

# BFES SCEA Association

## Journal and Newsletter - Winter 2020

Issue 47



### From the Chair: Ken Jones OBE

I write these comments as we come to the end of a fortnight's lockdown in Wales and face the prospect of a further four weeks lockdown in England. Despite these constraints I continue to believe it is important to accentuate the positive when looking forward to 2021.

The committee share this positivity with me, and it is for this reason we are planning three events next year when we can possibly meet up with each other again. The results of the recent questionnaire survey have confirmed the fact that it is important to plan such events. It is very apparent that members view the chance to meet up with friends being one of the most important benefits of being members of the Association, as well as being in receipt of the excellent newsletter.

I would like to thank the 81 members of the Association who completed the survey proforma as this level of response has given us a good indication of the views of the members. As the Chairman of the Association this is something I have always wanted to hear.

The responses we have received will provide the committee with a superb agenda for the years ahead to which the committee will need to respond.

Christine Ritchie deserves a huge amount of credit and

thanks for the truly superb work she has done in constructing the questionnaire survey pro forma analysing the results and compiling a report, a short version of which you will find in this newsletter. A much fuller report will be found on the Association website, illustrated with excellent bar charts. In addition to this there is a very useful map showing the location of members of the Association within England and Wales, which shows a heavy concentration in East Anglia and the south of England. All of this would have taken many hours of work so thank you again Christine.

Given the constraints placed on us this year by the COVID-19 pandemic, I had really worried about the future of the Association. However, the responses to the survey left me feeling confident that a significant number of members do value the Association and wish to see it continue.

To ensure the future, there is however a need for younger members of the Association to step forward and join the committee and maybe bring in new ideas. You will have seen on the AGM agenda the need to plan for a new Chairman in October 2021. If there are members who would like to step forward take on this role, please do so. My wife has insisted it's time for me to step down

given that I shall be 83 years of age by next October!!

Given our inability to meet up with each other, the committee conducted a zoom meeting in September which was a success. To achieve this, we owe thanks Mike Chislett and his skills in such matters of technology. As I write these comments, we are also planning a Zoom AGM meeting which I hope will not be a bridge too far!

The first ever raffle draw conducted by the Association was to award £100 prize to one of the respondents to the survey. I'm very happy to announce the winner of the lucky draw was Ms Sybil Watson who joined the Association in 1992 and whose career spanned Berlin in 1971 to 1978, followed by Queen's School, Rheindahlen 1978 to 1989 and finally Cornwall School, Dortmund 1989 to 1992.

I do hope that in these very difficult times those of our members who live alone will have the support of a nearby community to help them combat the feeling of isolation which is bound to happen in the enforced lockdown that we now face.

Finally I would like to conclude by wishing you all as Happy a Christmas as it is possible to have and that we can look forward to better times in 2021 and hopefully that the threat of this dreadful virus will have abated somewhat.

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## The Berliner

Through "The Wall", past the barbed wire a train in chains rides the uneven track across Saxony and Prussia. X years ago the journey began for the **Berliner**.

Keen as a Cossack's sabre, the East wind blusters down the railway track, dashing sleet into the face of the armed Russian sentry who stares in through the dining-car window.

Inside, all is warm and bright: crisp napery at the tables, white-jacketed stewards ready to serve. Someone raises a glass of Claret in mock toast to the figure outside. The barbed wire, electric fences, Alsatians and searchlights of the Inner German Border - gateway to the workers' paradise - are behind us. We are at Marienborn, the first stop inside East Germany on an extraordinary train journey to the island of West Berlin, 100 miles behind the Iron Curtain.

Here, we wait while the Russians check our papers, and a West German engine is swapped for a Marxist-red, East German replacement. From the rear carriage step three British soldiers, a Captain, a Warrant Officer and a Sergeant-interpreter.

Right on cue, a door swings open. A Russian officer steps out, executes a left turn and stands to attention, facing the oncoming trio.

Senior Lieutenant Belyak makes a courteous gesture towards his office, careful that Captain Simon Baxter of the 14/20 Hussars, Officer Commanding Train, goes first. Sergeant-Major Grenville Horsley of the Royal Corps of Transport and Sergeant Jim Edgerton, Royal Military Police, follow.

For those remaining on the train - servicemen and civil servants bound for Berlin - there is little to do but order another duty free drink;



'cooking' brandy for 8 1/2 p or Courvoisier at 23p. There is no chance to stretch the legs on the platform, as the doors are fastened with stout chains and padlocks.

Patrolling the corridors with loaded 7.62mm rifles are four soldiers of the Glorious Glosters whose job is to prevent would-be refugees boarding - or leaving - and to defend the train against attack. Like the bar prices, the Berliner is unique. It is the world's last remaining British Military Train, shuttling between Brunswick (Braunschweig) and Charlottenburg station in West Berlin.

Except for Christmas Day and during the bleak months of the 1948 - 49 blockade, it has made the same journey every day since 1945. Exactly 21 minutes later, Captain Baxter and his NCOs emerge from Belyak's Office with a briefcase of authorized documents - mostly Berlin Travel Documents (BTDs) belonging to the passengers. There are more salutes and handshakes. As they march back to the train, the Russian remains at attention outside his office door.

No one is allowed to photograph either procedure - just as they are forbidden to take pictures during the East-German leg of the journey. At 5.09, the train moves off with a jolt, carrying an extra passenger - an East German railway guard who sits in the escort coach. Here there are bunks for the camouflage-clad

train guards an office-restroom for the OC Train and a small sorting office for the BFPO service. Immediately ahead of the escort coach in the pack-wagon, crammed with enough food and drink, blankets and emergency supplies to sustain crew and passengers for three days if the train was to be marooned in Soviet territory.

Sergeant-Major Horsley voices the instruction against using cameras - and highlights other regulations that all passengers (who incidentally pay no fare) must observe to the letter. He warns: "You must not lean out of the window or attempt to throw anything from it. You must not attempt to speak to East German or Soviet personnel. And you must remain seated at all stops in East Germany" We are warned "not to discuss any classified information", when travelling on this train. The Russians are known to take advantage of the train's frequent stops and slow progress to record conversations with their sensitive microphones.

The train is operated by the Royal Corps of Transport. and fed by the NAAFI. but staff come from an altogether more luxurious stable ~ Compagnie International Wagons Lit. With an old fashioned courtesy worthy of the Orient Express the Head Waiter seats us. "A drink Sir?" he ventures. gesturing towards a wine list that includes the trains own-label Claret (£2.50 a bottle). While we order, the slow-moving

*The last remaining  
British Military Train  
plods a route across  
Soviet Territory from  
West Germany to Berlin:  
an isolated island of  
capitalism behind the  
Iron Curtain. Locked in a  
mobile prison under  
armed guard, passengers  
aboard the Berliner are  
warned to obey the rules.  
Over a bottle of best  
Claret in a luxury dining  
car, travelers watch the  
communist world go by  
keeping their heads  
down and their mouths  
shut.*

carriage slips past a huge armoured depot jammed wall-to-wall with Russian T62 tanks. As coffee appears with the cheese and biscuits, we draw into Brandenburg, once the urban heartland of Prussia. Like every other East German town we have passed it is a seedy picture of grime. A little after 7pm, the train rumbles into Potsdam 6 miles south-west of Berlin. Here the East German engine is replaced by a West German one and our East German guard dismounts.

Three hours and seven minutes after leaving Helmstedt the Berliner rumbles into Charlottenburg station and into the bright bawdy heart of West Berlin.



Text - John Beattie; photos Cpl Dave Bassett RAF

## Letter from Berlin - Monika Gruber

Dear readers of the newsletter,

After Sue Adams kind introduction (see right) I don't have to say much as to why I will be sharing some of my memories with you. I do feel honoured and proud to have been given the chance of telling you a bit about the other side, or rather the inside, of that "bubble" Sue mentions.

It will not be a chronological report, more like following my stream of consciousness. My little "stories", "adventures" will be true, but not necessarily true in the history-book, or Wikipedia, sense of the word, they will rather be my own personal truth, i.e. I won't make up anything, though sometimes you will wonder I suppose.

So let me start from the very beginning : I was born in Breslau, Nether Silesia, Germany, in 1937 - and here is my first personal truth : I am German, but Breslau isn't German any more, it is called Wroclaw now and is Polish. However, when I was born, Breslau had

been Prussian/German since 1742 after having belonged for centuries to Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland earlier on. But in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 the German population was expelled after WW II and the town and Nether Silesia were settled by Poles from East Poland, who had themselves been expelled by the Soviet Union.

Breslau /Wroclaw is a true Polish town now, where Polish is spoken, which I don't understand, of course, because the language of MY Breslau was German.

Years later, before 1989, i.e. before the Wall came down, when I decided my children, born in 1969 and 1973, should see where their mother had come from, we went by car to Wroclaw Breslau. To get a Polish visa I had to fill in a form, where I was asked for my "place of birth". I wrote "Breslau" of course, but was told I had to write "Wroclaw", otherwise I would not have been given a visa.

When we came to the Polish

border, the border police, checking our papers, talked to me in Polish. I told him I didn't understand Polish. He seemed quite surprised and said to me in broken German "But you were born in Wroclaw". "Yes", I told him " but look at the year of my birth, Wroclaw was German then!!!" I do think he had learned something different at school.

My parents, both of them musicians (father oboist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, mother a singer), lived in Berlin, when I "was due". My mother, whose family lived in Breslau, decided to go there for my birth, because she knew she would be well taken care of there, while in Berlin life was a bit hectic sometimes because of the many concerts my father gave. So, I was born in Breslau, not in Berlin.

My father was drafted right at the beginning of WW II and was killed in action in Russia near Smolensk in January 1942. Even before his death my mother had decided to join that army programme,

Sue Adams is delighted to welcome **Monika Gruber** to the pages of this newsletter.

Sue first met Monika in September 1988 at an Anglo-German Association meeting held at the Officers' Club in Berlin. She was at that time teaching English at a local Gymnasium.

