £403.50 |
| Less: Contribution to the cost of booklet, Badges, postage, and Badges. | £250.00 |
| Totals | £166.50 C/F |

Monies for 2010-2011

| | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| C/F | £166.50 |
| Collected so far this Period | £481.00 |
| Collection box | £ 7.00 |
| Total | £654.50 |

Notes.

Cost of booklet production, Badges and CD was a lot more than the £250 I have requested. The Ink for the printer alone cost more than that but I treat this more as a hobby so I am content with the amount. Postage and package is expensive but as more people get computers with email I will be able to keep those costs down. Blank CDs are cheap enough now so I usually get them whenever I see a sale. Ron Snook donated a load of stuff that also helped to keep the costs down over the last 2 years.

Any one who would like to comment on the above accounts should contact me by phone or email. A copy Of the list of contributors can be sent to any one who is a member of "Black Ants 51"

Membership Of Black Ants

The membership of Black Ants has grown over the last 12 months and some people have given more than the requested £20.00. All the money is put to good use for newsletters, CDs, The Reunion and anything that is of interest to us all as Ex Members of 51.

I feel a bit guilty for taking the £250 to help out with the costs because most of what I do is done out of interest and as a hobby. However it does get quite expensive and I am on a pension now. The printer inks are the largest cost. Each Cartridge costs around £60 and the Printers use 4 colour cartridges.

We now have 44 members.

Pictures on the website

Many of the pictures on the website do not have captions so if you can identify anyone or place please take a note of the page and picture number and let me know and I will up date as soon as possible. I have been updating wherever I can remember the names and places but some I am really not sure of.

There are a lot of places that 51 went that I still do not have pictures for. Main reason I suppose is that I did not go everywhere that the Squadron went. I have a few pics of Beef Island now from Georgie Margs.

I would like pictures from:

Gan
Beef Island
Anguilla
Netherhaven and other Airfields.

Any pictures of Harrier pads, Arrestor gear, road/Air field construction or any other jobs we did.

The site is getting quite large now and it takes a while to plough through everything that is on there, so its well worth visiting more than once.

Newsletter Distribution

Some of you get this newsletter by mail and some of you by e-mail. If you get it by e-mail you might find that depending on which operating system you use that the pdf files do not show the pictures as well as they should do.

For Firefox users you may need to down load another application to make everything viewable.

There may also be difficulties with different versions of IE.

Some people still use dial up connections so the newsletter takes forever to down load. If you do have problems let me know and I will send the letter by snail mail as a hard copy publication.

Spot the difference

Some of you said you liked the spot the difference pictures so I have included this one for you to have a go at. Still not a prize for finding all 6 though.





Newsletter

Black Ants 51

Issue no 6

Well here we go with our 6th issue. If there's not much of interest for you then its only because no one has provided me much in the way of news, So come on chaps talk to me, write to me, tell me I have got it wrong or I've got it right. I don't mind what you say to me as long as it's interesting.

I can write about what I have been doing lately but too much of my mundane existence will soon have everyone switching off. It's a bit like the letters I used to get from my mother when I was in the army. You know the kind of thing I mean, "The cat's died and we have painted the back door green".

Just as an illustration of how boring this can be without any other input. I have just spent about 6 weeks in total taking down an old shed and replacing it with a bigger brand new 10ft one. I also paved the whole area. The whole job took me about 5 weeks longer than it would have done two or three years ago. I just don't know what happened to my body but it feels like someone has drained all my strength and kicked each of my joints in turn.

John Ashton, Frank Hughes and Pete Edwards met up in Leeds for a mini reunion and John tells me a great time was had by one and all. Its nice to see that people are meeting up and having a bit of a chin wag.

New Contacts.

At the time of writing I have had a contact from Mike Warren and I have his email address should any one want to contact him he lives near Northampton. Here a picture that Mike sent of himself.



Mike Warren

Mick Marshall now has a computer on line so anyone who would like to contact him let me know.

I also have an email address for John Peck.

Proposed New Lapel badge

I intend getting a new lapel badge for the next reunion. The last badge was a little disappointing in as much as the writing was too dark against the blue background. The new badge will have a silver ant instead of the black ant to acknowledge the fact that we are all silver surfers now and nearing or even well past retiring ages.

Dave Hamilton

sent me a few pictures of his carvings and I must say I am quite impressed, a small selection is shown here.



Movements

John Clark tells me that he has moved house and is now living in Birmingham. I do not have his new address yet but I do have an email address if any one wants it.

Spot the difference there are at least 6



Harvey Andrews

Some of you have heard me wax lyrical about Harvey Andrews before but he is a man that is well worth listening to. His song Soldier was banned by the BBC because they thought it was a bit too topical and political at the time. He also sang what you might call protest songs so the establishment would never be his friend as long as he told it the way he saw it. He put the ordinary persons point of view into the “Me” generation of Maggie and her mates.

Not all of his songs are political or contentious some are amusing and may even make you laugh out loud. Other songs are love songs and will move you to tears.

I have been a fan for years but found new recordings hard to come by at a reasonable price until I chanced upon his website. My old records were almost worn out and, any way I don't have a record player anymore so I had not heard his stuff for quite some time. His website was a revelation and I ended up buying CDs to replace my old records and also his newer stuff.

Harvey has been described as the best British singer songwriter of all time. It may be a bit over the top as a statement but I reckon he comes pretty close to living up to the claim.

I remember getting tickets for one of his shows in the round house in Celle but the date was one of the dates when the army decided I had to be elsewhere so I ended up giving the tickets away.

Finally I managed to see him live at Chatham “ Brook theatre” and he is even better in concert than on his records. He performed some of the old songs that I remember so well and a few of the new songs that I am only now getting to know.

My Son came with me to the concert and also met and spoke to Harvey. He said it was hard to reconcile the mild mannered gentleman he met in the foyer with the talented stage presence he saw on stage.

If you have never heard Harvey you can get a few samples of his stuff on his website at www.modernprojects.com/harvey/

Below is a picture of Harvey and myself at Chatham. He was very friendly and open and during the interval signed books and CDs for any one who wanted them. The lighting is not very good and my attempt to enhance the picture digitally has put about 10 years on both of us. Still its one for my scrap book.



I came across this on the Internet and found it interesting.

51 Squadron Royal Engineers

Unit History

The Unit was first formed as a Fortress Company at Chatham in 1900. It moved to Malta for 2 years but then disbanded. Nearly 13 years later, a Park Company was established, and from 1916 - 1919 it was in France. On returning to the UK the unit was disbanded.

In 1948, 51 Port Training Squadron was created, based at Marchwood, Hampshire. During the 1950s the unit served in the Middle East, Cyprus and on Christmas Island. The unit's name changed a number of times, only again to be disbanded in 1965.

However in 1965, 51 Field Squadron (Airfields) was formed and was put under the command of 38 Engineer Regiment based at Ripon, N' Yorkshire. After a 2 year tour in Singapore, the Squadron moved to Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, working with 39 Engineer Regiment. The Squadron remained at this location for a number of years, taking time out to serve in Anguilla and Northern Ireland.

In 1968 the squadron was renamed 51 Field Squadron (Construction) and transferred back to 38 Engineer Regiment. Between 1984 - 1988 the Squadron deployed to Belize, the Falkland Islands and Northern Ireland.

