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First thoughts: Greetings to you all! We hope that you enjoy reading the items in this month's Bulletin – perhaps you would consider writing down some of your memories to share with others. There is an item focussing on Münster, Germany in this issue and next month, Cyprus. All contributions are very welcome, either short or long or with just a photograph!



“The girl in the red blazer.”

Paul French sent us one of his sketches made in 1952. In this particular sketch, the girl in the red blazer had just arrived at KAS Plön. She was Anne and the red blazer was obviously eye-catching as Paul and Anne celebrated their 63rd Wedding Anniversary on 2nd April this year. Congratulations to both of them!



Reunions – A Follow on from Steve Tennant:

“As an interesting follow-up to my story published in the March Bulletin, I went in mid November 2022 to a British Forces Far East School Kids reunion in Singapore which then moved on to Penang in Malaysia. About 40 persons duly gathered in Singapore with their partners, mainly from the UK, a few from the States and Canada and several from Australia and New Zealand. Myself and a girl who is living in Singapore had the shortest travel distances. Whilst we all did lots of things together one of the more interesting events was the formal reunion lunch and school tour that took place at the former Alexandra Grammar School. This was an Army school in Singapore and the vast majority of the persons who had attended the reunion had gone to Alexandra Grammar

School on Dover Road or its successor St John's Army School (I am a little confused on that point) in Singapore? "How was this possible?" you may well ask!

The reason this was possible is because Alexandra Grammar School (which although expanded and modernised still contains many buildings which those who went there recognised) is now the Dover Road campus of the United World College South East Asia (UWCSEA) <https://www.uwcsea.edu.sg>. Those in our group who had gone to Alexandra Grammar School or St John's Army School are recognised as Alumni by UWCSEA. Apparently the group has been back to UWCSEA several times over the last 10 or 15 years and every time the School is delighted to host what it considers to be its oldest Alumni who date back before the foundation of UWCSEA!!



left to right: Steve Tennant, Francis Williams (my class mate) and Michael Daly, all 3 of us ex Seletar Secondary Modern School at what was St John's Army School

However, the highlight of that particular trip to UWCSEA was meeting two persons who had also been at RAF Seletar Secondary Modern School at around the time when I was there.

Further investigation revealed that the lady who I was sat next to at lunch had not only been there at exactly the same time as me, had not only been there in the same year as me but had actually been in my class which we shared for about two and a half years!

Whilst in Singapore we also attended the Remembrance Day Service held at the Kranji War Memorial. This was a very large event attended by several hundred people from many Commonwealth countries, diplomatic and military representatives from around the world, Singaporeans and Commonwealth expats living in Singapore.



A picture from a Video that I took at Kranji of the Remembrance Day Service



Former students at Mr. Wheelers graveside at Kranji where they had laid flowers.

Flowers were also laid at the grave of Mr Hugh John Wheeler, a past headmaster of St John's Army School who died in Singapore in November 1965 and is buried in Kranji.

In late January of this year, I flew out of Seletar Airport to Kuala Lumpur and saw my old School Seletar Secondary Modern School that I had attended from the 1960's, which I believe is now being demolished and along with my old house from the 1950's. I felt quite emotional!!

Focus on Munster, Germany:

When we thought of adding a focus on a particular area for the Bulletin, we naively thought it would be easy to get hold of basic facts and add some personal stories to make the dry history more interesting. However, the reality is harder than the imagination suggests, particularly when we decided to focus upon Münster! As Mike Chislet, present Chair of the Association commented, "it's like having puzzle pieces spread across the table". When we attempted to put together something about Münster schools, it was not only putting the pieces of the puzzle together that proved difficult, but just finding the puzzle pieces became a mammoth task, as much of the information seems to be lost. But, we are not alone, as the post from Edinburgh School Facebook shows! So, if you have any stories to share about Münster, do send them to us, thanks.

Münster, in the **North-Rhine Westphalia** area of Germany, once boasted eleven army barracks, although not all of these had a school within their compound. However, it does seem that more schools existed in Münster than we know about, as only recently the Association became aware of **Lincoln School**, based at Lincoln Barracks, which closed about 1980. The majority of the barracks were opened after WW2 and most were closed by 1995. After this date, many of the buildings were demolished or repurposed by Stadt Münster, but more about this later.

Member Jo Vestey (nee Eyre) remembers details of her first tour at **York Junior School** Münster at Buller Barracks, which was right next door to a stand-alone **Cambridge Infant School** on the same patch of land. There were 8 classrooms at York and Jo thinks Cambridge was about the same size.