Following this initial meeting, Monika and Sue kept in touch and over the years Sue has heard many fascinating stories about Monika's life - and in particular how life was for Berliners after WW2.

As a civilian member of the Allied Forces in the British sector it could have been easy to exist in a bubble of "us" and not to appreciate or reflect on how life was for "them". Sue learnt so much from her about the progress of Berlin following the war and her anecdotes added to her enjoyment and understanding of a wonderful city.

We hope you will enjoy them too.



Photos TNM and TNM archive

*Monika's account  
of her post-war  
days in Berlin  
continues in the  
spring 2021 issue .*

which sent singers, musicians, actors etc. to play for and entertain German troops. In German it was called "Truppenbetreuung", the English term might be "troop welfare" (?). So, she parked me with my grandparents in Breslau. I had a wonderful childhood there. All peaceful and quiet. I was too young to notice the fears and anxieties my grandparents and their friends must have felt. Breslau was too far east for American and British bombing planes, they would not have been able to return to their bases. So, there were no air raids, the Soviet front was still "far" away. Yes, fathers, uncles, brothers, friends lost their lives fighting in Russia. But somehow that was "natural", didn't upset us children too much. We got used to people wearing black ribbons round the sleeves of their coats to indicate that they had lost a family member in the war.

Only once in a while though I learned the hard way what that war meant; my best school-friend Sabine and I had decided we both wanted a baby in the family, possibly a little brother. I also talked to my grandmother about it at a time when my father had already died in Russia. She said that God didn't want babies to grow up without their fathers,

so "we" wouldn't have a baby. Sabine's father had been killed in action more or less at the same time as mine had. BUT: He had been on leave shortly before he had to return to the Russian front. Nine months later Sabine's brother was born - so what about God not wanting babies to grow up without fathers'?? I must confess I lost some faith in Him then.

In later years I was glad my mother had to care only for me, since surviving in Berlin after the end of the War was an enormous challenge. But generally speaking, my childhood until 1945 was wonderful.

One of my mother's brothers had a farm near Breslau where I frequently went with my grandmother. It was an old renaissance mansion house with a moat around the building, lots of cattle, sheep and poultry, a large vegetable garden with a green-house, where my aunt grew wonderful roses. I loved going there, especially since it meant being picked up at the train station by a horse and carriage, since all private cars had been "drafted". In winter it was a sleigh rather than a carriage, with bags made from sheep-skin with a hot brick inside for our feet. I was still so small

then that such a bag reached right under my shoulders - very cosy.

In the summer we used to go to the Pomerian coast of the Baltic Sea, north of (now) Szczecin, then Stettin, where friends of my parents had 2 little wooden bungalows behind the dunes in the woods. Pomeria is Polish now, too. What a fantastic life we children had! And even the nearby airbase of the German Airforce sometimes added to the fun we had: They had to practise air fights and target shooting, for which an enormous oblong balloon drawn by a plane was used. The fighter planes attacked and aimed at the balloon out over the sea. They did not use bullets but little hard rubber balls, which then fell into the water for us to pick up on the beach. Each of us had quite a collection! To mark the individual shots little puffs of smoke (?) were used. Depending on the colour of the sky that day, they were either pink or white or blue - very romantic really in our, the children's, eyes. The grown-ups did not tell us too much about the real purpose of those puffs and rubber balls, it would not have been any use to scare us, would it?

**1944 was the last summer we spent there never to return.**

## Inside Story: BFES Berlin - Roger Traynor

It's a funny thing, but despite the deep-seated affection that I have for the city and that whole period of my life, I cannot actually recall physically arriving in Berlin. I do know that one of my first memories was how cold it was. I was no stranger to German winters, my father having been posted to Osnabruck in 1959 when I was just 2 years of age and

where I started my schooling at Cromwell Infants School at the age of 5, but this seemed to me to be cold on another level. January 5<sup>th</sup> 1968 was the date of our arrival in Berlin and for some reason I cannot explain it is the only time the exact arrival date of any posting as a child has ever stuck in my mind. My

father worked for NAAFI on the audit side, and consequently we moved around independently of any particular unit, always just as a family of four on accompanied tours which most of them were. My father would normally go on ahead, and my mother, brother and I would follow at the appropriate time



which seemed to vary on each posting. This independent movement was both a blessing and a curse, in as much as my brother and I were starting new schools periodically without the cushion of established friends relocating with us and sometimes also without each other as he is two years older. The upside was that some postings, Berlin would be amongst them, would be of a longer duration than they may otherwise have been.

Our quarter was at No 58 Dickensweg, near the junction with Schirwindter Allee. My bedroom window was upstairs at the front of the house facing south. I remember immediately noticing a towering red and white striped radio mast, known today as the RBB (Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg) Sendemast. At 231 meters in height, it is still the second highest structure in Berlin. My father's NAAFI staff car, a light grey VW Beetle was parked in the road outside, although we had a garage in a separate block a few hundred yards away in Dickensweg at the corner of Passenheimer Strasse. That site was cleared and built on a few years ago. Each door of the Beetle bore a circular sticker bearing the familiar three coloured stylised 'N' of the period and the car additionally had a Union Jack sticker on the engine compartment lid. The registration number was ZD 96 B. I believe the 'Z' prefix indicated a NAAFI vehicle and that other prefixes applied to privately owned vehicles but all were in the then standard BFG format of white letters and numbers on a black back ground.

There was a free Garrison bus service provided by the RCT which ran in a loop between Alexander Barracks in Spandau and Edinburgh House on Theodor Heuss Platz. We were actually between official stops but the civilian drivers were very helpful and this was never a problem. The vehicles, also used for the school run to Gatow, were mainly Mercedes Benz 0302 models,

although a few of the older 0321 type were still in service when we arrived. I remember them being very quiet and comfortable, and they were a typical shade of army green.

Several things made Berlin different to me from other postings. The first was the paper currency known as British Army Forces Special Vouchers or "Baffs" for short, unique to the British Armed Forces for use in occupied areas which included Berlin, and valid only in NAAFI establishments and other British military canteens. The exchange rate then was around 10 Deutschmarks to 1 Pound Sterling and we would need to convert them to local currency for shopping trips outside the military bubble.

The second thing was the Families Ration Issue Supplement or FRIS for short. Occasionally, a smart Mercedes lorry with a green painted cab and a white refrigerated, compartmentalised body would pull up outside the house and we would receive a large box full of groceries, sometimes including a Sunday joint. These rations were sourced from reserve stocks held for issue in the event of another blockade and as they approached their Use By dates were sold off to entitled families at very competitive prices as an alternative to simply being discarded. How the order was managed I have no idea as I was only really interested in eating the food but I do remember that we never experienced such a service anywhere else.

Thirdly, there was the requirement to carry at all times an Identity Card which included a photograph and specimen signature of the holder.

Then there was of course the Military Train known as The Berliner, more about which later.

Finally, truly unique to Berlin, was Exercise Rocking Horse. This was an operation announced without warning quite literally in the middle of the night whereupon a Land Rover would patrol the vari-

ous Married Quarter areas broadcasting the message 'Alert! Alert! This is Exercise Rocking Horse' via a (very efficient) loudspeaker. This training exercise was designed to test the 'scramble' response for any potential Russian invasion of West Berlin. Though it didn't directly affect my father, it did come as quite a shock the first time I experienced it as I had no idea what was going on.

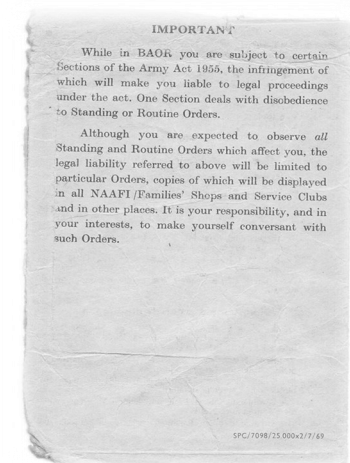
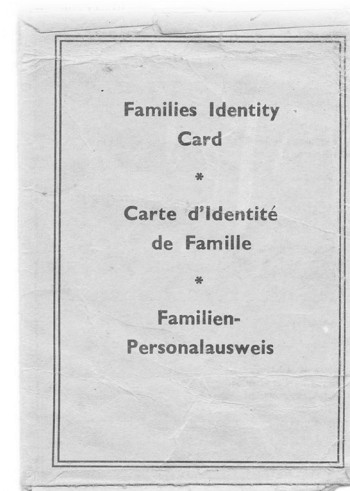
I started at **Charlottenburg Junior School** almost immediately after we arrived. It was only a short walk of perhaps 5 minutes, passing on the way the then British Military Hospital. The large open playing field opposite the BMH where we would play has now been extensively built over. I have very few memories of my short time at Charlottenburg, but remember taking the 11-plus there and learning my first few words of German despite it not being formally on the timetable. The school building itself was a low level, single storey affair of some size with a long pathway from the road to the main entrance and the playing area was beautiful, with trees and shaded areas everywhere.

From Charlottenburg it was on to **Gatow** for 1969 and 1970 which necessitated a daily bus journey from just up the road. It didn't take long; on the Heerstrasse to Spandau then turning left and after a few kilometres alongside the Havel turning right into **RAF Gatow** where the school was located. In contrast with Charlottenburg, Gatow was physically altogether different. It was an imposing building with, to me at least, a rather forbidding appearance being two storeys high and with additional dormers in the roof space. Two blocks were occupied by the school and these were linked by covered walkways at each end forming a courtyard used as a hard play area. My experiences there were both happy and memorable under Headmaster Mr Ecclestone. His wife taught music and I recall her being so amazed

**Roger Traynor** is an ex-pupil of several BFES schools. His late father was stationed with NAAFI in Berlin between 1968 and 1972 and his mother and brother accompanied him. He lived in Dickensweg in Charlottenburg a proverbial stones' throw from the 1936 Olympic Stadium.