Yet again then Squadron's name changed to 51 Field Squadron (Airmobile). Between 1989 - 2000 the Squadron deployed to Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands and Bosnia. The Squadron underwent a name change to 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault) in September 1999 now part of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault).

Applications for Pingat medal and the Veterans badge are reproduced on the next 4 pages for those of you who may want to apply for them. The Pingat medal is given by Malaysia to those who served in Malaya up to Aug 1966. The Vets badge is a nice little badge that says you served in the forces. Jack Dawkins tells me that his Pingat medal took 2 years to arrive so don't hold your breath after you put your app in.

Application for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal

Instructions for completion

About the Pingat Jasa Malaysia

The *Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM)* is a special medal of service to eligible United Kingdom Service personnel who served from Independence until the end of Confrontation in the security of Malaysia, during the period 31 August 1957 and 12 August 1966 inclusive.

Categories of eligibility

Category 1

(a) Those members of the United Kingdom Force who were on the posted strength of a unit or formation and served in the prescribed operational area of Malaysia and Singapore, in direct support of operations in Malaysia for 90 days or more, in the aggregate, as follows:

(1) Malaysia during the period 31 August 1957 and 12 August 1966 inclusive; or

(2) Singapore during the period 31 August 1957 and 9 August 1965 inclusive.

Category 2

Verification of service

Although the *PJM* is a foreign award from the Government of Malaysia, all applications for the *PJM* will need to undergo a verification process by the Ministry of Defence. This process can be greatly assisted by applicants providing as much information about their service as possible, including service numbers, dates served in the prescribed area, etc. This will allow applications be finalised much faster.

Instructions on how to complete this form

- Please use BLOCK letters only.
- Please complete the entire form and provide details of ALL service in the prescribed area.

Please forward completed forms to the following address:

National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association
Mr Fred Burden
National Membership Secretary
44 Meadgate Avenue
Great Baddow
Chelmsford
CM2 7LQ

Application for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal

Personal details

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Rank | | Family Name | | Given name(s) | |
| Family name served under (If different from above) | | | Given name(s) served under (If different from above) | | |
| Date of joining the service | Date of leaving the service | Rank on discharge | Branch of service (delete as necessary) Navy Army Air Force Royal Marines | Service number(s) | |
| Date of birth | | Home phone number | | Work phone number | Mobile phone number |
| Postal address Postcode: | | | | | |

Details of service in the prescribed area (Please provide details of all periods of service in the prescribed area)

| Country | Dates served | Ship, unit or squadron |
|---------|--------------|------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Previous awards

Have you previously been awarded medals for service in relation to Malaya between 31 August 1957 and 12 August 1966
 Yes (Please specify below) ☐ No ☐

| | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Naval General Service Medal 1914 - 1962 with Clasp 'MALAYA' | <input type="checkbox"/> General Service Medal 1962 with Clasp 'BORNEO' |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Service Medal 1918 - 1962 with Clasp 'MALAYA' | <input type="checkbox"/> General Service Medal 1962 with Clasp 'MALAY PENINSULA' |

Declaration

I declare that the information provided above is true and correct.

Signature of applicant

Date

Official Approval Stamp

MEDAL APPLICATION (For non-serving personnel)

For Office Use Only:

Reference Number:

Please complete in **black** ink and **BLOCK CAPITALS**

Medal Applied:

Surname:

Forenames:

(NOT INITIALS)

Any other surname
Used during
military service:

Date of Birth:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|-------|--|---|------|--|--|--|
| | | / | | | / | | | | |
| Day | | | Month | | | Year | | | |

Service/Regt/Corps/
Branch on Enlistment

Service/Regt/Corps/
Branch on Discharge:

Service Number
on discharge:

Rank Held on
Discharge:

Any other Service
Number held:

Details of any other
military service or
civil defence during
WWII:

Details of overseas
service, location(s)
and approximate
dates:

Details of any
Disability Pension
applied for as a
result of military
service:

Signature of
Medal Earner:

Or

Signature of
Legal Beneficiary:

Name and Address
of Medal Earner or
Legal Beneficiary

Name:

Postcode:

Tel No:

Please return completed form to:

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency
Ministry of Defence Medal Office
Building 250
Imjin Barracks
Gloucester
GL3 1HW

NB: Serving Personnel should apply via their unit admin staff.

Well that's all for this edition. I hope there was enough to interest you in the absence of any real news.

Alan (Beef) Baker

Website www.beef-51.britishforces.com

Email alan.baker55@yahoo.com



Newsletter

Black Ants 51

Issue No 7 *September 2010*

Well I asked for a few notes from people for the newsletter and thanks to Tony Allen and Roy Pinnock I have been able to put something of more interest than my Garden shed in this issue. I had hoped for emails with loads of content but I got two nice letters from two of our members who do not have computers so I had to type everything out using my two typing fingers. (The army did try to teach me to touch type but it never took hold and I reverted to the two-finger shuffle as soon as I got back to the Squadron.) I hasten to add that I don't mind if some one sends me a thirty-page letter I will still enjoy typing it out and I like getting mail.

Next reunion. Ron Snook has booked the King Charles Hotel for the next reunion for the 26th of Feb. we had intended for it to be on the first weekend in March but some one had already beaten us to it. There has been a suggestion that maybe we could hold The 2012 Reunion in the isle of Mann. So far reaction has been mixed.

The phone number for the King Charles Hotel is 01634 830 303

The website. <http://www.kingcharleshotel.co.uk>

Gareth Davies is now back in UK and has moved houses to live in Morton-in-marsh Gloucestershire. Email available on asking. He sent this email about his search for final resting place of Roy Pearson who died in a fall from the barracks veranda in 1967.

Beef,

I think that I have finally found out what happened to Roy Pearson, I know that he was buried in Singapore because I was part of the burial detail but I cannot remember where. I can only assume that from the roll of honour personal details that the body was disinterred and cremated. I'll give you a ring when I get back to the UK ,

All the best,
Gareth.

Note: In Singapore burial plots are only allowed for a number of years before the body is exhumed and cremated. The remains are then stored elsewhere. This is because there is an acute lack of building land.

Keith Thomas sent this picture. He asks if you can see the likeness.



New contacts Since last newsletter.

Alan Warne. Living in Tunbridge Wells Kent

Derek Keetch Living in Peterborough

Brian Richomme

Last year we were running at about 2 new contacts per month but things seem to have slowed to a mere trickle this year. I suppose it is inevitable as for various reasons such as people getting older and passing to the **big Squadron in the sky**, Emigrating to pastures new and working abroad.

Some like Jeep Jackson, Dave Pearson and Jeff Slack seem to have disappeared off the face of the earth no matter which database I look up.

Retirement Notes

Since retiring I have found more time for reading and listening to music and to do all those things that I knew needed to be done that a full working week never gave me the time nor the will to do.

I have read books about the war in Afghanistan by the lads that are involved in it, likewise the Iraq debacle. Also reading books about the WWII jungle fighting. Spencer Chapman (The jungle is neutral and Jungle Fighter) and Tom Harrison. The latter was a bit of a nut case but apparently extremely effective Special Forces operative with “Z” force.

I am exploring the English folk music scene at the moment with some really refreshing CDs from the likes of Seth Lakeman, Vin Garbutt and Harvey Andrews. And I have rediscovered an old favourite on CD in the shape of Blaster Bates who doesn’t do music but is very entertaining.

The shed, paving and garden have all been done and re-done, the kids houses have had their bathrooms kitchens and small jobs done to them and I even manage to help the wife occasionally when she will let me.

