

# BFES/SCEA Association Email Bulletin

## August 2022



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**From:** Membership Secretary  
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### First thoughts:

Members getting ready to go to Malvern for the Lunch and AGM in September, may be interested to know that Walter Lewis, our archivist, has arranged with the Institute of London for items to be displayed from the collection that illustrate the history of MOD schools. In particular, Walter is hoping to have sufficient material for a specific display of schools in the Far East and other far-flung postings. It should prove to be an interesting talking point!

If any of you have material that you could contribute or share for the display, just get in touch with us or Walter Lewis ([bfesarchivist@gmail.com](mailto:bfesarchivist@gmail.com)).



A photograph can say so much.....



### Welcome to new members:

If you are one of our many new members this year, we would like to welcome you again to the Association, and hope that you enjoy reading about experiences of members.

All members might be interested in membership 'statistics', so here is a breakdown of the roles that make up our membership community, which now numbers 562:

The bulk of members is made up of Teachers, including HT/DHT & LETS with 366 in total. Close behind and growing in number are ex-Pupils with 168 members, Other members include Educational Psychologists, Advisors, Service Education Officers, TAs, School Librarians, Chefs, School Secretaries, Career Officers, Pre-School Leaders plus many others who worked within the education system abroad. 7 members were pupils who became teachers, perhaps indicating how much they enjoyed school life. You might also be interested to know that 55 of our members still live overseas!

## Spotlight on Members:

Ian Rowles posted his congratulations to his wife on our Facebook group page, remembering events of June 2021:

I am so very proud of my wife Lynn, who received the General's commendation today (from Lt General Skeates himself) in recognition of 36 years of service, teaching in MOD Schools in BFG and NATO, here at Afnorth International School in the Netherlands. We came out here in 1985 and we both retire from MOD schools next Friday... .. 36yrs!... Crumbs! ...time flies!



## This month's Quiz:

Do you remember pre-decimal days? We still frequently think of measures in old pounds and ounces as well as feet and inches, but do you also convert your shopping bill into "old" money from time to time? Well, if so, this quiz is for you! Can you remember the name of the pre-decimal currency for these places as well as the current currency? *(or perhaps it is still the same!)*

- |              |               |             |                |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Cyprus    | 2. Germany    | 3. Brunei   | 4. Netherlands |
| 5. Gibraltar | 6. Malta      | 7. Malaysia | 8. Aden        |
| 9. Sardinia  | 10. Singapore |             |                |

*Answers next month.*



## From the Archives:

It is always interesting to read about the days gone by, and although we are focussed upon our Association and the schools run by SCEA, BFES and all the other names associated with MOD schools in general, it sometimes is illuminating to read about the fore-runners of those multi-service organisations who went out to teach children of service families across the Empire. The article on the following pages about Army Schoolmistresses was sent to us by Jane Tull – it had been used on one of the programmes for a Winchester Curry Lunch to add interest for members and she looked it out to share with us.

We hope that you enjoy reading this bit of history too.

### **Sun sets on memories of Empire as Army schoolmistresses say farewell** **A newspaper article by Jenny Rees (date not known) – shared by Jane Tull**



In a well-worn meeting room at the YWC in Bloomsbury, a valiant band of women joined hands and sang, poignantly and for the last time, the song of the Queen's Army Schoolmistresses.

To the 20 or so members present, the words of 'The Link' recalled their happy days as members of the QAS, formed in 1846 to teach the children of soldiers serving overseas in garrison schools throughout a world, which in their time and to them was The Empire.

*"British Isles, East and West,  
Empire loved of all the best,  
Tropic rain and scorching sun,  
Then a winter just begun,  
Links afar, links at home,  
Join on...."*

The QAS was effectively disbanded in 1947, when the last teachers were recruited, but since 1919, when the first annual reunion was held, the veterans of the QAS have meet every year on Whit Saturday.

But, now with age and illness taking their toll on the dwindling ranks of the QAS Association, Saturday's reunion was the final one.

“We are to go out with a bang, rather than dribble on,” said their chairman, Mrs Penny Getgood, 77, the daughter of an RAF squadron leader, who joined the QAS in 1933.

Mrs Kay Harrison, 82, a former president of the association for 14 years, who now lives in Reigate, was 20 in 1927 when she went to teach the children of the first British Army on the Rhine, then going on to teach in a garrison town in the North West Frontier in 1930.

She said:” In wartime there were often no books or materials, and there are plenty of stories about QAS teachers holding classes in odd places like caves. But I had a quiet war in India, we had plenty of books and the children were never unduly worried about what was going on.”

Mrs Mamie Colley, 84, who served in the QAS for 25 years and was married to an officer in the RASC, was sent to Singapore in 1937. She was put on the coaster Mata Hari, bound for India, three days before the Japanese invasion of the colony. Her ship was captured, and she was interned by the Japanese for three-and-a-half years in various camps, where she always managed to set up a schoolroom for the children. She said: “Of course we had no books, but I managed to get the Japanese to give me slates, so we were reduced to Dickensian teaching methods.” In the camp she took under her charge an orphaned three-year-old boy, Mischa, whose mother died after five days of internment. She taught him English and brought him to England in 1945, when he was taken into care by the Red Cross. Thirty-seven years later she was reunited with her former charge, now living in California. “It was extraordinary, but he can’t remember a thing about the camps, “she said.

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### **And so, goodbye:**

The Malvern lunch event will also include the Annual General Meeting for the BFES/SCEA Association and whether you are able to attend this event or not, you might be interested in the business of the association.

Information about the AGM will be made available to you soon, but if you have a question for the Committee or wish to serve on the Committee you should contact the secretary, Lynn Marshall by emailing her at: [lynnmarsh6@aol.com](mailto:lynnmarsh6@aol.com)

AND do not forget, we would love to have contributions for the Bulletin, so do send us items. Perhaps you could create a quiz, or crossword? Or, how about a favourite recipe from days gone by that we could share and try?

Best wishes and we hope that you keep well,

Hugh and Christine Ritchie  
Membership Secretaries

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