Roger attended both Charlottenburg and Gatow schools prior to moving to Windsor Boys School in Hamm. He left Berlin in the Summer of 1972 when his family returned to the UK.

This three-part series – the first ever contribution by an ex-pupil – is an account of his BFES school days during that period and, in small measure, of his search (after a remembered Christmas visit all those years ago) to what his father referred to as No 6 Civilian Mess.



*'Alert! Alert! This is Exercise Rocking Horse' via a (very efficient) loudspeaker. This training exercise was designed to test the 'scramble' response for any potential Russian invasion of West Berlin.*

## Inside Story - continued ...

that I had heard of Yehudi Menuhin that she gave me a house point. I believe the Deputy Head was Mr Greer who along with Mr Davies took us for English.

Mr Scott was my German Language teacher at Gatow. Aside from textbook-based learning, he would also bring in a small portable record player with its own speaker on which he would play a series of lessons on 45rpm records called 'Los!' ('Go!' in German). Each one would begin with a scratchy run-in and the words 'Los Nummer Eins, Zwei ' etc. It was a novel method of learning entirely new to me, later surpassed by the 'Language Laboratory'. This was manufactured by the well known German brand Uher and was really innovative; pupils would sit at a specific workstation wearing a microphoned headset and learn German by repetition on to tape. This tape was controlled by the use of a joystick; you'd press a button set into the top to start and stop the tape and move the stick to the left or right to fast forward or rewind and re-record. Mr Scott would be able to monitor each pupil unknown to them (as I once found out after getting rumbled repeatedly pressing the pause/rewind/replay button and getting nowhere with the lesson).

I have been amazed at the number of teachers whose names I can recall, their subjects too quite often, both in Berlin and thereafter at Windsor Boys School in Hamm BFPO 103 which I attended from Autumn 1970 to Summer 1972. That they are so unforgettable is testimony to the positive influence they had on my education and development.

As much as I enjoyed my schooling in Berlin I always looked forward to the weekends. A typical Saturday for me would begin with trip to the main NAAFI at Summit House on Theodor Heuss Platz. The bus would take us

to the car park at the rear of the Edinburgh House, a boxy modern building used primarily as a 'transit hotel' for certain newly arriving or imminently departing personnel and their families or as temporary accommodation for other entitled visitors. From there we would walk the couple of hundred yards or so back along the main road to the NAAFI facing as we did so the Services Kinema Corporation (SKC – Now SSVC) Jerboa Cinema which shared the same building. A visit to the cinema was all the more special on a cold winter's evening, by us being able to queue directly over a warm air outlet serving the NAAFI bakery situated in the basement below. I can trace a life long doughnut dependency back to this experience.

The main entrance to Summit House was literally just around the corner of the same building and situated directly on the Heerstrasse. Upon entering you were immediately faced with a broad and imposing staircase, in marble if I remember correctly. Before the staircase, to the right, was the foodhall. I always remember the thick and delicious Danish yoghurt which came in one pint Tetrapak packaging. Along with similarly packaged milk and vacuum packed bacon, I was told that it did actually come by road from Denmark daily. NAAFI Car Sales also had a pitch on the same level, and from here I was able to accrue an interesting collection of brochures over the years. I now wish I had kept hold of them and would have but for the occasional need for drastic de-cluttering we will all be familiar with.

Up the stairs and immediately on the right round the corner was the YMCA bookshop, a valued source of UK daily and monthly publications not available easily or as cheaply anywhere else. Music magazines such as Disc, NME, Melody Maker and Fabulous 208 (the full colour magazine of the now defunct Radio Luxem-

bourg) were my favourites, along with car magazines such as Motor and the then separate sister magazine Autocar. I remember being particularly excited by the then newly announced Range Rover and Triumph Stag models both of which are now modern classics. The 'Y' also sold Airfix model kits including the popular Dogfight Double packs and other small toys and nick-nacks. Further on up and you reached the NAAFI Clothing and Gifts and Durables Departments. LPs and 45s were the wallet lighteners here and there was normally a good selection. My pocket money ran to one 45 per week, so an album required a bit of saving or a special occasion. One of my early album purchases was 'Death Walks Behind You' by Atomic Rooster. I was initially struck by the cover which features a full colour reproduction of William Blake's Nebuchadnezzar (although I didn't have a clue about the artist or his subject at the time) but it featured their hit single 'Tomorrow Night' so I bought it and it remains in my collection to this day.

Summit House was not only for shopping and NAAFI administrative business though. For a few months in early 1970, every Friday evening I would take the bus to Edinburgh House and walk from there to the car park at the rear of Summit House to the NAAFI staff entrance. Within the lobby was an ancient Otis lift in a cage through which all of the cables and workings were visible, complete with an old, heavy metal, double expanding scissor type access gate. It was operated by an equally ancient, but very friendly German attendant who did so via a single control lever mounted within a circular drum like protrusion on the lift wall which resembled one of those red rotary manual fire alarms that seem to be everywhere. This control had three positions at 9, 12 and 3 o'clock. Once I was safely inside, he would secure the grille, hold down the control lever in one of the two outer



Charlottenburg Primary School  
Playground



Class Portrait with Mr Scott at  
Gatow 1970

positions (I can't remember which) and off we would go in relative silence with the lift bouncing gently at the slightest provocation. Then, as we approached my floor he would release the lever which would spring to the centre position and the cage would glide smoothly to a halt. He did exactly the same on the descent until the cage came gently to rest on a cluster of huge springs. I wonder if that lift still exists.

The purpose of these Friday evening visits was to receive piano lessons from a patient and kindly German lady whose name I always remembered as I found it rather grand; Frau Hilde Sander-Froehlen. For some time I had expressed an interest in learning to play so my parents procured a second-hand upright piano and arranged the lessons but in the end I always found some reason not to practise so after fair warning the piano went, along with the tuition. I have since learned that Frau Sander-Froehlen was in fact an accomplished, recorded concert pianist who trained under Carl Friedberg, Edwin Fischer and Egon Petri. Even the smallest amount of research into these will confirm just what a pedigree she had, and how wonderful was the opportunity that I squandered. I regret it to this day as I struggle to learn keyboards with failing levels of memory and concentration at the age of 63.

A trip to Berlin city centre itself was always a treat, and required a trip on a German civilian bus which we caught from nearby Scholtz Platz to the Europa Centre right in the city centre. The civilian buses were in the main manufactured by Büssing and of their D2U model line. They were painted in a rich cream colour similar to German taxis everywhere and the top deck seating was unusual in so far as the seats were mounted on a kind of raised platform which ran the length of the bus on both sides. This meant that there was much less head-

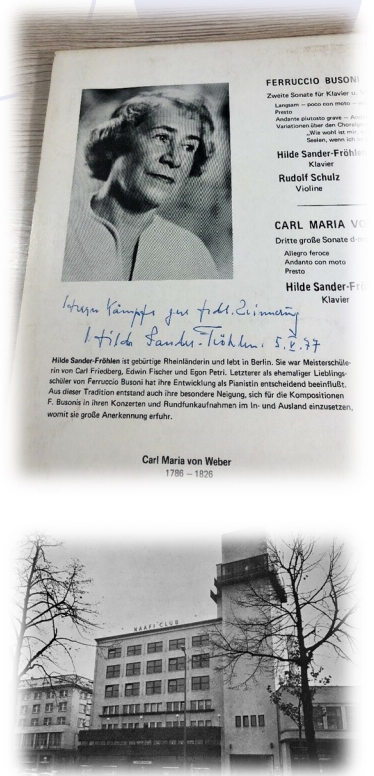
room than you would expect in comparison with down-stairs.

In addition to established German chain stores including Quelle, Hertie, Kaufhalle and Neckermann right in the city centre where you could purchase anything from a bike to clothing, LP records (and get the chance to hear them first with headphones – that didn't happen in the UK until years afterwards) there was also KaDeWe. The name is an abbreviated form of the full title Kaufhaus des Westens and the premises were just around the corner from the Europa Centre. KaDeWe was quite upmarket and considered to be the equivalent of Harrods which was probably why we never went in there. Each allied sector had its NAAFI equivalent too; the French had the Economat although we rarely visited the sector, and the Americans had the PX (or Post Exchange) in Clay Allee, named after the American General Lucius Clay and not, as I mistakenly assumed at the time, the world famous boxer Cassius Clay, later known of course as Muhammad Ali. We visited the PX frequently, and from my perspective it was great for LPs, car magazines and car brochures. They had a strange dress code though, to me at least. During one summer visit I was wearing an ordinary pair of plain coloured, tailored cotton shorts. My parents and I were taken to one side by a management type and were politely but firmly told that 'kids are not allowed to wear short pants in the store'. We were allowed to stay on that occasion but I never did understand the reasoning behind that rule.

Not being particularly athletic, Berlin's sporting opportunities were of little interest to me, aside from the marvellous indoor swimming pool situated in Stadium Barracks, a short distance from the quarter. It boasted a full Olympic length pool and 2 x 1m, and 2 x 3m springboards, in addition to a central tower featuring single 5m, 7m and 10m diving

platforms. Flanking the pool were four or five stepped rows of flat marble slabbing with heating under, forming a terrace up each side. Aside from the odd special booking, there were no restrictions on how long you could stay, it didn't close until 2000hrs, entry was free and whole days just evaporated there. The bus would drop us off at the security gate at the top of Hans Braun Strasse at the eastern end of the complex, we would show our ID and then walk through from there. My hair would literally turn to shards of ice on return trips during the winter when the air was so cold it would tickle your lungs.

Most of my friends were on the patch, but the sprawling expanse of woodland south of the Heerstrasse bordered by Am Postfenn leading down to the Havel lake to the west and Teufelsberg to the east was a real adventure playground. The latter has a fascinating history unfortunately beyond the scope of this article and was topped off with the rather intimidating American National Security Agency Listening Station complex, which would not have looked out of place as the villain's lair in a James Bond movie. The whole area was vast and criss crossed with a mixture of rough, deeply rutted tracks and numerous less challenging bridleways ideal for dirt tracking. I would spend hours charging around on my bike there. Popular as it was in the summer months, in winter time the area around Teufelsberg would completely change character and really come alive. Aside from walkers, the snow would bring with it hordes of skiers and sledgers taking maximum advantage of a huge sweeping downhill toboggan run which made the area a go-to spot for such activity. To this day, the sight of snow in any quantity transports me straight back to that wonderful time in Berlin.