If I had known retirement was so full I may have carried on working a bit longer.

The downside of course has been the gradual disintegration of the body with knees, legs, feet, and back all beginning to show wear and tear. A lifelong smoking habit has also begun showing its effects. All in all it bodes ill for the future but I think its still a wonderful life.

A few words and photos from Roy Pinnock



“Sappers walk” is an alleyway in Gillingham leading to the public toilets (how appropriate).

The large plaques on the wall depicting the history of the Royal Engineers are in fact made from fibreglass that imitates bronze. They show some of the famous military personnel with connections to the RE's and the inventions that owe their origins to the Corps. Dating back to the Royal Flying Corps and hot air balloons.

“The Road to nowhere” Upchat Road was built to join Upnor Road to Chatendeden Barracks, which was being built in the late 60s.

Prior to the road, the Journey was about a four mile round trip down country lanes and through Strood and taking anything up to an hour depending on traffic.

A straight direct road was seen as the answer, cutting the journey time to about ten minutes, but the stumbling block was the main road the A228. (Four Elms Hill)

From Upnor it was about a mile or so to the gap and then about 150 feet to the Chatenden side.

This had to be bridged with a Bailey Bridge and the road below couldn't be closed as it was a main Trunk Road to the Isle of Grain.

(The Bailey bridge served its purpose for a number of years until, a more permanent one was built by Wimpey. They took nearly 5 weeks during which time the Bailey was still being used alongside.)

On the chatenden side was about a mile leading to what was to become the Plant Training School and everyone was happy. Don't make me Laugh!

Chatenden Barracks was built, married quarters, school, and NAAFI. What could go wrong?

Some clown at the MOD decided a change of strategy meant that the barracks was closed and it is now a deserted wasteland, which has plans for 300 dwellings on a residential development. (housing estate to you and me)

After all this time, over 40 years the road is still in use as houses have been built in the area and not a pot hole in sight. We must have done a good job.

The plinth at the Chatenden end of the road must have been passed thousands of times by motorists not knowing what it said. I must confess that this was the first time I knew of its existence despite living in Chatham for the last 41 years.

It states that the road was built by 52 Squadron (Airfields) but not a mention of 51s large involvement in the project.

I would be grateful if any other members maybe recall who else worked on the road. My memory is fading.

As I said it is the road to nowhere, and standing at the crossroads in Upnor, looking along the road, that's exactly what it is now.

As Remembered by Roy Pinnock



Extracts from a very nice travelogue from Tony Allen

Most of my time this summer has been taken up with travelling and holidays, so I thought I could send you a sort of travelogue that you could use in the newsletter.

I am very fortunate that both our offspring and their families live in great locations, so visiting them and the grandchildren is a real Pleasure.

Our Daughter lives in Swanage Dorset, which is only a small town but has lots of interesting things going for it. A beautiful safe beach, sailing, diving, boat trips to Poole and Bournemouth, . It's also part of the Jurassic coast and is surrounded by the Purbeck Hills providing stunning views of the coast and Dorset countryside.

Five miles inland is Corfe Castle, which can be reached by travelling on the magnificent Swanage Railway. This is of particular interest to me as a life long Railway enthusiast (Not a train spotter) and they run steam trains every day throughout the summer and weekends during the winter.

The Town has lots of good pubs, many with live music and has an annual Jazz and Blues festival.

So if you have not been and are in the area give it a try.

Our Son and his family live in the USA so visits there so far have only been one per year.

They live in a town called Cumberland in the state of Maryland. Cumberland is situated about 150 miles inland and to the west of Washington DC in the Allegany Mountains which are part of the Appalachian mountain range,

There are many historical places of interest in the area particularly relating to the American Civil War where many bloody battles took place.

They have long hot summers there and harsh winters. We were there in July this year and the temperature was in the 90s F most days.

I won't go in the winter, as I don't like snow.

This year we flew into Washington and then to Cumberland by train. This was our first time on Amtrak, the company that runs all long distance passenger trains in the US.

It was a great experience, the trains were clean and very and very comfortable, with by-level carriages, the luggage stored on the the lower level and most of the seating upstairs. The seats have plenty of leg-room with knee and foot rests and recline if you want to take a nap. Ours was a long train pulled by 3 Locomotives to get it up the long gradients through the mountains and ending up in Chicago the following day.

Like trains in the UK they are non-smoking but after about 3 hours they have a stop to let people off who want a smoke. The conductors and attendants on the train were very friendly and helpful and seemed happy in their work.

Before leaving for home we spent 3 days in Washington DC having a look round .

This was amazing and we hope to do it again on our next visit. For anyone who does not like hot weather, do not go in July or August as it is baking hot, which suits me, Washington is a fantastic place for tourists, they even have ex London open top double-decker buses doing sight seeing tours. All the museums and historical sites are free to enter with first rate facilities everywhere.

We went to the Arlington Military cemetery and visited President Kennedy's final resting place which is close to where Audy Murphy and Jimmy Doolittle , commander of the eighth Air force during WWII are buried.

From the beginning the planners in Washington banned high rise buildings and skyscrapers so it has a very open feel and great views in all directions,

If anyone is visiting the US and has chance to look around Washington I would recommend they do so. There are a couple of places you are advised not to walk around especially at night but other than that it's a safe place and people are very friendly.

We stayed at the "Red Roof Inn" Hotel in Chinatown which was brilliant and not expensive.

PS An anecdote for "Petrol Heads" .

While we were in the US the BP oil spill was big news and a campaign was started to boycott BP filling stations. Of course the operators of these stations soon realised they were losing business and reduced their fuel prices. Next day when we drove past the local BP station there were Huge queues waiting to fill up.

By the way petrol there costs \$1.65 to \$1.68 per GALLON which is what we pay per litre.

In America Oil Is King

Tony Allan

Books Review

Jungle Soldier

Many of you will have read "The jungle is Neutral" by Spencer Chapman. Well this book is a biography of the man himself and relates some of his other activities before his adventures in the Malayan jungle behind enemy lines. His exploits in Malaya are also well documented with a few extra facts that were missed from Chapman's original book because of political constraints at the time of the CTs in Malaya.

Sapper Martin

This is the diary of a Sapper during the first world war. When I first saw this book I thought it might be a bit boring but as I glanced at a few pages in the bookshop it drew me in. It's well edited with all the repetitive stuff filtered out by Richard Van Emden the author of "the last fighting Tommy"

Our Lad Ricky.

You may have seen my comments about this book and others in the series. I brought this book in the first place more to help out a fellow ex sapper and give him encouragement.

I did not expect too much but this first book pleasantly surprised me. Its about a young lads journey through Sapper training at South wood Camp Cove during the early 60s. Many of us had similar experiences so it was also a bit of nostalgia.

His other books are "Ricky the early years" and "Ricky Green beret" which are also well worth a read.

Spot the difference

There are at least 5



Medals I included in the last newsletter the forms for the medal issued by the Malaysian Government and the Veterans badge. Well there is a firm that also does a Royal engineers medal. They will put your name and rank round the edge of the medal and you can have clasps made to show places like Borneo, and NI. Not much use as a medal, as it can't be worn next to your GSM, but it might make a nice memento to hand on to your children or grand children.

Website www.awardmedals.com Look for the Royal Engineers section.