Jo was aged 24 when she went to Münster and found the experiences there very different from life in UK. Most female teachers from schools in Münster were housed in a barracks above a guard room, but Jo considers that it was her bad luck to be housed in a delightful German house that was designated for senior female staff such as School Heads and SSAFA Sisters and so was a bit more formal than the barrack housing. Single female teachers from York school were also housed in the German house, "11 of us so I acquired many mothers and big sisters". However, the senior member took her position very seriously and rules were set down and meticulously enforced making Jo feel uncomfortable and wishing she was with the other teachers above the guard room!

Jo remembers one of the group being, "an attractive, beautifully groomed lady called Margaret Cooper from the Potteries. So I am certain she ran a good school. She was followed by Olive. Later I discovered that Olive became the Infant Advisor for BAOR. How did I discover this? Well, after behaving myself and following the rules I became PMC of the mess. Then off I went to Singapore followed by a spell in UK. I reapplied for SCEA. As I walked into interview the chairman said "welcome back to family", and looking down table I was shocked to see Olive and said, "Oh Hello Olive!"

York Junior School and Cambridge Infant School were both demolished about 1992 shortly after the schools closed. Buller Barracks is now a housing estate and all that remains of the original buildings is the Garrison Church. It is in the area named Münster Gremmendorf.

Another school, the **Oxford Primary School**, based in the Oxford Barracks at Münster Gievenbeck has also been demolished. The redevelopment of the area was open to competition and the winning entry planned to revitalise the site of the former British Army Barracks by taking fragments and traces of former structures as starting points and integrating new additions into the historical context of the area. The plans included keeping the existing clock tower, former military training grounds (the Paradeplatz to become *the new heart of the neighbourhood*) and original masonry boundary wall. The whole was "reimagined to create flexible housing options for students,

Good day to you all. I am writing the history of the Oxford Barracks in Münster Gievenbeck. Part of it is the Oxford Primary School there. In addition, I would like to mention the secondary Edinburgh School in the Nelson Barracks. Who can help me with information about it? When was it founded and when was it closed. At which secondary school was it taught as a substitute after closure? How many teachers were there and how many pupils? I look forward to receiving lots of information. Greetings from Münster. Anton Kruk



families and older people that take into account the specific needs of each group". The area was renamed the 'Oxford Quarter' with a planned development of 1,200 residential units but keeping the original name intact. Other Münster barracks have also been redeveloped and repurposed in a similar way, for example, York Barracks in the same Gremmendorf district as Oxford Barracks provided 1,800 units for 6,000 residents. Therefore, very few original barrack buildings, including the school buildings, exist today.

As well as primary schools Münster also had a secondary day school, **Edinburgh school**, which was based in Nelson Barracks. Children were bussed in from surrounding areas and judging by the comments on the current school Facebook, it was a happy and thriving school. The school closed in 1995, and any children still attending at that time were transferred to Kings School, Gutersloh.

The late Dave Hunt, in his amusing memoirs, remembers arriving at Edinburgh school in 1969: "I soon settled into school, and discovered that I, as the only officially designated head of department, was the third most senior member of staff, after the head and his deputy. The school was scheduled to be built up and already a former German military barracks on the other side of town was undergoing refurbishment to make it into a school. This had been the Herman Goring Barracks and I was able to go and have a look at it. The first noticeable thing on the side of the main building was the large concrete German eagle; the swastika had been removed, presumably at the end of the war. The eagle itself was to be chiselled off before any pupils arrived.