Carl Maria von Weber 1798 - 1826

NAAFI - Theodor-Heuss-Platz until 1963 it bore the name Reichskanzlerplatz. Brits called it NAAFI-Platz. Officially it was Summit House. Photo TNM

Roger's story of his childhood days in Berlin continues in the Spring issue - "No 6 Civilian Mess, Music, Film and Windsor Boys School"

## BFG Form 66 : SOXMIS - Bill Johnston

Bill Johnston is going to seed in rural Leicestershire after 29 years in schools (plus three added to the pension for six years in the 'debilitating' Singapore climate). After retiring he made short celebratory videos for more than 60 schools in the UK and Singapore – and one which celebrated 25 years of SCEA's administration, which involved travelling to Gibraltar, Cyprus, Naples and Belize. Bill and his wife have just completed walking the South West Coastal Path around Cornwall, having polished off the Pembrokeshire Path; and when Norma's hip is sorted, they hope to take on the Devonshire coastline.

### SOXMIS

In September 1970 I was appointed Deputy Head of **Bünde Primary School**, having served one year at Hildesheim Primary after arriving in West Germany after teaching at Pasir Panjang / Wessex Junior School in Singapore since 1963. (After six years living less than 100 miles from the Equator it was something of a shock to the system to experience a severe northern hemisphere winter when the snow lay on the ground from November 1970 until the following Easter. The quarter we were given, No 1 Bethovenstrasse, was a corner property so it had pavements both in front of the house and alongside the lengthy garden. This meant getting up early each morning to ensure that no trace of snow remained on them to encourage an unwary German to slip and sue us.)

Bünde is a town between Herford and Lubbecke, famous for its tobacco and cigar museum. We lived on the Officers' Patch, semi-detached houses on Engelstrasse and Behringstrasse with three detached colonel's houses. (When I became Head in 1973 I fought for – and won – a very desirable semi-detached Major's quarter, one of just two in a secluded cul-de-sac with views stretching over open countryside.)

What made our patch in Bünde different from any other was a large group of quarters in our midst surrounded by a high chain link fence and almost impenetrable hedge; these houses were where the SOXMIS officers and their families lived.

**SOXMIS?** Sounds Russian. And they were. The Soviet Military Mission in BAOR used clearly identifiable cars and were permitted to travel at will throughout the British zone of what was then Western Germany to check that extra forces were not being built up nor

revolutionary equipment being installed in this period of the Cold War. They weren't allowed to sit alongside a military installation or take photographs – though they did both – and wherever the cars were spotted it was the duty of British servicemen to report the registration number and the time and place to our Military Police.

There was a small green hut near our house and opposite the entrance to the car park of their compound in Bünde where a watchman noted down the time and registration number of each of the SOXMIS cars as they left and returned. They often entered the 'Patch' at speed, closely pursued by a British military police car; but somehow managed to screech into their compound as the gates were hastily closed behind them.

(In East Germany BRIXMIS consisted of British soldiers driving around in the same fashion; and I expect there were YANKMIS, DUTCHMIS and others of a similar ilk all over the East.)

The British children living in the Patch were very fond of the man in the green hut, who would always have sweets available in return for a chat to relieve him of the monotony of his job.

There was no contact between the Russians and us apart from attempts by our children to communicate with the small children inside the fence, squeezing sweets and chocolates through the openings. When they reached a certain age the Russian children were flown back to Moscow. When a wife went shopping in Bünde she left only as part of a group so that there was no chance of her defecting to the West.

After I became head of Bünde School I received an invitation to a cocktail party at one of our colonel's houses, when some of the Russian officers were present. Resplendent in

their uniforms they moved round to chat with each of the Brits – but they didn't stay long with me when they discovered that the only military secret I possessed was an inventory of my bulging stationery and stock room (Remember the days when we could order from Viersen as much black sugar paper as we wanted?).

I played – badly – the organ at the church in Birdwood Barracks and directed the small, enthusiastic choir. Each Christmas we would set off to sing carols at the three British patches in and around Bünde (with a harmonium in a trailer towed by a Land-Rover and played by someone more competent than I). In the officers' patch we would always stop outside the main entrance to the Russian compound and give them two or three verses – but no one ever came out. Except once, when relations between Moscow and NATO must have been good – because on this occasion the gates were flung open and we were invited to step inside the house which served as the administrative centre. Here we were plied with vodka (orange juice for the children), tasty samosas and lots of smiles. One of the officers was even dressed as Grandfather Frost (like Santa but in a green instead of red robe) and ho-ho-ed around the room, patting our children's heads.

I said I played the organ badly. I used to drive to the church in the barracks an hour before the Sunday service and practise hitting the occasional right chord. But for a period from December 1973, because of a fuel crisis, the Bonn government banned private cars being driven on Sundays. The Signals Regiment based in Bünde issued me with a document that permitted me to drive along the short stretch of autobahn which was a short cut between the officers' patch and the camp. Each Sunday

BFG FORM 66 (Rev Apr 75)

### SOXMIS

**42**



SOVIET MILITARY MISSION - BAOR

THIS IS A TYPICAL SOXMIS NUMBER PLATE

REMEMBER: The number will be different on each car.

If you see a SOXMIS vehicle, contact as quickly as possible:

HERFORD MIA 2222

If using a German Civil Phone, dial:

- a. In HERFORD Code 89 then 2222
- b. Elsewhere Code 05221-89 then 2222



Начальник Советской военной миссии связи при Главнокомандующем Британской Рейнской армией генерал-майор С. Г. Зайцев с супругой просят *Mr and Mrs W. H. C. Johnson*

пожаловать на прием по случаю 54-й годовщины Великой Октябрьской социалистической революции. Прием состоится . 5 . ноября 1971 года с 18.00 до 20.00.

Просьба ответить  
Телефон 46-82

г Бюнде, Вестфалия,  
Энгельштрассе, 85



during this period the road was full of Germans enjoying the novelty of walking on a motorway – instead of the usual Sunday afternoon dawdling inspection of our

quarters in Behringstrasse – but when they saw a BFG car coming slowly towards them they shook their fists and hissed at the ignorant lawbreaker.

I could take it: I didn't want to upset both the German walkers and the British congregation on the same morning.

## Breakfast in Breda - Wilma Simpson



Breakfast in Breda

As many of you know, I am an avid motocross fan and travel all over Europe throughout the season following my nephew Shaun who rides in the MXGP World Championships. He has been a professional rider since he left school in 2005. He sat his Physics O grade on the Friday morning then flew down with his mother to Southampton, and crossed to the Isle of Wight turning pro the next day when he rode in his first professional race. He has continued with his career to the present date having ridden for numerous teams and varying makes of bikes; from top factory teams to, in 2020, his own motocross team SS24 i.e. Shaun Simpson 24, which is his riding number.

This year I had been to the first two GPs in UK, Matterley near Winchester and Valkenswaard in The Netherlands, when lockdown occurred and like you all were confined to our homes. Life as I knew it had stopped! Time was spent in and around my

home, tending to my seeds and eventually plants as well as numerous indoor activities. Some were pleasant but others like cleaning the venetian blinds less so!

Anyway, I digress from the main theme of this piece. Motocross like a number of other sports started to open up in mid-summer. An updated calendar was produced and the season would restart in Latvia on the weekend of 8th and 9th August. Latvia at the beginning of July had 1,141 positive Covid cases and thirty deaths from a population of approximately 1.9 million people. They were also stringent about quarantine on arrival if you came from a country that was above their permitted limit of 16 positive cases per 100,000. Every Friday an overview of European data was updated; UK was over the limit!

I was not to be thwarted by this and after some initial thoughts I decided that a 15/16 day trip to The Netherlands, which had a very low

count, would suffice. I would enjoy a break as well as meet the required quarantine regulations for Latvia.

I left Scotland on 21st July after an afternoon visit to my hairdresser. Yes, she had just opened. I drove south then stayed overnight about half way down. I took the Dover / Calais ferry on 22nd July as I can't sleep on the Hull / Rotterdam crossing, and arrived at my first hotel near Breda late evening. I then went to Arnhem on Monday 27th July and finally I moved to just south of Amsterdam on 2nd August.

It was interesting the different ways countries and hotels had of coping with the virus. In my first Dutch hotel it was well organised; numerous one way systems, lots of sanitiser and gloves and tongs at breakfast etc. You felt quite safe and everyone was mindful of social distancing. In my second hotel (an extra star and more expensive) it was much more frenetic. I don't know whether it was because they were bigger or what, but they didn't seem so well organised. Suffice to say I was thankful that my room was lovely; spacious with calm decor and a super garden view so I tended to collect a salad or similar from a supermarket and eat it in my room in the evening. I did have breakfast in one of the various restaurant areas. They could learn a lot from my first hotel! The third one was more similar to the first one. You were given a table for your stay and they brought your pre-ordered items; cheese, cold meat, egg, bread, croissant etc. Juice, coffee, cereal, butter, jam and other such items that are already packed you collected

**Wilma Simpson** joined Service Children's Education Authority (SCEA) in 1983 when she was posted to Naples Primary School. After three years she then moved to the Dhekelia Base from where she taught at Pergamos School, a few miles north of Dhekelia right on the Green Line. In January 1989 she moved to Talavera Primary in Werl, near Dortmund as DHT. When it closed in 1994, she then moved to Bishopspark First School in Paderborn also as DHT. In December 2000 Wilma moved south to Heidelberg Primary School as HT. The school was situated on one of the American Bases, Patrick Henry Village. A number of facilities were shared with their American neighbours. Then in August 2002 she returned to Bishopspark as acting HT. Her last posting was to William Wordsworth School in Sennelager in September 2003 as HT, from where she retired in April 2015. At this time the authority, which had gone through a variety of titles during her thirty-two years, was known as Service Children's Education (SCE).

