

# BFES/SCEA Association Email Bulletin

## February 2023



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**From:** Membership Secretary  
**Email:** bfes.scememb@gmail.com

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### First thoughts:

Hello to you all! We hope all is going well. As you know, the 2023 annual subscription of £15 is now due, so here is a quick reminder of how to pay:

Method of Payment:	Details:
1. Payment by <b>Electronic Bank Transfer</b> (BFES/SCEA Association) <i>Association Bank details are shown here →</i>	National Westminster Bank Account Number: <b>38024373</b> Sort Code: <b>60 – 07 – 01</b> The reference should be <b>your name</b>
2. Set up a <b>Standing Order (SO)</b> with your bank	Please complete the Standing Order form and return to the Membership Secretary, thanks.
3 Pay by <b>cheque</b> <i>(this may be for up to three years in advance)</i>	Please send your cheque, <i>and a covering note with your name and address for identification purposes</i> , to the Membership Secretary, thank you.



### Focus on St David's Infant School, Mtarfa, Malta:

Stand-alone Infant Schools within BFES/SCEA can be counted by the handful, which makes them interesting and probably fairly invisible, as they were usually small schools and overshadowed by their larger neighbouring Primary schools. St David's School at Mtarfa in Malta is one such example, and has very few surviving records. Luckily, we have a description of the school from its last Head Teacher, compiled with help from Bernie Ryan and Dot Cotton, two of the last teachers at the school with HT Maggie Threadingham (née Knight). Maggie writes:

"I was appointed Head Teacher of St. David's infant school in Mtarfa, Malta in 1973. It was to be my first Headship. I had been with SCEA (BACS) since 1964. I'd worked in Germany, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong (BFES).



Originally there were two Infant schools in Malta. The other being at Tigne which closed in the summer of 1970.

Captain Mike Law, the Naval officer in charge of schools, when writing on the history of schools in Malta said, "*I am afraid I have no knowledge of the history of St David's*". Having trawled through some of the archives I believe the school could have opened in 1920. There was a Military hospital in Mtarfa which became known as the Royal Naval hospital in 1965. An increase in hospital staff occurred in 1967

when the RN hospital in Bighi closed. Accommodation was needed for these families and St David's would provide education for the young children of the transferred staff. It was a purpose built school with 3 classrooms, cloakrooms, a medical room and a large hall. The walkway to the school office, staff room and swimming pool provided a shaded area in part of the playground. School times and children's uniform changed in accordance to military winter and summer routines. Children began school at 4yrs but at 7yrs transferred to one of the Primary schools in Luqa, St. Andrew's and Verdala.



The David Bruce Royal Naval Hospital, Mtarfa, Malta

Some children walked from the nearby hospital accommodation and others arrived by school bus. There were 3 class teachers, a Headteacher, a secretary and 2 cleaners.

Before I arrived, the school had closed during the Withdrawal of 1971 when Britain withdrew its forces and reopened in 1972 when they returned. The three new members of staff were recruited in London. None had taught in service schools before. The Headteacher, Heather Jenkins was in post for their first year leaving to get married in the July and I arrived in the September.

This was a unique challenge for us all. So much was different from our previous experiences. Being a small school offered lots of opportunities for both teaching and learning. Before long we had offers of help from mothers with reading, baking & art work, while one group set about making clothes for the Home corner.

Sadly the situation changed when preparation for the end of a military presence in Malta in 1979 began. Military personnel were leaving which affected school numbers resulting in Bernie Ryan moving to Verdala and Dot Wilson to Luqa. I became class based.

After a year, a further change was made. Chris Ford (née Spibey), the remaining class teacher joined the staff at St. Andrews and I became an advisory Early Years teacher to the Primary schools including the one in Naples. Mtarfa School became a Teachers Centre.

In 1978 I left the Island and became deputy head of Spandau school in Berlin. Chris Spibey went to Krefeld, Bernie Ryan to Hong Kong and Dot Wilson to Edinburgh."



David Bruce Royal Naval Hospital, Mtarfa - a more recent picture



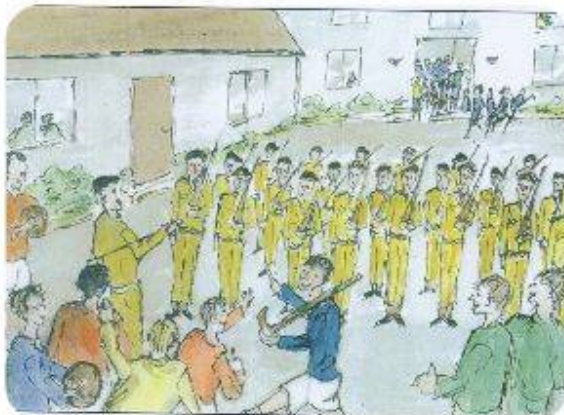
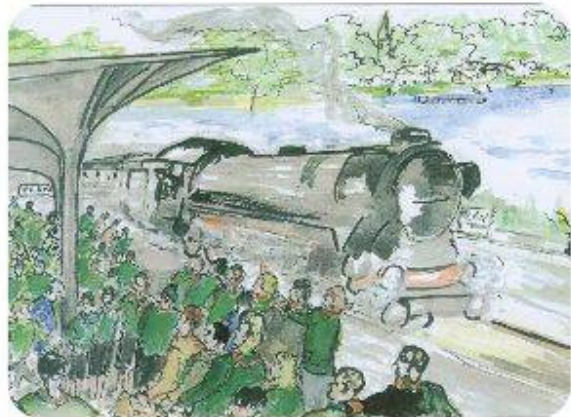
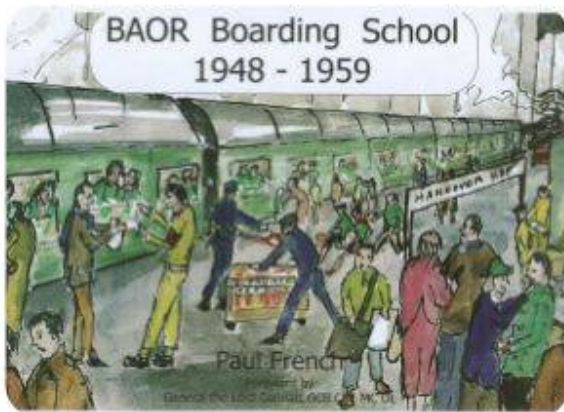
## Spotlight on Members:

Did you go to a Ministry of Defence (MOD) Boarding School? Paul French, enjoyed his time so much that he wrote to the Daily Telegraph and had the following letter published on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2020. It seems an appropriate time to share it again, together with some images of the school from Paul – *more on the website*.

## “How to get the most out of a boarding school:

SIR – I cannot relate to the miseries of boarding school described by Dr Alex Abercrombie (Letters, February 18). I was fortunate to board at the coeducational King Alfred School in Plön in Germany from 1949 – 1956. Surrounded by lakes and hills, it had as its headmaster the charismatic Arctic explorer and author of *The Jungle is Neutral*, Lt Col Freddie Spencer Chapman SSO. He had a clear vision of the unique opportunities that such a boarding school could bring. High priority was given to outdoor activities such as sailing and athletics, with mutual support paramount. The school had ‘helpers’ rather than prefects.

We got involved in the local community by taking part in cultural and sporting events in the area. The school maintained a very happy environment that the 6,000 or so pupils who attended over the years carried through to later life. It was open for just 11 years, but some 150 former pupils from around the world continue to attend the annual reunion held in London, through which many thousands of pounds have been raised for various charities. This is fitting for a school with the motto: “Let right be done.” **Lt Col Paul French (retd) Andover, Hampshire.** “



## From the Archives:

In January, the Association’s archivist, Walter Lewis, took a large amount of material to the Institute of Education to add to their public archive. In total, there were ten categories of resources, ranging from DVD discs to individual members’ memorabilia and photographs. You might be interested to know that when an individual donates their memorabilia to the archives, their name is recorded along with the material. The full list of resources is too long to include in this Bulletin, but here are a few examples handed over by our members:

**Paul Davies**, Head of PE St George’s School Hong Kong:

Four copies of the “Georgian Chronicle”; St George’s Secondary School, Kowloon, Hong Kong; 1979, 1980, 1981 & 1982. Excellent articles & photographs of life for the pupils, staff and the school in general through some

periods of major change in the Colony. Accounts of school trips to Brunei, Macau, Kowloon Walled City, Kuala Lumpur & Nepal.

**Linda Greenwood's Collection:**

Excellent historic collection of SCEA documents appointing her to St George's School, Gibraltar 1973-74; Includes: SCEA briefing at Eltham Palace; FSA allowances, invite to interview, MOD regulations etc.

**Nick & Dawn Turner's addition:**

Two 1984/5 photographs of a young Ben Turner (later head of Haig & Akrotiri Schools!)

**Other items:**

Copy of "British Families Education Service Report – Academic Year 1953 – 1954"

Report by JA Glenn, SCEA HQ on "Amalgamation of SCEA & BFES" 1969.

Nolan Clamp (Director of BFES/SCE)'s letter to all Heads reference the First Gulf War –March 1991.

Ofsted Inspection Report on King's School, Gutersloh; 1999; Head Mrs S. Hargreaves

So, if you have items, whether small or large, do consider donating them to the official archives and so save them for prosperity!



**The Winter Journal:**

The Winter edition of the Association's Journal will be with you soon and we feel sure that you will enjoy reading as there is something for everyone. Main features includes Bill Johnson's reflections on life in West Germany at the time of the 'cold war' and details his observations of being in close proximity with Russian soldiers. Another item from Arabella Kurdi outlines the difficulties facing staff in 1947, just after WW2 when BFES was just starting up, and there are a couple of articles focusing on Berlin, including one that remembers a school visit at the time of the removal of the 'wall'.

Those of you who were based in Singapore and/or Hong Kong will find interest in the report of life in the 1950s, written by Elizabeth Powell, and Walter Lewis writes about the opening of a new school in 1970. The Malta Story tells how the schools were put together again in 1972 after the forced exit in 1971.

This is not everything of course, but just a flavour of what is included in the Winter publication!



**A Quiz for February: *answers next month!***

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|---|--|
| 1. A humanoid blood sucker (7 letters)            | 2. Isaac Newton watched this fall (5 letters)    |
| 3. A leaning butler perhaps? (5 letters)          | 4. Could be a relaxing flight! (4,3 letters)     |
| 5. Movies might get stuck here (6 letters)        | 6. Double the chat perhaps? (8 letters)          |
| 7. Sixth colour of the rainbow (6 letters)        | 8. Hazy, cloudy or vague (8 letters)             |
| 9. Listen surreptitiously or wear it? (6 letters) | 10. His name fits hearts and flowers (9 letters) |

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**And so, goodbye:**

The next Bulletin will include the Booking form for the Curry Lunch in Winchester on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. So put that date in your diary and be ready to complete the booking form by 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Best wishes      Hugh and Christine Ritchie      Membership Secretaries

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