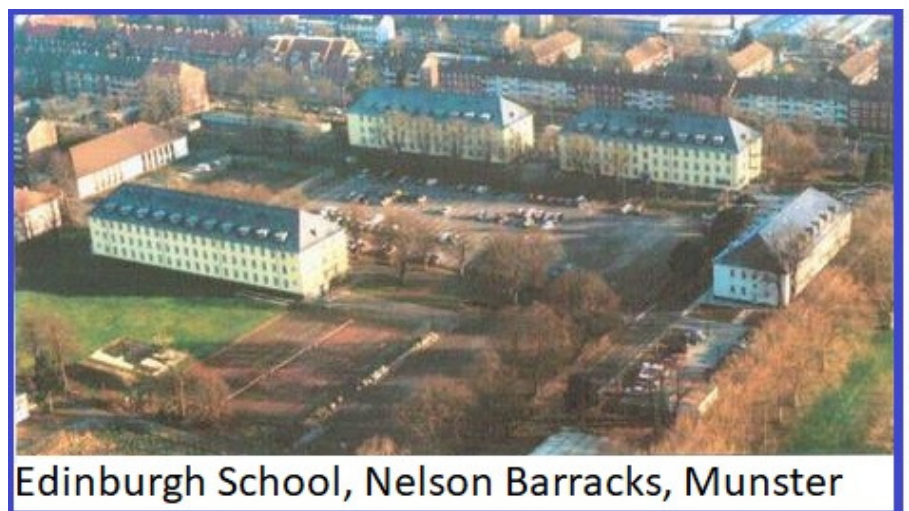
My first year was therefore one of marking time; the pupils were only first and second years and so there was no external examination threat. Weekends and evenings were spent in exploring Münster, an old University City with much history. The eating and drinking establishments were very lively. Only about twenty miles away was the Dutch border town of Enschede, which did a roaring trade on English Cup Final Day. Our televisions, and most of us had only black and white, could not pick up the signal from the BBC - but over in Holland they could. Hence the annual invasion of all the Brits from the Garrison Towns of Münster and nearby Gütersloh and Osnabruch. Many a squaddie would arrive at the Dutch venue (even by the pre-booked coach load), at lunchtime on Cup Final Saturday, and would finally be found sometime during the Monday, facing an AWOL charge. In later years, the more caring battalions would send trucks into Holland, late on the Saturday night, to round up the confused, penniless, drunken soldier."

Dave had many stories about life in Münster, many of which you might relate to, such as this long-winded method of keeping in touch with family and friends in UK at the time:

"In the late '60's the advances in technology meant that we could go, at certain fixed times, to the main post office in Münster and telephone the UK. We did this by giving the telephone number to the person behind the desk, who would dial it for you and say something like 'drei!' which meant 'you may take



Demolition and Redevelopment of the Oxford Barracks - to be named the "Oxford Quarter"



your call in booth number three!’ When your time was up, you went to the desk and paid up. We did this a few times, and felt that it was the ultimate in immediate contact between our families in Accrington and Chester, and us.”

Dave also recalls the visits from Inspectors to the school, which may also resonate with other teachers throughout BOAR and SCEA – “The layout of the school and the position of my room were such that I had a commanding view of the main gates and anyone driving into the car park. When we had visiting Inspectors, I would ‘telephone around to everyone and say “They’ve just arrived!” Then, once I had been visited (I was always first, as my room was on the ground floor) I would ‘phone the others on the two floors above me with the cryptic message “They’ve left me and are on the way up to you!” I often wonder what went through the minds of such visitors when they opened classroom doors, to find the teacher waiting on the other side, fixed smile in place, hand outstretched and uttering words of welcome.”



Photo from Linda Lawrence – Teacher’s Mess, Münster

One last snippet from Dave related to the Civilian Officer’s Mess, which opened when Dave was there and was situated across from Edinburgh School. Any of you reading this who based in Germany from this time onwards might remember how tightly the Officers Mess held onto their rules and regulations! This extended to the Civilian Officer’s Mess, as Dave reminds us: “It was also about this time that the standard of dress in the mess became a major issue. For once, it was not the sweaty males in their tracksuits, straight from the

gymnasium. This time it was the sweet smelling, bejewelled and coiffured females! Their crime was to wear the infamous trouser suit! This was just not on, in the early 70’s, in officers’ mess! The saga lasted some months, from an initial outright ban to a partial lifting for informal early evening events. Of

course, the tide of world fashion could not be held back forever in our mess, and soon it became as normal as it is today. However, what a trauma it was at the time, both for the innocent wearer and the equally subservient committee member who had to reprimand the defaulter. Many angry words were exchanged, and many friendships lost.”

We hope to bring a few more snippets of life in Münster in the next edition of the Bulletin!



Where are they now? Member Lynne Copping sent in this request – if you have any answers, please email us at the address on the top of this Bulletin. Thank you.

“Would you be able to help with this query posted on my Facebook group? Can the query be sent out to your members? "Hi, new to the group and posting on behalf of my Mum who was a British Army Infant teacher in Singapore 1967-68, unfortunately all photos have been lost over the years and with failing memory can't remember the name of the school and would love to know. Assuming there were a few? Her maiden name **was Miss Ann Dwryd** (from North Wales). It may be a hell of a long shot if anyone remembers! She does remember living in or near Braddell but that's about it. Any help appreciated. Thank you.”

On a personal note I was taught by a Miss McGurk at my school on Pulau Brani, Singapore, in 1959 and I've often wondered where she went.”



And so, goodbye: Best wishes Hugh and Christine Ritchie (Membership Secretaries)