## Breakfast in Breda continued



Airborne cemetery, Oosterbeek



Memorial soldier with flower girl



Delft Antiquities



Van and trailer en-route

yourself or from a basket at your table. In all three hotels once you arrived they didn't clean your room. They would leave extra towels in a bag on your door handle. This meant that no-one would have been in your room during your stay, which was a good idea.

In Holland there was no wearing of masks, anywhere; there were one way systems and sanitiser and people were socially distancing. I don't know if they have changed this as the number of positive Covid cases rose. In Belgium it was slightly different with face masks on if you went into a shop or petrol station etc. similarly so in Germany. At lunch in a wee cafe in Kleve, I was given a table number and a piece of paper to fill in. They had already written the table number, time in etc. On leaving I had to write the time I left, name, address and mobile phone number. Very organised indeed, and this is now the norm here too.

My first few days were spent visiting Breda, Delft, Zeeland on the coast and other places with canals and water. I just love canals with varying sized boats going up and down. I also saw heron, storks, geese and a number of other wildlife along the banks. I was surprised to see storks though. On the return journeys I often put in my Tom Tom 'avoid motorways'. I did love the interesting routes you ended up taking.

There were lots of military historical sites around the area of Arnhem. I was at the Airborne Museum, which is in the middle of a wonderful park area. It was just up the road from where my hotel was. I forgot that nowadays you tend to have to book to get into museums and other such venues. As it was holiday time here, it was almost all full up until after I departed. Howev-

er, I saw what I could. I visited Arnhem Bridge and the little museum there (you didn't have to book) was most informative and had a four minute explanation of the 'Market Garden' campaign in September 1944. I also visited the Oosterbeek cemetery one morning. Many of you will have visited some of these venues if you were out in Germany, I am sure.

I also travelled up to Den Helder as well as visiting Zandvoort, which is right on the coast. I recall visiting there many, many years ago but how it has changed; so busy and many more hotels, holiday apartments, cafes and restaurants. I didn't linger!

From my third hotel nearer Amsterdam, I visited Gouda and other small villages around the area. As many of you know the cycle paths are wonderful, and I believe are even better in the country areas where agricultural vehicles also use them. To see a very large combine harvester slowly moving along the wide cycle path was a sight to behold. We could certainly learn a lot from them.

There was a change of plan though. As I mentioned earlier, the reason for my Dutch trip was so I could spend 15/16 days in the country then fly to Latvia for the racing. You couldn't fly to Latvia directly from the U.K. as our covid figures were too high. However I ended up not flying either as it was all becoming too challenging. Shaun had already filled in paperwork for me, but there was more to come and on Friday 31st July it was made mandatory for all paddock personnel to have a Covid 19 check done three days before their arrival in Latvia! Shaun and Willie went to their doctor in Belgium and got their results within 24 hours by text. I couldn't be so

sure that I could get this done. They (MXGP) were being particularly fastidious (my opinion and no one had said this at the time) as the majority of the motocross community reside in Belgium, and as a country, had just moved into the red zone for numbers of personnel per 100,000 who are testing positive. So by doing this they were probably satisfying the authorities. This turned out to be the case. As I said, it was all becoming too bureaucratic.

I therefore headed home a little earlier than planned on Wednesday 5th August. I stopped half way on the way north and arrived home tired but safely on Thursday 6th August. I enjoyed my travels but was pleased to be home too. I had been away for fifteen days but due to the wet and heat we had in Errol the garden was quite jungle like! I spent the next few weeks getting it all under control.

I was able to change my return date ferry ticket without an extra charge. I also managed to cancel my hotel and was refunded my car hire in Latvia as well as parking at Schiphol. I received the flight refund a few weeks ago, so I have been lucky there.

Many of you will have used the Dover / Calais ferries during your time in Western Europe. On the way out there were about fifteen / twenty cars and on the return journey this jumped to about a hundred, although there were many more lorries. For the July / August period such small numbers would have been unheard of in times past. However, I have to say social distancing wasn't a problem!

Anyway, I watched the racing from the comfort of my own sitting room! I have an online streaming package so I can watch all the races which run until 8th November. I was not

too disappointed not to make it to Latvia as I had a break away, and perhaps that will keep me going.

Shaun and Willie's trip to Latvia was not without incident. The event was a 'triple header', three rounds of racing over nine days; Sat/Sun then Tues/Wed and Sat/Sun again. This meant they could have lots of racing but no travelling between the events, so it was easier on the riders and teams as well as cheaper for everyone. On the first Sunday Shaun had his wheel broken and back brake damaged accidentally by another rider in the first race. In the second one he had a huge off and banged his head as well as being badly bruised and knocked around. On the Monday he assessed the situation and felt there might be some internal injuries, so the decision was taken to return to Belgium and have a scan etc. So a nineteen hour return journey was duly done. He had his scan and was given the all clear. He was told to take it easy and resumed light training the next week. However on Wednesday 9th September he

had a silly, fluke accident while training at Lommel in Belgium. He ended up in hospital with a broken T2 and T3 vertebrae in his neck/ back area and a displaced left pinkie of his left hand. His vertebrae will heal naturally but he has to wear a back and neck brace in the meantime. His finger required an op! Back to square one. He was released from hospital on Monday 14th and spent a few days resting at his house in Lommel before heading home on Friday 18th with his dad. So the season is over for this year. He needs time to recover then get back up to full fitness for 2021. 2020 has been a difficult year all round, but onward and upward. He actually had the pin removed from his pinkie on Friday 2nd October at the hospital in Kirkcaldy. In two or three weeks' time he will fly back to Belgium with his dad to have his back checked before driving home with the remaining two vehicles for the winter break.

The races in September, October and November were / are being held in Italy and Belgium and one event



near Madrid but under similar circumstances as Latvia; the paddock is a controlled area with a number of local fans allowed track side but not into the paddock. The majority of flights to Italy, Spain, and Belgium have been cancelled apart from a few national carriers putting on flights between capital cities. So as I mentioned earlier I watch the racing online.

Not the same atmosphere but safer!

As I said, I thoroughly enjoyed my trip and felt quite safe. I suppose having my own car made a big difference.

### Ken Jones OBE



*Ken Jones graduated with a degree in geography at Leeds University where he remained to complete his PGCE .*

*His first teaching post , in 1962, was at Wennington School in Wetherby, a small Quaker boarding school for about 200 pupils where he was appointed Geography and Games teacher, and later Junior Housemaster. This was followed in 1965 as Head of Geography at Fulneck School , Pudsey - a school which had been created by the Moravian Religious Foundation.*

*In 1968 - following an application to SCEA Ken found himself Head of Geography at Kent School at Hostert . This was followed in 1970 by the deputy headship of Kent School and subsequently in 1972 the Headship of King's School in Gütersloh.*

*In 1990 Ken took up the prestigious post of Principal at Welbeck Defence Sixth Form College in Loughborough.*

***The Summer 2021 Newsletter will have much more to reveal about Ken's long and distinguished career.***

## On a visit to Shanghai - Ken Jones

### Communist Government controls and the challenges of China

Reading **Paul Cunningham's** excellent account of coming to terms with the authoritarian manner in which lockdown was implemented in China led me to recall how often I encountered instances of absolute state control during my four years as the Gap Project manager in southern China. More recently I have also been made aware of this during the work I have done with a Chinese owned educational organisation in Shanghai. **On a visit to Shanghai in 2018** I was surprised to hear the Chinese leaders of this organisation express worries as to the direction in which Xi Jinping was taking the country.

My role as the **Gap Project Manager** between 2002 and 2006 covered the provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, Sichuan, and Fujian, mainly in towns which never saw tourists. The work involved me spending the months of April and October in China visiting each of the gappers in their placements. Initially I had to select and place pairs of 18 and 19-year-old volunteers, from Britain and Australia, in state secondary schools, as language assistants in spoken English, for a period of five months. One group went out in September and the other group went out in February with about 40 going out each time. All British volunteers attended a week-long teaching skills course in London which I always visited.

Yunnan province proved to be an especially interesting province, as I quickly spotted that there were a lot of different facial features evident and when I asked why I was told that in earlier years 41 minority tribes, living in different parts of China, had been forced to migrate to this province to separate them from the dominant Han. Many of them were to be seen greeting passengers at Dali Airport proudly wearing their traditional dress. It was a much earlier example of the authoritarian actions of the central government which we see now in the way the Uighurs in Xinjiang province are being treated.

As well as these volunteers I interviewed, in each of the four provinces in China, teachers who had been



Guangxi Province



The world of work for young girls



Mass Exercise



The author poses with girls in minority tribe costumes - Yunnan

selected to come to the UK for one year to work mainly in private schools as teachers of Mandarin.

In this article I aim to bring together some of the instances of how the authoritarian control of the central government was often very apparent and highlight the kind of challenges I and the **gappers** met.

### **The beginning of the Gap China Project**

Brig(Rtd) John Cornell (ex Green Jackets) as the Director of Gap made many attempts to get the agreement of the Chinese to launch the project in the country which finally led to him being invited in 1989 to have a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in London. On the day before the planned appointment the awful Tiananmen Square incident occurred and John was convinced that this would totally destroy any chance of the project being accepted. To his immense surprise the planned appointment in the Chinese embassy did go ahead. At the end of the meeting the ambassador informed him that he would have to report back to Beijing to get the necessary governmental authority. After some weeks delay the authority was duly issued and the project was launched.

### **Reception in the Chinese Embassy**

During the week long teaching skills course in London the Chinese embassy always laid on a reception for the volunteers, myself and a Gap representative. During the course of the reception an address was always made by a delegated official to inform the volunteers of the great interest of the Chinese government in the project and what was expected of them.