Well that's about all for this issue I have tried to make it interesting and, with the help of your emails and letters there would appear to be enough to read before you bin the letter. Don't forget I am always looking for letters, emails and pictures to include in the newsletter.

I should be able to produce a booklet of some of the latest pictures collected via email and at the last reunion and I will also put a few selected ones onto a CD. I will give these out at the reunion.

Website www.beef-51.britishforces.com

Phone 020 8803 5824

Address

Alan Baker
36 Oakfield Gardens
Edmonton
London
N18 1NX



Newsletter

Black Ants 51

Issue no 3

Welcome to the latest Newsletter.

At the time of writing this, "Christmas" is still quite a way off but by the time I have checked, rechecked and re written things then started to distribute the letter it will already upon us. So, Merry Christmas and a happy new year to one and all.

There are a few letters and a sad Obituary for Colin Brandrick in this issue. I hope there is enough to interest Everyone.

We start with the letters

From Mick Marshall

Hello Beef

I got off the train in York and waited 30 minutes for Frank Hughes and John Farrow. I was expecting a 7 stone bag of bones with a mop of wavy blonde hair and a well built bloke to walk round the corner. It didn't happen. Instead I got the Cast of "Last of the Summer Wine" myself included as I was the oldest. Well, we Were in Yorkshire. The weather was great. We could see that through the pub Windows. Although we did have a bit of a walkabout looking for a "bookies" for Frank who as it turned out was unknowingly contributing to someone's pension Fund.

Our first port of call was the Golden Fleece, which is part of the "Haunted Trail" (ghosts from the past). We then progressed to the Lowther, which is a nice Pub down on the riverside. Neither pub really catered for the drinker. Quite Expensive compared to the doss houses in Newcastle where you can still get a Pint for under 2 quid. We had steadily got to re-know each other although Frank and John had had quite a few outings together. I found it very funny when they mentioned that at breakfast at the reunions everyone has a load of pills with them that they have to take. I will be another one. We three all take the same ones!!

As I said we had a good day and hopefully we are going to see each other again this time including John Ashton and maybe Pete Edwards.

One thing I realised is my wild days are over.

See you in Feb. Mick

From Ken Toye

Hello Beef

Yes I'm still in Panama. Don't know if you know anything about Roller Compacted Concrete, it's placed in 300mm layers and each layer must be placed before the underlying layer has reached initial set.

The dam consists of 850,000m³ of RCC and we have placed about 50%. As you can imagine there is very little time to relax. All being well we will finish the main concrete works in February and fill the dam in May.

Total value 580 million USD

The powerhouse is almost complete, as is the 4.5km tunnel through the mountains. The electricity has already been sold to Costa Rica and we stand to lose 90,000 USD per day for any delay. The pressure to keep within the programme is enormous.

We will shortly find out if we have won another contract for a dam on the Pacific side of Panama. I would be happy to spend another three years here, it beats going to Tesco every Friday

From Mike Scott

Hi Alan,

Thank's for the email. With regard to Roy Pearson the next day after the funeral service and cremation, Mick Marshall and I were sent to the Crematorium to collect his ashes. On arrival at the Crem we were met by the Padre who gave us a shovel and a plastic bag and he told us to fill up the bag with the ashes which were under the furnace. We took them back to the Sqn office put the bag in a cardboard box and posted them to the Co-Op Funeral service in London. We assume they duly put them in a casket and sent them on to his wife.

Hope this clears the matter up.

Regards Mike

From Joe Ellis

Title:-Battle of the midgets

Place: Parade ground RAF Seletar

Time: before the boozers opened

We stood on parade awaiting the arrival of our diminutive SSM. When he arrived he gave the order, "Tallest on the left, shortest on the right, in Single Rank size!". We sized in a manner befitting Sappers heavily hung over from the previous nights endeavours.

Standing there in the morning sun, sweating pure alcohol, the SSM walked down the single rank re-positioning the vertically challenged among us. Arriving at my self and Taff Hamett, Mr Keane swapped us over, then swapped us back, then swapped us over again. He declared he could not make up his mind which of us was the taller. Taff, being from Cwmbran and lacking in genteel refinements, looked first at me, then at the SSM and declared, "There is not a hapeth of (*insert you own word here*) between the three of us".

Mr Keen ignored the remark and barked, " From the right ...Number" ... We Numbered ... Eventually.

JE

Spot the Difference



8 differences

Mick Warren with Bells on

I had an email from Mike Warren. He said if I could get down to Greenwich I would have something to put on the website as long as I took a camera with me.

Intrigued I started off with my Grandson on the appointed day. I started out early so that I would have plenty of time. However it was a weekend and most of the tube lines that I needed were closed for essential maintenance so it took about 5 and half hours to arrive at the venue Mick had given me.

By the time we finally made it Mick and his gang had moved on to another location. So we trudged to the new location.

The pictures below are what we found.

It was a nice meeting but we did not have much time to chat because I had another 5 hr journey to look forward to and Mick had to perform.

The actual performance was quite good and looked to be very energetic considering none of them were very young men. Keep up the good work Mick it was a rare treat.



Here's an email and pictures from Keith Thomas

Hi Beef,

Hope you Nancy and family are well.

Attached is a photo of Me,Bernie,John Davey and Trev Rillet. It was taken in the hotel during our tip to Tenerife.I thought that your might be able to use it in your next newsletter. Bernie,Trev and me flew out from Manchester. John joined us flying out from Spain. The other photo was taken with our wives Marj,Doris,Anne and Diane in that order.

Take Care

Keith



Davey Hamilton

I saw this fellow appear on my TV screen and was amazed to recognise one David Hamilton, (Pride of Britain awards)



Reunion 2011

The next reunion is confirmed as Saturday 26th of February 2011. As with the last three Reunions it will be held at the King Charles Hotel Gillingham (formerly the old NAAFI club).

The Hotel is not the cheapest as far as the rooms are concerned but it is reasonable and they do give us a small discount as long as you tell them you are with the 51 black ants group. Its main interest to us is that the function rooms are cheaper than most and helps keep the cost down.

To get the discount you must *phone* your booking through. If you book over the Internet it is an automatic system and will not give the discount.

The itinerary should run something like this:

1000 hrs. Start with tea and coffee. We should have slide shows and a few pictures to keep interest flowing.

1300 hrs. Buffet lunch with things on sticks etc.

1500 hrs. Group Photograph

1600 hrs. Raffle (If I can muster some prizes worth having.)

The evening will be what ever you like but if we give enough warning the hotel will shove a few tables together and we can all sit down to an evening meal. Last year the meal was quite good and reasonably priced and I feel most of us enjoyed it.

I will as usual try to produce a booklet for the occasion and put some of the latest photos on to a CD just to give us something to chat about.

Obituary

Colin Brandrick Passed away on 24th October 2010

I first met Colin at Southwood training camp Cove in 1962.

We were not actually in the same party but we met when we heard and homed in on the west midland accents. We discovered we lived only about a mile and a half from each other.

After that we met when ever training allowed and travelled up home on weekend passes and Christmas leave.

After Training we were both posted to Osnabruck in Germany. Colin went to a different Squadron but we still kept in touch.

Later I was pleasantly surprised to see that Colin had been posted to 51 Sqn when we formed up in Ripon prior to going to Singapore.

I even ended up living a few doors down from Colin in Jalan Kayu when I got married. When I first moved there just before my wedding Colin helped me sort a few things out. On my wedding day he helped sober me up and brushed all the fluffy bits off my suit where I had lain on a fluffy cotton bed Cover. I looked like a snowman and the fluff stuck like poop to a blanket.

