

BFES/SCEA Association Email Bulletin

June 2023



From: Membership Secretary
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First thoughts:

We hope that you are all enjoying the good weather, wherever you are – here in Canterbury we are reminded of the lovely sunny days spent in the Mediterranean area!

We would like to draw your attention to the date of the AGM and lunch next September, and hope that you will be able to join in this celebration of our Association.



AGM and Lunch Event – Friday 22nd September, 2023

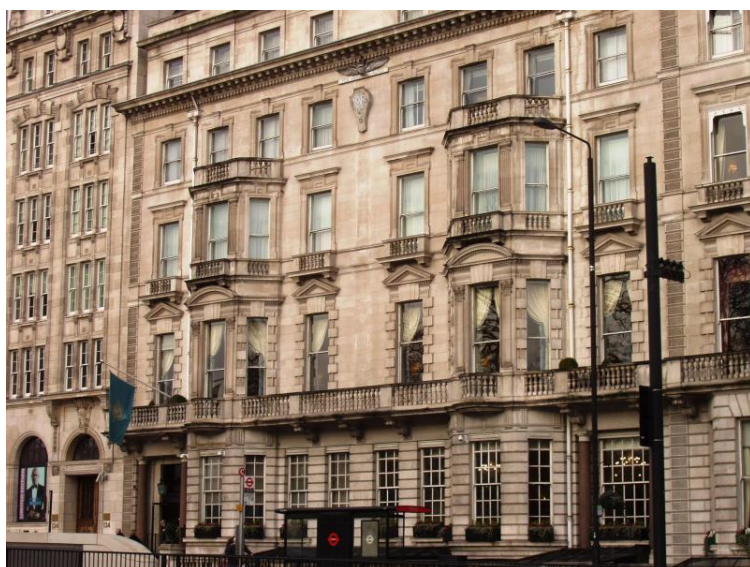
If you love history, listed buildings, London and good food, then this is an event not to be missed – all members and their guests are welcome to attend.



Date: Friday 22nd September 2023

Where: RAF Club, 128 Piccadilly, London

Included: Lunch; Tour of the Grade II listed building; guest speaker; Short AGM Meeting



As this historic building is open to members only, this is an opportunity to go inside the club that is usually restricted to members and their guests.

The RAF Club website says, “The Royal Air Force Club is a prestigious home away from home of Officers of the Royal Air Force and their families...Valued by members as a distinguished landmark where traditions and camaraderie reign, the Club’s timeless elegance and atmosphere are complemented with fine dining, delightful accommodations, and exceptional library, business suite and fitness centre.”

The Club was first established in 1917 during WW1 as a place where officers on leave from the

front could spend time and some R & R. The club continued to develop and moved into its current premises in 1922. Since then, the Club has retained its historic character but has all the modern conveniences expected by RAF Officers of today. So, if you want to see all this for yourself, do come to the lunch!

The booking form for this event, with menu choices and the price of the event will be sent to you within the next few weeks, so look out for it in your email box! Any queries, do email us!



Continuing the focus on Munster, Germany:

It is always pleasing to receive feedback from members relating to our articles, either those published in the monthly Bulletin or its big cousin, the Journal. The focus on Munster in the April Bulletin started with a small query from a member that grew as we got carried away with the history of the place! Judging from some feedback, and what we have found out since, it might well expand further and you might read the expanded story in a copy of the Journal at a later date. However, John Bastable (*who had a tour of schools that includes Swinton School, Cagliari School, St Clements School and Wavell School*) had more to add that seems appropriate to include in the Bulletin. Here is John's addition to the Munster story:

"One significant school overlooked in the recent article about schools in Munster was **Swinton School**. My first appointment to SCEA was to this attractive school in Senden, Westphalia, Germany. Swinton School was a modern purpose built open-plan, single form entry, primary school in a small town servicing a large lower ranks housing area 15 kilometres from Munster, and a part of that educational group of schools supporting the families of soldiers garrisoned there. Swinton School catered for the children of junior ranks housed in Senden, it was well supported by the British Army and the local Stadt.



Staff of Swinton School, 1978.