### **Control of the project within each province.**

Within each province the project was overseen by a central government appointee who was the Provincial Education Officer. This person's retention of the post was always governed by the central government and in the four years I worked with them a regular theme was that they were not sure they would be there when I next visited. This

did happen on a number of occasions and this was often due to them being instructed to attend a six months residential intensive language course prior to being posted overseas.

### **Selection of schools which received the Gap volunteers**

This was entirely under the control of the Provincial Education Officer who would issue the approved schools with a licence to have foreign volunteers. The school selected was invariably the No 1 Middle School, as all state secondary schools in each town were rank ordered, but I never found out what criteria were applied. They were viewed as the best in the town and as such many parents living outside the town would pay a sum of money to have their children admitted.

This was understandable as the schools I visited showed evidence of huge investment in buildings and facilities, often grossly underused. Some of the investment came from former pupils who had become wealthy businessmen, and in one case I saw a school was built in just 6 months. PPI even in a Communist country! The contrasts between these schools and what I saw in the agricultural areas, just outside the towns, was so huge that I took the opportunity, wherever possible, to take the gappers out at a weekend to see for themselves. Some of the photos will illustrate these contrasts.

### **Secondary schools in China**

These were huge by our standards, ranging in size from 2000 to 10,000 pupils, with class sizes ranging between 55 and 70 being the norm. All of the schools I visited were contained within a secure perimeter fence with guards at the main entrance and a steel concertina gate. The schools were organised into Junior Middle for pupils between 12 and 15 years of age and Senior Middle for pupils between 15 and 18 years of age. The schools could be on separate sites or on a joint site and graduation from the Junior Middle school to the Senior Middle school was entirely

dependent on examination results. Failure in the Junior Middle 3 exams would lead either to a Vocational school or the world of work for a 15-year-old.

### **School management and promotion**

The two key leaders in the school were the Headteacher and the Communist Party Secretary. It was very difficult to know which of these two was the more important. Each time I sat down to meet the Headteacher the Party Secretary was always present. The key role of the latter seemed to be to ensure that the ethos of the school was in accordance with the Communist Party ethos and that all teachers conformed to all government instructions. Below these two key figures there were usually three Deputy Heads.

Promotion to a Headship seemed to require membership of the Communist party and waiting for an instruction from the party to put their names forward. Another pre-requisite was for their names to be open to public scrutiny, with photographs of them in the local papers and scope for the public to raise objections. Once appointed, those Heads who were very successful could be directed after some years to move to take over a failing school.

For the ordinary teachers, once appointed they were not allowed to move to another school unless directed to do so. Seeking to move to another school of their own volition would lead to punishment. An example of this involved a young teacher who came to England for a year and who, during his time here, became so disillusioned with the nature of his work as an English teacher back in China, informed his Headteacher that he did not want to return to the school and punishment duly followed which involved the payment of a fine.

Another young teacher I selected to come to the UK informed me that before his departure he was given strict rules by the Party Secretary and if all went well he would be invited to join the

Communist party on his return. He was delighted with this news as he said it would help him a great deal in his career.

### The curriculum and examinations

These gave a very clear example of the very tight control exercised by the Chinese government. The core subjects which were taught were Chinese, Mathematics, Physics and English (pre the Cultural Revolution it was Russian) Political Science, Biology or Chemistry, Geography or History. There were no formal PE or games lessons, but the whole school would go out in their normal clothes for 20 minutes and do coordinated physical exercises to the accompaniment of loud music through the school loudspeaker system. Each class was supervised by the pupil designated as the class leader who was responsible for both attendance and performance. This was an amazing sight to behold for reasons of class discipline, as there was minimal teacher supervision. I never saw any kinds of extra curricular activities or school team sports against other schools.

The examinations were as specified by the central government and for pupils at the end of Junior grade 3 and Senior grade 3 they were vital for the onward continuation of their studies. They were a particular source of great pressure for Senior grade 3 students as their university choice depended on these results. Getting a place at a top university was very competitive as the central government allocated a set number of places for each province. The provinces I visited felt that their allocation of places was very inferior to the places allocated to the wealthier provinces on the north eastern seaboard of China.

Examination results led to students being allocated a set number of points with the overall maximum being 680 points. The four core subjects had a maximum of 100 points each and the three other subjects 80 points each. Finally, 40 points were allocated for physical fitness. If the students

fell below a certain level in many subjects, they had to repeat the school year. There was one occasion when I was being shown around school in the lunch break and I saw some boys doing press ups in a gym. I asked the teacher accompanying me whether this was a punishment and he said no we want to be sure these boys pass the physical fitness test in the final examination!

On the morning after the grade 3 examinations the national papers printed the correct answers for all subjects which were fact specific.

To get to one of the top universities the students had to get a points total well into the mid 600s.

### The school day for pupils and teachers

Schools operated on the basis of two terms a year, separated by the Chinese New Year, which meant the first term ran from September to late January and the second term from mid-February to the start of July.

At the start of each week on a Monday the whole school had to stand outside and sing the National Anthem and the National flag was raised.

The school days were very long starting at 7:30 am with the initial 30 minutes being compulsory silent reading in the classroom and it really was silent. Lessons were 40 minutes long with a 10 minutes break between each lesson. Added to this there would be a 10 minutes eye exercise session and the amazing 20 minutes whole school physical exercise session. 90% of all lessons took place in the one classroom with the teachers moving around. This meant that the desks of each pupil were stacked high with different textbooks for every subject. Minimal time was allocated to science or IT practicals.

Many schools had superb labs which were hardly used as was the case with the modern gyms.

All teaching was based on state designated textbooks which led to state set examinations. The lessons were teacher

centred and focused on the assimilation of knowledge to pass exams. There was no scope for enquiry or research by pupils and zero group work. As one walked around a school one regularly heard a whole class chanting what the teacher had just told them. Pupils were not expected to have an individual viewpoint or have a discussion.

The role of the pupil who was the class leader was an interesting one as it not only covered supervising the class at the mass physical exercise session but also recording attendance, lateness, performance in subject tests and the efficiency with which they cleaned their classroom at the end of the day. The performance of the class in all these different elements was given a score and openly displayed on a board outside the classroom.

The school day having started at 7:30 am would continue until 5:30 pm, with a lunch break of 2 hours. Pupils were then expected to return to the school at 7 pm for 2 hours 30 minutes supervised private study or extra lessons. The class leader supervised the sessions and the teachers were expected to be present on a rota basis.

For the teachers their teaching loads were light by our standards as they amounted to 12 lessons a week and at most 14. However, class sizes were huge, between 55 and 70 and the marking load very heavy. During the time I was in the schools I saw teachers spend more time marking than preparing lessons.

The English departments I visited were mainly staffed by women and the standards of spoken English were terrible. The emphasis in the past had been on reading, writing, comprehension and grammar and this led to a whole generation of English teachers with limited ability and very poor pronunciation in spoken English. Headteachers sometimes asked me to listen to the person they viewed as their best teacher give an Eng-

lish lesson and ask for my opinion at the end. The fact that I often could not understand what they were saying, because of poor pronunciation, made it a difficult task. In some schools when I met the Head of English they had to have a young teacher translate for them because they could not speak English! This situation meant that the central government started putting far more priority on the importance of spoken English which no doubt is one of the reasons why the Gap project was accepted.

I suspect that all of us who have pursued careers as teachers would have found the authoritarian governmental controls I have highlighted - very difficult to accept but on the other hand the well disciplined pupils which such a regime produced might be seen as a blessing!



... and in the spring

2021 issue Ken Jones

concludes the story of

his time as manager

of the Gap Project.

## A Personal Memoir: Hemer Primary School

*Bill Bowen started work as Headteacher of Hemer School in the New Year of 1984 with very little idea of what was ahead of him. This is his personal memoir ...*



Summer Term 1984



Hemer American Elementary School 1984/5



Autumn Term 1987

I started work as Headteacher of Hemer School in the New Year of 1984 with very little idea of what was ahead of me. I knew very little of what working in the setting of a Service School would be like, and equally no idea of how long I would be staying there. I knew that I wanted to work in an overseas location and wanted a better economic future for myself and my family. I had already completed 17 years working in schools in the UK; eventually progressing to the Headship of a Junior School in Wolverhampton and, with a wife and family to keep, was finding life something of a struggle to make ends meet. Accordingly, with the offer of free accommodation and an overseas allowance, we felt it was worth the gamble of accepting a three-year contract to join the Service Children's Schools (North-West Europe), the main branch of the Service Children's Education Authority (SCEA).

(I am writing these notes in the year 2020, 26 years after the school closed, so I apologise in advance for any inaccuracies that may have occurred; they are due only to my fading memory.)

Hemer itself is a small town around 20 miles south of the industrial city of Dortmund on the edge of an area of outstanding natural beauty known as the Sauerland. At the time I arrived, it was part of the Hemer/Iserlohn Station, itself part of a large battle group, the 3rd Armoured Division. On the Station were 3 Primary Schools, Hemer itself and the Iserlohn and Summern Schools. Secondary pupils attended the Cornwall Secondary School in Dortmund up until the age of 16. The British Army provided the buses to transport pupils there each day. For 'A' Level studies, pupils over 16 were offered boarding facilities at



Windsor School in Rheindahlen, where the British Army of the Rhine (BOAR) had their Headquarters; a 90 mile drive away beyond the major town of Dusseldorf towards the borders of Belgium and Holland.

For me, the move to Hemer proved a significant moment in many ways, not least because it was the very first trip in an aeroplane in my entire life. My family (one wife, three daughters) came with me. We stayed overnight in military accommodation for an early flight on an Air Force carrier along with military personnel to Dusseldorf Airport where we were met by my Deputy, Bob Steele, who drove us to our new home. That was December 29 1983. On December 30, Bob said we were invited to a New Year party given by some other teachers where I could be introduced to most of my new staff. The trouble was that they introduced themselves as totally different staff members to who they actually were. Fortunately, due to the effects of strong German beer, by the next day I had completely forgotten who they had said they were anyway and had to be introduced all over again, the right way round this time. It was actually quite fortunate for me as the staff thought I had taken the joke in good heart; it led them to think I was going to be a friendly, tolerant headteacher, which I

hoped I was.