I did lose touch for a while after we returned to UK and we were posted away again. I did meet him once in Osnabruck when I was collecting stores but then there was a few years gap until about 2 years ago when I made contact through Face book.

I will miss Colin and I am sure that there are many others who will also miss him. My sympathy goes to his family who will miss him more than any of us.

RIP mate

Alan Baker

Phone 02088035824

www.beef-51.britishforces.com

Black Ants Newsletter



Issue no 9

Well here we go with another issue of the newsletter. There are emails from Australia and pictures from Panama just to show the diversity of our members.

The first email was from George Dempster and he attached pictures of himself and Harry Spearman meeting up for the first time in around 45 years.

Of course this time of year there is the usual Reunion pictures. Faces that we have only just made contact with and some that have been to the last reunions.

In January I went to the Malaysian Embassy to collect my Pingat Medal from the Malaysian Ambassador. Its quite a nice looking medal and will give me something else to remember the Far East for. Photo below taken by my son who came with me for the day out.



Email from George Dempster

Hi Beef

At long last I was able to get down to Geelong in Victoria and catch up with Harry. It is a very strange feeling when you are standing there shaking hands with a person you have not seen for over 40 years but it was well worth it.

When we meet it was only for a short time as Harry was working so it was just lunchtime catch up. Next time I am down in Geelong we will have a good get together and talk over old times in the Sqn, I have attached photos.

Look forward to all the news from the next reunion for it is good to keep in touch with everyone, All at this end are keeping well and I hope the same for you Beef best wishes to your family for the coming year and thanks for your good work keeping us all in touch.

Best Wishes George



Extract from E mails from Bill Mairs

Hello Alan,

I live in Oxfordshire and have done since demob from Waterbeach in Nov 1969. I worked for the MOD since demob, working at COD Bicester, RAF Upper Heyford and RAF Croughton from where I was retired at 60. I reached a decent grade so retired with a good pension. Diane and I have a daughter, she's married, no grandchildren.

We live in a detached bungalow with a large garden, which I like to potter around in. I have a large workshop in the garden where I have in the past made lots of furniture to order but now just like to build and repair what ever I want.

Hope all is well with you. Thank you again for making it possible for me to look at our past and see our old mates as they are now and all from your web site.
Great.

Regards
Bill Mairs.

Sun, 13 February, 2011 19:46:27

A little bit more of my history.

I joined the Royal Engineers on my 18th birthday. My aim was to join my brother in Germany. My Basic Training was at Southwood Camp cove starting in December 1963. Not a good time to join up winter time, as I was soon to find out. After training which included B3 driver training, half a dozen of us were sent to Halton Bridging Camp in Lancaster to support the TA there. After some weeks at Halton I was posted to Germany to join my brothers unit. The unit was 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron in Osnabruck. I never met up with my brother there, he was away on exercise. Again after only weeks I was on the move again, this

time the whole Squadron was on the move to Hameln. I met up with my brother after breaking down on a country road near Eschershausen. I was driving the OC's staff car and it just spluttered to a halt. I was under the bonnet trying to fix it when I heard a car pull up behind me, it was my brother, that was our first meeting for a couple of years. We soon fixed the car and we arranged to have dinner together at his place. My brother Alan (his name) was a Rig Commander and I was in MT but we got together many times after that. After a couple of years in Hameln I was posted to a new unit which was forming up in Ripon, (51) from there to Singapore and then Waterbeach where I was demobbed in Dec 1969.

That's it for now.

Regards



Ken Toye

Ken has been working on a large Dam project in Panama.

Below are some of the pictures he sent now that the project is nearing its end.





Reunion 2012

The reunion was held as usual at The King Charles Hotel Gillingham.

We welcomed a few new faces and missed a few that had been at previous reunions. As far as I could tell and based on feedback so far most people enjoyed themselves.

This year the weather was too bad to go out side for our group photo so an attempt was made to take one inside. We had a photographer from the local Medway newspaper trying to organise things. So far we have not seen any of his photos.

The next few pages are a selection of pictures from the day. I have also added at the end a picture of everyone cobbled together to show who was there. Not every one made it to the proper group photo.



Bernie McPhee and his wife



Frank Huges John Ashton John Collins



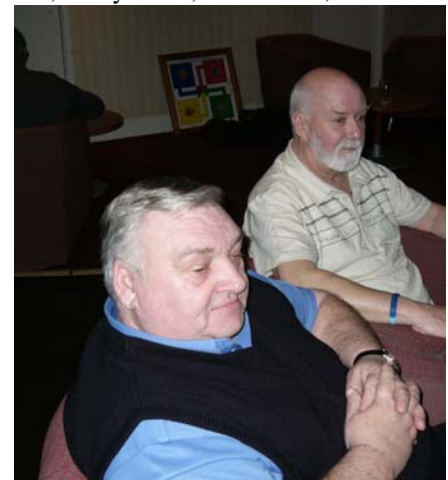
Chalky White



Brian Richomme, Beef, Harry Cook, Taff Fisher, Ron Snook



Geoff Slack and his wife



John Farrow and Les James



Ken Bradsaw & Daisy



Tony Allen



Back Ron Field Bernie barber
Front John Aston Frank Hues



Tony Mitchell Roy Pinnock Harry Cook



Jacqui Paintin and Beef Baker



The Ladies



Bob Morton and his wife



Chalky White and Brian Richomme



left to right: Mike Warren, John Peck, Mick Marshall, Terry Kirby, Geoff Slack, Bernie McPhee, Keith Thomas.



Back Row: Chalky White, Harry Cook, Mike Scott, Bernie Barber, Ron Snook, Terry Kirby, Mick Marshall, Bernie McPhee, Keith Thomas

Standing: Les James John Farrow Malcolm Scott, Ron Field, John Collins, Bob Morton, Pip Harris, Tony Walker, Alastair Brownlie.

Two standing on their own: Taff Fisher, Brian Richomme.

Sitting: Dave Hamilton, Frank Hughes, Steve Olsen, Roy Pinnock, Les Wilson, Mike Warren, John Peck.

Kneeling: John Ashton, Beef Baker Tony Mitchell, Tony Allen, Geoff Slack, Les Painting, Pete Edwards, Bob Carr(Inserted from old picture)

Foreground Inserted pics Ken Bradshaw, Len Milward, John Weston, Mick Bardell .

There are many more pictures on the website.

Financial report for the black Ants

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| C/F from Last year | £ 949.50 |
| Collected 2011 including Raffle | £ 690.00 |
| Total before Deductions | £1639.50 |
| Deduction for Catering | £ 456.00 |
| Final total after deductions. | £1183.50 |

Lloyds bank tell me that as the account is what they call a small club account they do not pay any interest on the account. I will therefore be looking for some other kind of an account, maybe a Building Society or Post Office account that will give us a small return for our money.

That's about all for the newsletter. There are a few things that will have to wait until the next issue because it's a lot to print out in one go. The people who have computers are OK but I also have around 15 people who are still not connected so I have to print out hard copies and send to them so it does get a bit restricted if I don't want to spend a week just printing out copies. (It's a labour of love but time consuming)

Please keep the e-mails and updating reports as it all make for a more interesting newsletter

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Black Ants Newsletter

Issue no 10

Well here we go with the 10th Black Ants Newsletter. As usual a mixture of old stuff from the Website and some new bits that I have not got round to putting on the site. I have messed around with the format this time so I hope it has worked out OK.