Having been interviewed at Eltham Palace my first placement was a Year 6 teaching position at Swinton School. The Head of School was Cahl Kennedy, and he and his wife Maureen, made us very welcome. They picked us up from the airport and took us to a BBQ in their garden where we met all the other staff. Social life, particularly dinner parties and BBQs were an exciting part of supporting the military in Germany. Shortly after arriving there my wife Jenny was head-hunted to teach as a Locally Employed Teacher, (LET) at Edinburg Secondary School. We lived in Havixbeck, a village a few miles from the school and were welcomed by the German community there.

We had arrived in a very different world and lifestyle to that we had left behind in England. From a rented house with barely an income to meet the bills from month to month we received the extraordinary provision of a modern German house with everything provided by the Army, from furniture to light bulbs! Swinton School was similarly well provisioned with everything one needed to educate the children, great professional staff, and many more training opportunities than back at home. Unlike the English county I had left with very stable student populations the military schools had a constant turnover of children as the Regiments and their personnel moved from station to station. In no time we learnt to recognise a child's ability and teach them at the right level, years before the National Curriculum began talking about it, and more rapidly than back in England. In my experience SCEA recruited some of the very best teachers and provided them with ample resources to do the job. We had been told at interview that SCEA did not provide a career path, but we stayed in BAOR for 17 years, serving in several schools, and only left when the Berlin Wall came down and it was clear that there would be a huge drawdown of service children's schools.

I often wonder what became of the school, perhaps one of your readers could let me know."

If you do have more to add, or any photographs, please send them to us. Ex-pupils may have other experiences to add, which would be most welcome!



A Blast of Music from the Past:

It seems that music, and performing arts, have been a staple of education across the years for the children in MOD schools. The extract below shows how a concert given in 1894 was reported in the “Navy and Army Illustrated” publication of 18th September 1896. If you are interested in the whole publication, you can see the full collection in Google books free of charge! The pictures are terrific, and reflect the feel of the times. Certainly, the engraving that heads the article shows a cosy family scene that probably does not reflect the reality of married life in the services in 1896! The issue also lists the school curriculum taught in Army schools, and highlights the importance of music.



TOMMY ATKINS MARRIED.
BY RED CROSS.



An extract from the magazine is given below:

'Soldiers' children, amongst their other advantages, have the benefit of excellent schools. Here they are given a thoroughly sound English education, the girls in addition being well grounded in needlework, darning, etc. Music, both theory and practice, is taught and well taught, and a concert by soldiers' children is frequently a treat worth going some distance to enjoy.

I had the pleasure about two years ago of being present at a concert given in the Royal Opera House in Malta (photo above) by the combined schools of the Garrison. Upwards of three hundred children took part, and no prettier sight have I ever witnessed than the appearance on the stage of these little ones. The programme consisted of solos, part songs, and glees, interspersed with fan drill and other beautiful movements, the whole of which was admirably executed.'