Hemer was a pleasant and prosperous town, founded on the wire drawing industry. Its main feature was the Felsenmeer, a collapsed limestone cave system. At one end was a large cave, the Heinrichshohle. It then turned into a massive jumble of striated rocks overgrown with massive beech trees, before ending at the village of Deilinghofen, where the town's two British barracks were situated. For me, the main attraction in the town was the 50 metre swimming pool facility which the school was able to use for swimming lessons, and my family could use on Friday evenings before the weekly treat of 'fritten mit gyros' from a schnell imbiß takeaway kiosk, or pizza at the Fontana di Trevi restaurant. During WWII, Hemer was the site of a concentration camp, Stalag VI-A. It housed mainly Russian POWs, and over 20,000 victims of that terror are buried in a mass grave on a hillside beyond the town in a parkland now dedicated to peace and friendship between nations.

The Hemer School building was quite special in that originally it had been built as an all-age school - by Canadian Forces who had been based there during the early years of the formation of NATO. The station was used as a rest and recreation area well back from the front line of the frontier

with what was then East Germany (the Iron Curtain) to counter the perceived threat of a Russian invasion. It was (still is) a very large building. At the time, I took over (the Canadians were long gone, having left in 1970) the school housed not only classrooms for around 350 pupils, but also the Station Library, the Station Youth Club, the Station Kindergarten, as well as a totally separate United States Elementary School which used 4 classrooms for about 35 children aged 4 -14, under the direction of their headteacher, a Bostonian called Bob Whitman who became a close personal friend. The US Army had a small base in Menden, a town about 10 miles away. (I used to feel safe enough being about 150 miles away from the East German border, until I found out the US base housed a missile regiment whose rockets were poised to fire directly into East German territory and which would have been among the first targets of a Russian invasion force.) In 1970, when the British Army took over from the Canadian Forces, the building housed a Middle School (8 - 12 years) on the top floor with a First School using the ground floor classrooms. The experiment was not a success as the two headteachers did not get on, and when I arrived the change to one Primary School had been established for a number of years. When I arrived on the Hemer/Iserlohn station itself there were three army regiments based there, the First Battalion of The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters, the

Gordon Highlanders, and 26 Engineer Regiment. Also situated there was BMH Iserlohn, a hospital run by the British Army Medical Service, and some children of medical personnel attended my school too. The arrangements for the housing of schoolteachers in Service Schools in the station were quite complicated. All teachers were nominally regarded as having Officer status. Class teachers were given the equivalent rank of Lieutenant. As my deputy, Bob Steele was regarded as having the status of Captain, and I enjoyed the equivalent military rank of a Major. So I was able to live in a Major's quarter off the base, whereas the single teachers started off being accommodated in the Officers Mess of the 26 Engineer Regiment. Around Hemer School were the married quarters of mainly non-commissioned soldiers, so there were very few children of officer rank parents in my school. Children from the quartering area where we were accommodated were taken by bus each morning to Iserlohn School where almost all of the children of officer rank families (who weren't in private boarding schools back in England) were allocated. Fortunately for me, this led to Hemer School being regarded as one with many special needs pupils; consequently I managed to keep quite a relatively calm atmosphere in the school, and caused little trouble for the authorities, I knew I was going to be OK.

Most of my single teachers, especially those who had been with the Service for some

time, had managed to arrange some degree of independence by moving to one-bedroom flats in the attic of married officer buildings outside of the barracks. I soon realised that what was intended at first to be a stepping stone to further work overseas in the private sector, suited me just fine. My house was better than that which I had come from. We didn't have to pay for fuel and light. We were entitled to purchase petrol coupons from the regimental quartermaster at a duty-free rate, and, best of all, we could buy goods, including cars, without paying tax. Within less than one term's service under my belt, I was able to take my family with me on the ferry from Kiel in Northern Germany to Gothenburg in Sweden to take possession of our first ever brand new car; a 245 Volvo Estate.

**Hemer School: my first years**

With my immediate economic future assured, I also found a school situation too that suited me down to the ground. Hemer school had a committed, professional staff and a most delightful bunch of pupils. The school had a well-established tradition of ensuring that all pupils were given every opportunity to explore and benefit from the local environment; a tradition that I was determined to follow and expand. As headteacher, I enjoyed two immense advantages over my UK counterparts; generally speaking, the parents were supportive of what I was trying to achieve, they knew that I was held in esteem by the Commanding Officers of each regiment and would not wish to be the source of any trouble. Secondly, because all teachers at the time were on three-year renewable contracts, I could get rid of incompetent or troublesome staff members simply by refusing to recommend them for a second or third contract for them. That power was not open to me back in the UK.



1991



1993

Within a year of arriving in Hemer, I had applied for a second contract, which I secured; this time for a period of five years, which would take me to the age of 45 years ...

*Read the concluding part of Bill Bowen's personal memoir in the Spring 2021 issue of the newsletter.*





Photo tnm

Les Garner taught in Cyprus at Episkopi Primary from September 1969 to August 1972 and St John's Secondary from September 1972 to July 1974. Having gone to Turkey on holiday in July 1974 with his first wife and two daughters, they were unable to return to Cyprus because of the invasion and had to drive back to UK (you can read Les's account of this adventure in the Summer 2019 Newsletter); after a term in UK, Les joined King's School in Gütersloh, in January 1975, before moving to John Buchan Middle in Sennelager in January 1979. He left SCEA in July 1982 to take up a position as deputy head of a large middle school in Suffolk, taking early retirement in May 1995, but continuing to work at the same school on a two-thirds contract until December 2003. When his wife, Kay, joined SCEA in January 2004 at Afnorth School, Brunssum, they moved to Holland with their two sons, where Les started work as a supply teacher, continuing in the Rheindahlen area at various schools when Kay moved to St Andrew's School in September 2006. Finally, Les returned to Episkopi when his wife took up a post at Episkopi Primary School in September 2009, almost 40 years to the day when he first taught there! When Kay retired as headteacher of Episkopi Primary at the end of August 2019, Les finally finished as well, after 52 years as a teacher!

Kay, and I were in UK for two weeks early in March this year. As our visit progressed, it became clear that various countries were tightening their regulations and, with a few days left, we learned that Cyprus would be taking into quarantine anyone arriving from UK from 6pm on Monday 16th March. As we were due to fly back from Stansted on that date, with an arrival time of 4pm, we were increasingly concerned that we might not be back in time if our flight was delayed - as it turned out, we made it back with two hours to spare! However, we still had to self-isolate for 14 days, but at least we were in our own home. This was the beginning of our lockdown experience in Cyprus.

We had been living in our rented villa in Pissouri Village for more than six months, following Kay's retirement. Fortunately, a teacher from the school was also living in the village, as her husband had left the army to become a diving instructor, so they very kindly agreed to buy and deliver food for us during our self-isolation - their son was also able to help as he had been working on a cruise ship that had ended its trip in Limassol, so he was living with mum and dad (he still is!).

During lockdown, after our isolation ended, we were allowed out just once a day, either for exercise, shopping, medical reasons, etc. Kay had to text a government department, giving the reason and time for leaving the house and stating the category (one of

eight in total and you weren't allowed to do more than one a day!) - she then had to wait for a text reply giving her permission to go out (which generally came instantaneously). I was able to just fill in a form giving the same details, which I had to carry with me in case the police stopped me to check - presumably they thought that anyone over the age of 65 would not be able to send a text using a mobile phone!

We did hear of people in the village who were stopped and fined €300 for not carrying the paperwork or were not able to show the text giving them permission to be out. I did manage to be fairly flexible in combining two or three different visits when going for shopping, fuel or pharmacy because I didn't have to text for permission. As Kay wasn't able to do this, she devised the wonderful plan of running a marathon (42.195km) in one week! We live in a very quiet area (there weren't any neighbours at that time), with a straight stretch of road in front of the house, measuring 120 metres - so she ran 6km every day by going up and down the road 50 times each day for seven days to complete 42km, plus the extra 0.195km on the last day - without ever leaving the close vicinity of our house!

Having been rather lazy myself in the past regarding exercise, only being able to go out once a day somehow turned out to be an essential activity! We were both able to go out for lovely walks with wonderful

views of the sea, cliffs and mountains whilst always remaining within the required one-kilometre radius of our home - we are very fortunate to live where we do. Although all the local restaurants were closed, some were able to do takeaways, delivered or to collect - so we had curries delivered from 'Saffron' in Pissouri Bay and, from the village, fish and chips with mushy peas every Friday from 'The Two Friends', which I collected, and chicken tavas and vegetarian moussaka delivered from 'O Vrakas'! As lockdown in Cyprus eased, we were finally able to go out to a restaurant for our first meal on Thursday, 21st May.

Another feature of our lockdown and post-lockdown experience has been playing tavli together nearly every day - at home in the first few weeks and also, more recently, at a local taverna by the sea. Tavli is a great game, played in Cyprus and Greece, on a backgammon board. If you've been to either country you will have seen the men sitting outside the local coffee shop, drinking their coffee, talking loudly and playing tavli!

The government of Cyprus has done really well in the way they have handled the covid crisis - Cyprus is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world to live in at the present time. We certainly feel safe here and happy to go out, taking sensible precautions of course, but not feeling that our lives have been severely restricted. Many people have struggled financially of course, especially as



Cyprus relies heavily on the tourist trade, particularly visitors from UK. Paphos, which is usually full of tourists in the summer months, has had only 10% of hotels open, with only 10% occupancy. Walking along the extensive coastal path, it is so strange to see so many beautiful hotels with nothing, except maybe a few gardeners looking after the grounds and then the occasional hotel with only a handful of visitors using the sunbeds.