As I always I try to point out that this newsletter is intended mainly for the people who still have not got access to a computer.

So all you computer nerds will have to bear with the less up to date amongst us.

Computers are more affordable now than they have ever been. Tesco do a small laptop that would cost around £10 per month over 3 years and it has all the important bits you need. I know this because I have just got myself another Laptop with Windows 7 and I checked everything else out before I got mine.

The Windows 7 looks nicer than the XP but it doesn't really seem to be that much of an upgrade. I have only just got it and have not played with it too much as I am still using my Desk PC for the important stuff like the website and for writing this newsletter.

My retirement has allowed me to do a lot more reading and I get through something like 7 books per week. This was becoming quite expensive, as even the cheaper books are usually still around £4. I prefer to buy the hardback copies whenever possible so it becomes more expensive still.

The kids brought me a Kindle for my birthday and this has allowed me to down load hundreds of free and cheap books. Unfortunately the top current best sellers are sometimes dearer than the real books.

For those of you have not yet heard of the Kindle it is kind of dedicated computer that allows you to read books. Thousands of electronic books can be stored on the one little book sized Tablet. The technology is such that the screen is no more strain on your eyes than an ordinary book. It will also allow you to listen to music or audio books. It's a lovely bit of kit and even if you can't be bothered with computers normally you would probably like this. Cost about £111 at the moment but if you hang on for a while it will probably get a little cheaper



Book Reviews

Jean Auel.

“The land of the painted caves”

Not always a fan of women writers.
Usually seems to be a bit of miscommunication between what women see and what I see of the world.

There are only about five female writers whose books I would actively seek out and Jean Auel is top of the list. Her latest book is the 6th book in a series that started out with “Clan of the Cave Bear” Her descriptions of the lives of stone age people are brilliant. She does extensive research and visits known stone age sites round Europe

Anthony Riches

“Fortress of spears”

This book choice is the third in a series about Roman soldiers based in the North of England in and around Hadrian’s wall. Great writing and narrative.

When you read this you can feel the cold and damp of the north and sympathise with the Roman Squaddies life.

John Wilcox

“The Shangani Patrol”

This is the 7th book in a series that follow the fortunes of Simon Fonthill and his friend 352 Jenkins.
In the first book Fonthill is a young Lt and Jenkins is his batman.

They have many adventures both within the army and after leaving the army.

The action moves from India and Afghanistan, South Africa, North Africa and Khartoum with General Gordon and the latest book back to South Africa and Cecil Rhodes.

Its all boys own type stuff but its good for all that.

Geordie Taroni



Above picture is of myself, and Arthur (Geordie) Taroni.

He phoned me to say he would be down in Romford with his Nephew’s Bowling team. They would be staying over night.

I went down to Romford on the Saturday to the Hotel that Arthur said they were staying in. No sign of him in that Hotel or al the others that I tried.

I arrived back home a little disappointed that I had some how got things mixed up. However a phone call from Geordie informed me that the venue was on the outskirts of Romford and we arranged a meeting for the following day.

So on Sunday We did manage to link up for about two hours.

My grandson and I walked round the Bowling Hall. And I could see no sign of him anywhere. I asked at the counter and was given the Lane number that he was supposed to be on. There was no one that was even near his age there so we wondered around with my grandson looking at the video games with interest.

Just then we were hailed from the restaurant. It was a man with long hair and large beard. Luckily Arthur had recognised me because I would have walked straight past him.

It is always great to meet some one after such a long time so it was another few hours well spent.

Arthur has been ill and in hospital over the last Christmas and this was the reason he had been a bit difficult to contact

Frank Hughes sent this picture of him accepting his Pingat medal. He does it well. It must be the practice he had collecting all those football medals when we wiped the board with the RAF teams



John Ashton

At the time of writing this newsletter John has been in and out of Hospital and is getting weaker as the days go on.

The prognosis is not good but John has always been stubborn when it comes to being told what to do by others.

I at least remain optimistic that he will pull through. All the best John we are all rooting for you.

John has added a little note to go with this column

As Alan has said the future is not quite as clear as it once was for me, but then again I never did take much notice of what others said.

I am only sorry that a lot of you have had to find out this way I would much rather been able tell you all in person. I know it's a hard time and it's hard to think of what to say, just don't be afraid talk to us that is both Trish and myself. We know what its like and it means a lot to us so just pick up the phone and dial.

You have been the best bunch, crew, rabble call us what you want but you're still the best, collection of SAPPERS there could have been to serve with.

Thanks for some fantastic memories and unforgettable friendships.

Take every day as it comes and live it to the full. The rest of your life is yours take every second of it and live it as if it is your last.

PS Once the dates for our next reunion are confirmed we will be booking.

Eileen Dempster

It is with sadness that I report the passing away of George Dempster's wife Eileen. Many of you will have known her from your time with 51 Squadron.

All our sympathy and love go out to George and his Family at this time.

Rest in peace Eileen.

The next Reunion is already booked for the first weekend in March at the King Charles Hotel as usual.

I did a quick straw poll of every one at the last reunion and at least 80% of people were happy to keep it at the King Charles. The reasons range from the personal, because it is near to their home, to, “Well Chatham is the home of the Royal Engineers.”

For others almost any major venue would mean a long journey that they are willing to take. For my own part I have always been lazy and ready to take the easiest route.

For a nominal fee of £10 we hope to have a sit down Dinner this year with the rest of the cost coming out of the black Ants funds. May even run to a few bottles of wine on the table.

Harvey Andrews

By now I think you all know I am a fan of Harvey, (Ron Snook hinted that I might be president of his fan club).

Well I’m not quite that bad.

We went up to see Harvey at Hitchen Folk club. As usual it was a great night and he was on great form with songs and stories and fulfilling all the troubadour requirements. I hope to see him again at Walthamstow Folk club

The main reason for this little missive is that he said that next year is to be his last touring season. So if you would like to see the lad playing **live** your last chances are only for this year and part of next year up to the Autumn months.



Spot the difference.

There are 8 differences but one is a bit more difficult than usual.

An Extract from an email from Keith Thomas accompanied by some photos

Bernie/Doris/Anne and me went over to Spain to visit John and Diane Davey on the 17th of May. We stayed at John's for 5 days and had 2 days in Gibraltar. Attached are two photos' I thought you could use for your newsletter.

The first one was taken of the three of us on the beach near John's villa.

The other one was taken of Bernie and Me in Gib Beside a Sapper statue.

(I should of taken note of the inscription on the front)

But if you zoom in you might be able to read it.



Terry Kirby was down in this area visiting his relatives and he popped round to see me bringing with him a box full of slides. I am slowly going through them and with luck should have a few new pics for the website by the end of the week

I have tried to make the Gibraltar plaque Large enough to read but I am not sure if the quality is good enough



Photos like these of Sapper memorials or details of various historical projects of the Corps are always of interest to me. I am sorry that a lot of the places I have visited over the years have had the remnants of sapper projects from bridges to roads and I never recorded them for posterity. The ease of taking photos with digital cameras should mean that we can all come up with a few good pictures.

Did You Know

The Royal Albert Hall was designed by Capt Francis Fowke and Major –General YD Scott of the Royal Engineers.