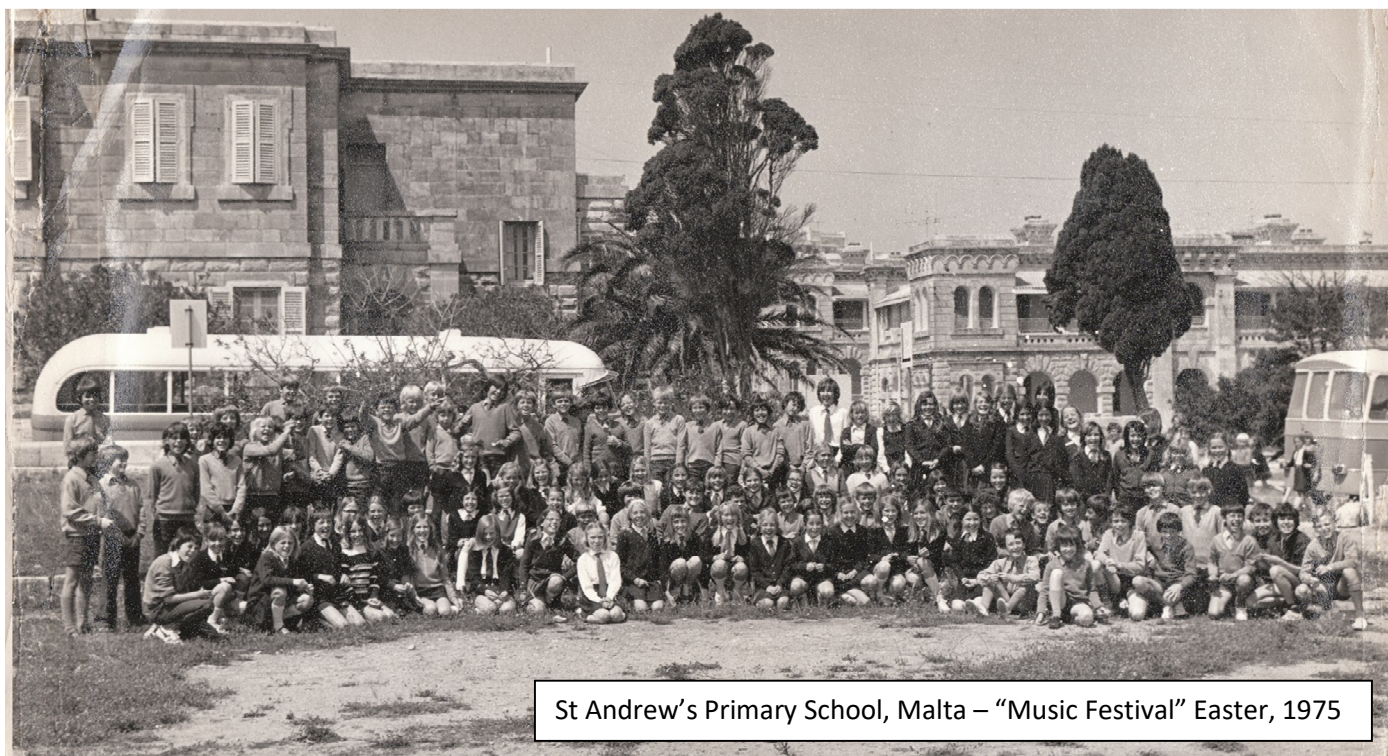
The author of the article is listed as being one “Red Cross” – who wrote a series of articles all focussing upon “Tommy Atkins” published in the magazine. It would be interesting to know who exactly Red Cross was! We first came across the extract when browsing on “The Army Children’s Archive” (<http://www.archhistory.co.uk/>) where you can find many interesting snips about past schooling. TACA can also be accessed through ‘links’ on the Association’s website.

Anyway, fast forward to the same island, Malta, and some 82 years after the reported concert of 1894 and music was still an important part of the curriculum as the



St Andrew’s Primary School, Malta 1977 – instrumental players!

photograph of children who appeared in a Music Festival indicates, although the possibility of performing in the Grand Opera House was lost as it was destroyed in an air raid during WW2. Christine remembers many such musical events, with children from the other MOD schools on the island being bused to the secondary school (Tal Handaq) to use their large hall for combined concerts. One such concert had sea songs as its theme, with songs old and new being sung by children in joyous voice. No doubt other such musical events were performed across SCEA and BFES schools!



Remembering Members:

Member **Alison Porteous** passed away peacefully on Sunday 14th May at Compton Hall Hospice in Wolverhampton. She had been ill for some time but in true Alison style she remained cheerful to the end and never lost her wicked sense of humour. Her colleagues remember her as a valuable and kind friend, who enjoyed a couple of games of Solo on a BBC computer before 'start of play' or working on crosswords with colleagues. Her work with BFES/SCEA took her from Hameln (1968-71) to several schools in Cyprus (1971-84) back again to Germany (1984-94) where she taught in Dulmen, Gutersloh and Berlin. *(Information posted by Carry Lynott & others on our Facebook page)*

Also, members may recall **Pat William**, who taught at Cheshire Middle School from the 1970s to 1990s. Pat sadly died recently, aged 87 years.

Our sympathies go to their families and friends.

And so, goodbye and best wishes to you all:

Best wishes

Hugh and Christine Ritchie
Membership Secretaries