Also the Surveyor in charge of building Pentonville prison in 1840 was Col Jebb of the Royal Engineers



Pentonville circa 1850

The next few pages are from Allen (Monty) Mountford's face book page.

I decided that it would make a good page for the Anecdotes on the website. Of course people with out access to a computer will not be able to read it hence its inclusion here. I added a few drawings of my own to make it look pretty (or not according to taste).

Allen (Monty) Mountford

From a very early age got the nickname Monty,

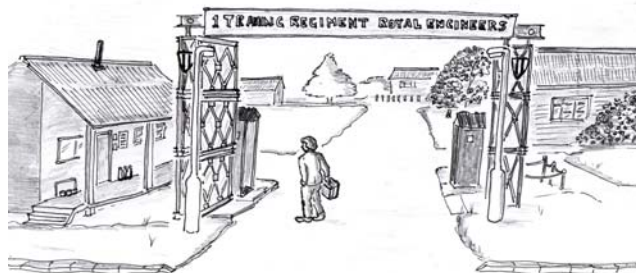
Mates during those early years the Mill Hill group Barry Pender, Billy Butters, Brian Salt, Tommy Meigh, Mickey Meigh (sorry if I left anyone out)

Left school august 1959 no formal qualifications,

Brian Salt and I would think nothing of cycling to Buxton for the day taking only, a bottle of water and a sandwich about 50 odd miles, and even Blackpool 97 miles each way.

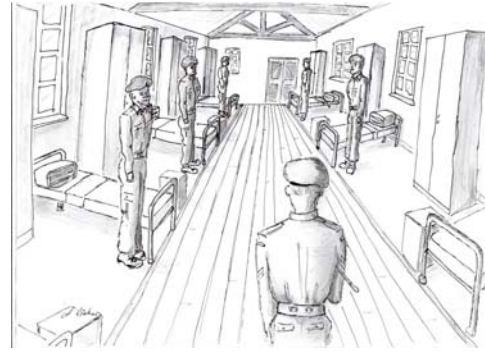
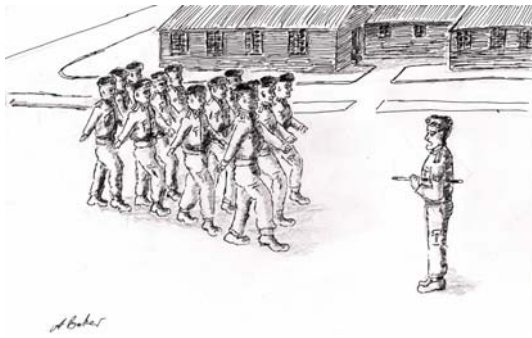
Had numerous jobs in and around the pottery industry, joined the territorial army early in 1961 Royal Engineers, found out I had a good eye for shooting with the old Lee Enfield 303.

Went on a summer secondment to Scotland and learned a lot about explosives and how they work (P E 808 in those days) working with it used to give us a blinding headache. We spent 3 weeks demolishing old WW2 ammunition bunkers on the coast near Ayr. Its wonderful what you can do with a bit of plastic and washing line, had to wait untill Ii was 18 in July 1962 to enlist in the regular army (Royal Engineers).



Al Bates

While waiting for my intake in October me and my mates went to the local fair and after winning a few coconuts or 12 for family and friends by shooting the strings the stall refused to let me try again. I remember Del Shannon (Runaway) was no1 at the time and then in October it was Brian Hyland (sealed with a kiss).



Started basic training late October then driver training, passed my test in the winter of 1962 that was a bad one the instructor said if you can drive in this you can drive in anything and he was right. We went down to the south coast for more training and the sea was frozen for about half a mile out.

Enjoyed most of the specialist training especially explosives, (The RE build it or blow it up).

After basic training posted to Nienberg in Germany (a beautiful little town on the river Weser) Member of 2 troop when we won the Niemeagan march and we built a heavy ferry and got a tank across the river at Hamlyn (of piper fame) in a record 57 minutes (there was a secret to that).

Radio operator in those days drove a ferret scout car 00EA07.

I remember one day in camp the MT officer asked if anyone could ride a motorbike and I said yes (he never asked if I had a licence which I did not) Anyway I had to go to the HQ block and pick up a dispatch folder and take it to Paderborn. To cut a long story short, for 5 days I was sent from one place to another until, finally back to Nienberg, tired but an accomplished motorbike rider. (Never did get my motorbike licence until Singapore)

Travelled all over Germany even went on the SAS selection course at Hereford I think I lasted all of 5 days. Pen y fan did it for me boy was I immature.

Last 3 years 51 Field Squadron (Airfields) RE, formed up in Ripon Yorkshire in July/August 1965.

Went on an NCO course there came 8th out of 32 but no chance of promotion because the SSM had a grudge against me.

Had me up on a charge for disobeying orders and would not let me speak to say I received later orders from Sgt (jock) Sword MT troop.

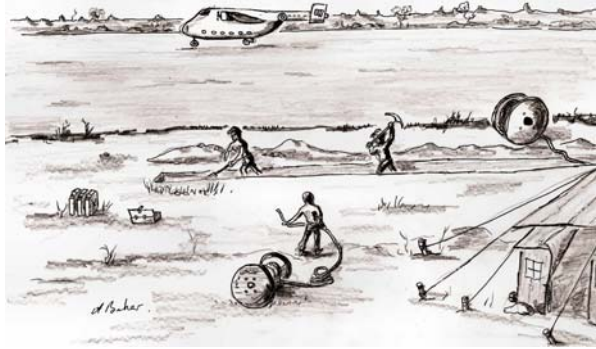
The CO threw out the charge and I believe SSM was reprimanded but that was the end of my promotion hopes.

We had a practice run as airfield construction by going down to Bedfordshire and building landing pads and setting up refuelling facilities for the (then) new Harrier jump jets in the middle of a forest. It was marvellous to watch them land amongst the trees.

Flew out to the far east (I think we flew from Newcastle Manchester stopping at Colombo Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to refuel (propeller planes in Those days).

Based at RAF Seletar on Singapore island. spent only a few months actually in base.

Preferred to be up country in Malaysia and Thailand with a few days in Borneo actually doing something constructive like building airfields and roads. (there's nothing like getting to a place in the jungle and building an airfield or road where there was nothing)



Helped to build an airstrip in the middle of a rubber plantation just north of the causeway onto Malaysia near the jungle warfare school. (can any of the lads remember the name of it)

I can remember myself, and, my mate Roger Connolly, who, came from Alsager in Staffs flying up to the strip squeezed in the back of a little plane with an army air corps pilot. Looking up at coconuts on the trees as we flew past and landing on a 100 metre strip surrounded by trees (happy days without all the army bull and doing something worthwhile).

We even had a visit from a photographer for an article to go into our local papers at home. it took my mum months to find The article in some obscure local paper.

We had a plant foreman WO11 in charge of us (Beaky Beacroft) he liked a drink. We heard he had been involved in the cleanup at Belsen at the end of the war so we couldn't blame him. He was a great bloke as long as you did your job he left you alone. He did get me to drive him home a few times when he was plastered. He always said his wife wouldn't shout at him when I was there. Beaky, Roger Connolly and myself were left to look after the plant on the airstrip a few times (he didn't have to be there but he could have a drink on site)

One night we ran out of beer and he decided we should go to the nearest Kampong but we had no transport. By this time he had had quite a few so he jumped into a grader (leaning wheels and a damb big blade only one seat me and Roger just hung on).By the time we got to the Kampong he had taken out about half a dozen road signs and a tree. Anyway we had a few more beers (he had a lot more) and roger had to drive us back as he was the plant op.

Beaky once fell out of a land rover as I was driving him home at least 25 mph and he bounced into a monsoon ditch. All he had were a few scratches and bruises it seemed to happen in slow motion one minute he was lollina against the door and then he iust

seemed to slide out.

Another thing about WO Beacroft he was always ready to help out, while on base I mentioned about my motorbike adventures in Germany and he took me to the MT pool signed out a bike and a landrover. He put me on the bike and said " follow me" which I did all around Sigapore and when we got back he signed of on my licence. He did this with various machines until I had a licence for just about anything. I found out I had a touch for hydraulics which came in very handy in later life.

Another friend I will always remember from Singapore was Terry (Nolly) Nolan he was married to a lovely German girl named Helga. I think Nolly came from the Litchfield area. When on base they used to invite me to their married quarters for Sunday lunch and card games especially Canasta, I got to be quite good at it but haven't played since.

Helped to build another airfield north of an enormous tin mine (Meringi or something very similar) Terangganu province I think.

We started with minimal equipment and then got a heavy air drop of major equipment. It was fantastic to see a bulldozer (Vickers Vigour) come out of the back of the aircraft (Beverly, flying boxcar) and the parachutes bring it down safely. I think we spent about 8 or 9 months living in tents (does anyone remember how we kept a preying mantis as a pet on a lead to eat the insects) Also sorry to say now but killed a cobra and used its skin as a hatband.

We somehow acquired an old ex army matchless motorbike which we used as a scramble bike thrashing it around the jungle using aviation fuel,(that didn't do the engine much good,)

Also on this job we got to use an assault boat with outboard on a recreation trip to a coral island a couple of miles off the coast,

A wonderful place snorkelling on the reef all day, if you haven't seen a coral reef in full bloom from close up you haven't lived. Unfortunately I killed a stingray with a spear gun something I've always regretted (I told you I was immature) On the way back in the boat we ran into a real South China sea squall. It came out of nowhere we had to keep heading directly into the waves and then a dash sideways heading to the beach, which we eventually reached. We had to drag the boat up the beach to make a makeshift shelter and wait out the storm (still got the photos)

They sent a search party looking for us the next day but they didn't have to bother we were just about to make our way back to base.

After that we went back to Singapore for a month before going up into Thailand to build a road It was close to the Cambodian and Vietnam borders so we were all a bit twitchy.

We just started facing a wall of jungle and set off cutting and bulldozing our way forward, building bridges and culverts and forming a new road. I think we went about 20+ miles, at this time 1967 the Vietnam war was in full swing and the Yanks were using a large airbase at a place called Ubon. We used to see the phantoms taking off

with full load of armaments and rendezvous with tankers to top up their fuel before heading off into Vietnam. We even got to visit the US base and the PX store (like the British NAAFI shop but a lot bigger).

It was nice to see how the other side lived (ice cream, fresh milk which we hadn't seen for about 3 months) ah well that was the yanks for you.

Tried for promotion again late in 1967 and got to see (with the help of a friend in the orderly office) a note written by the SSM (no chance never). This decided me to put in my notice so to speak, to leave in October 1968. It didn't help when people who got drunk and smoked weed every night got promotion because of who they drank with.

About this time we were due for the 10-mile bash and fitness test and the SSM as in Ripon decided we needed to practice for it. So we were doing marches all over (strangely senior NCOs were excused as were a lot of married men). He probably thought the Russians would give us plenty of notice before any aggression started. I had a dodgy knee and I struggled to stay in step. The Cpl in charge started to get on at me and the more he shouted the more I played up (bloody minded).

After that I know for a fact that certain officers and Senior NCOs were taking bets on whether I would finish the march so when we started I asked the Sgt if I could jog in front. He said ok so I set off and eventually passed all but the officer in the lead. He told me to stay behind so I finished 2nd out of the whole squadron even jumped the ditch and carried the officer across my back. See what I mean about bloody-minded. I know it cost some people a lot of money.

Used to go fishing in the local ponds and myself and Bob Booth I think fished in a competition 4 consecutive Sundays 4 hours each day. On the last minute of the last day I caught the winning fish. The prize a full size upright Singer sewing machine (I don't know what the hell they thought I was going to do with it I couldn't even get it back to camp so I swapped it for the second prize of a fishing reel.

Early in 1968 April I think, we flew back to the UK and I spent a couple of months driving cadets on exercises on Dartmoor. I even played in a football match against the warders of Dartmoor prison where unfortunately one of the warders suffered a broken leg. He just happened to be a top table tennis player and it put him out of the championships.

I can remember having a drink in the pub at the end of the road leading to the prison leaning against the bar and feeling hot breath on my neck. When I turned round I was face to face with the biggest dog I had ever seen even sitting it came up to my shoulders. (Talk about the hound of the Baskervilles).

Even my demob they couldn't get right. The procedure is supposed to start getting you ready for Civvy Street a couple of months beforehand.

With 3 weeks to go nothing was mentioned. Then I was called to a class where everyone was asked their demob date, Sparks flew when I said "3 weeks time". Within 4 hours I was on my way home 24 years old and a lot wiser. I often wonder what would have happened if it aot to the 28th Oct and I iust walked out of camp.

In 1969 started my Civvy life driving a truck for a Builders Merchant (sand, gravel, cement, bricks etc.

Married Anne 1970 had 1 son Wayne (born on my birthday 13 July)

I was in a bit of a rut for 20 odd years I suppose. I had a heart attack that I didn't know about in 1994 and had to stop working.

Anne left in 1994 and divorced 1995 this was a dark period of my life.

Then I met Susan my soul mate she just walked into the white horse pub where I was running a quiz night. It was as if a light had switched on, she said a few things that made me smile and think. I didn't really pick up the hints, it was only when a mate at the pub sat us down together that I finally got the message. I'm just glad Susan was persistent anyway we have been together ever since. Although we have had disagreements sometimes, nothing serious. We got married in 1997 and I promised I would try to give her a golden wedding anniversary (I have got to 102 but I will try).

We had only been married for a few months when we got Susan's 2 grandchildren Danielle and Sam to live with us full time for about 5 years. We had to move into a bigger house, as they both needed their own room.

My son Wayne had by now married Anita and they had two children Rebecca and Daniel and strangely enough both boys and both girls are roughly the same age. They are all quite grown up now both boys 18 this year within a week of each other.

Rebecca is now working and living with her partner.

Danielle has been with her partner since she was 14 she is now happily settled in her own home with Marny. They have two beautiful boys named Jaleel and Jahan.

I am now 66 and officially retired but have started doing a few hours a week as a barman at our local Workingmen's club in Goldenhill which I quite enjoy.

We go to the club on a Sunday night with Susan's sister Nancy and her husband Benny. We have been learning sequence dancing also at the club on Thursday nights and I must say I've never been happier and with no lasting side effects from the heart attack I'm in reasonably good health.

Anyone from 51 squadron who remembers Monty get in touch.

Just found some old photos from Malaysia and looked up the location on Google Earth (its now RMAF base Gong Kedak) near Pasir Puteh in Kelantan province.

Do any of the old army pals still have the old army habits, I can't go to bed at night without setting everything out ready for the next morning (cups, plates, pills & clothes etc) or am I just unusual.

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