We have also been able to take advantage of living out here by taking three holidays since July - a week in Krakow (the same trip that had been cancelled in June), when

everyone on the return flight was tested without paying (as one flight a day was being selected and everyone on board tested - we were the lucky winners!), three nights in Prague in August and two weeks in Crete in September, paying €60 each both times for a test at Paphos Airport on our return, which we are entitled to do as residents of Cyprus. We have also been away three times for a couple of nights in two different Air B&Bs and a hotel in three different locations around the island. We have felt comfortable with flying in the last three months, always having two out of the three seats to ourselves as planes have never

been crowded.

So, although our big holiday was curtailed because of COVID, a week's skiing trip to Bulgaria was cancelled and we had to cancel our September flight to Dublin for a week touring around, followed by ten days in UK (we have had all our money back except for one flight), we have still managed to keep travelling, for which we feel very grateful - especially as this was meant to be our 'gap year' (well at least two years actually!) following Kay's retirement. For us then, 2020 has been a very different year, but also a good year - we have been very fortunate indeed.

*The Association is pleased to welcome Mr Bram Nash, who taught in Hameln, Lippstadt and Hakedahl primary schools between 1974 and 1985.*

*His wife Rochelle was a LET in those schools over the same period.*

## Have you read? - reviewed by Mike Bennett

### British Forces In Germany. The Lived Experience by Peter Johnston.

192pp - ISBN 978 178816 0322 - Price £35 - dimensions 11 x 9.5 inches,

First published in UK 2019 by Profile Books Ltd. Copyright: Ministry of Defence.

This beautifully produced book is written in a fluent narrative style which relates the history of the British Forces in Germany from 1945 until the almost complete withdrawal in 2019. There are nine chapters, one for each decade under headings such as From War to Peace, Walls and Wire and At Home in Germany, each embellished by recollections and anecdotes.

In 1945 Field Marshall Montgomery forbade any form of fraternisation with the defeated enemy. A captain recalls 'we were billeted in a village which we had taken over and surrounded with barbed wire; the inhabitants had been turned out but the housewives were allowed in each day to clean their homes for us. I remember at Christmas the owner came with her little daughter and put up Christmas decorations for us. It was an

uneasy sort of time'.

National Servicemen remember the accommodation and army rations, both of which were often superior to what they were used to back in UK. The Regulars complained the servicemen took up too much of their time to discipline and train, when they themselves had their hands full during the Cold War.

The Berlin Airlift and the Berlin Wall changed the German civilians attitude to the British and soon the occupiers were seen as friends and protectors. In return the Forces were encouraged to mix with the host nation. Germany was now a very popular posting.

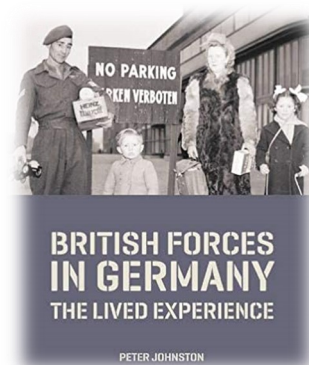
The book is full of interesting information and will evoke many memories for those who lived and worked in Germany. I was surprised to learn that by 1947, there were 3,543 pupils being taught by 216 teachers in 85 'schools' across the British Zone. I suspect many of the schools were based in quarters or barrack blocks. I read that Church House, Lubbecke in which I was dined out by headteacher colleagues in 1994 was Montgomery's HQ in

1945 before he moved to Bad Oeynhausen.

Did you know that currywurst was created by a Berlin Hausfrau in 1949 using Ketchup, Worcestershire sauce and curry powder allegedly bought from the NAAFI? Seventy years later an estimated 800 million are eaten in Germany every year, according to the author. We are introduced to the legendary Wolfgang the Bratty Man, part of the fabric of life since 1974 selling chips and mayonnaise and Wittinger beer from his modified blue Mercedes van to the troops on exercise on the Soltau ranges. The author however does not mention 'Lay by Lil' who for many years in the 1970's and 80's, legally plied her trade from a camper van between Fallingbostel and Walsrode.

I was reminded of visits to the Belgian Officers' Club in Cologne and film nights in Werl, during my time in Dortmund.

Sadly the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review heralded the beginning of the end. Some units had never been stationed in the UK. The book is worth having if only for its photographs (most from



the National Army Museum, where the author is based), its wonderful maps and colourful collection of Army Group Formations. I also amused myself by finding Association members' names among the acknowledgements and subscribers.

I finish with a quote from a Colonel Spencer 'Through most of my service, we in officers' messes used to have **curry lunches** from time to time, which I think harks back to the good old days in India. I think quite soon that we are going to find officers' messes having bratty and kartoffelsalat lunches and getting in some decent beer to remember what life was like in BAOR.' I'll drink to that!

## 2020 AGM; Lynn Marshall - Secretary

### Late breaking news :



**William (Bill) Batten** sadly passed away on 17th November 2020. He had been ill for a long

time but fought it bravely, maintaining his humour and coping without ever complaining. Bill joined SCEA in 1970, teaching firstly in Naples – where he met his wife Barbara - then Sek Kong in Hong Kong. He inter-command transferred to Bielefeld School before moving on as Deputy Head of Soest under his old Hong Kong mentor, John Tate. He subsequently became Headteacher of Alanbrooke School in Dortmund. He was a talented yet humble man, respected by all who knew him. He leaves his widow, Barbara, also a SCEA teacher, two daughters and two grandsons, who brought him immense pleasure.



The BFES/SCEA Association AGM took place via Zoom on Saturday 14th November 2020 at 11 AM.

The AGM took place and, despite many reservations, it was a very successful meeting.

All committee members took part and were joined by three members who had asked to attend. They were Barbara and Philip Arrandale and Jimmy Caldwell. A fourth member - Sybil Watson the winner of our £100 questionnaire prize draw - had been invited to attend.

Everyone logged on successfully and Ken welcomed and thanked them for attending. Time was then spent in outlining the Zoom AGM protocols to be followed.

The main points from the meeting were as follows:

1. The committee was elected to serve for a further year. As follows:

Kenrick Jones OBE - chair,

Walter Lewis - vice chair and archivist,

Lynn Marshall - secretary,

Janet Bradley - treasurer,

Hugh and Christine Ritchie - membership secretaries,

Sue Adams - events organizer,

Mike Chislett - website manager,

Tom Nielsen-Marsh - newsletter editor .

Jane Tull.

2. Ken and Sue both made it clear they would be retiring from the committee at the 2021 AGM.

3. The issue of attracting new committee members was discussed. As a result the visitors to the AGM were invited to be co-opted to zoom committee meetings for the year. Both Jimmy Caldwell and Sybil Watson declined as they are currently heavily committed elsewhere but expressed a desire to support and help when their circumstances changed. Barbara and Philip Arrandale accepted but also stated they are also committed elsewhere.

4. The proposal to change the constitution was accepted. The membership section now reads:-

*Membership is open to anyone over the age of 18 with an association with or family connection to Services schools.*

4. The committee will meet via Zoom in January to discuss how best to inform and attract new members.

5. A voucher scheme to attract new members was proposed by Christine. Full information will be circulated to all members by the membership secretaries.

6. The main findings of the questionnaire were discussed. Further details appear elsewhere in the newsletter. The committee was delighted to receive 81 replies. All due to Jane Tull's great idea of a £100 draw incentive. The committee was also delighted that the overall sentiment from members was that the committee was doing a grand job.

7. Future events planned for 2021 are:-

**Curry Lunch Winchester. April 24th 2021**

**Welbeck College - June 11th 2021 (provisional date)**

**AGM - Bovington Tank Museum October 9th 2021**

8. GDPR - the committee would blind copy emails sent out on committee business and to members. The committee would not be required to blind copy amongst themselves.

9. The meeting closed at 12.10 with the hope everyone would stay safe and meet in 2021.

## 2020 Association Members' Survey Report

### Introduction and background to the survey:

The Committee has long considered the best way to meet the needs of the membership. We live in a changing world, and although it is impossible to tell what the future will be, it is necessary to move forward and to evolve. With the closing of service children's schools over the years it is clear that our membership is

naturally declining and to remain active we need to plan ahead. Covid19 has placed an unexpected halt to events, but also given us an opportunity to 'deliberate, cogitate and debate' what lies ahead. The Committee therefore planned a survey of membership to find out what was important to members in three main areas: what members value about membership,

what events are attractive to members and how membership can be sustained and promoted for the future. The survey was designed to be as accessible as possible, offering questions online through **Survey Monkey** and also paper copies that could be completed by hand and posted back. The offer of entry to a £100 draw was offered as an additional incentive.

*A full Survey report can be downloaded from the Association's website.*

**Survey responses:**

In total, 81 responses to the survey were completed, roughly 35% of members taking part. The feedback from the survey was overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the Association was strong and has a loyal membership. The three top priorities to come out of the survey were the enjoyment to be gained from reading the newsletter, the continued contact with ex-colleagues and friends at events and the importance of the travelling distance when considering attending events. There were ten questions to answer in the survey, and what follows is a quick overview of the main points raised within the survey.

**What do members value about the Association?**

The first question was set to determine length of membership. Whilst some had been members for less than 5 years, 58% of respondents had been a member of the Association for 15 or more years. It is great that we do attract new members, but the loyalty of long standing membership is rewarding. Important factors in membership noted were “keeping in contact with friends and enjoying events together” along with “receiving and reading the newsletter”. Members noted how much they enjoyed reading and reminiscing about people and places when looking through the newsletter. This connection is obviously very important to all members. Several members have offered to write new articles, which will include informative items detailing experiences from a range of locations.

**Attending events and selecting venues:**

The questions posed to find out what members most

enjoyed about events brought out two key features - knowing that friends would attend the event and that the venue was within a reasonable distance from home. These were important factors for members as the decided whether to attend or not. As members are spread across the whole of UK (and beyond) this has always been a difficult need to meet for the Committee. The map indicates where our members are based and the Committee plans to use the map to assist in selecting venues in the future.

Suggestions for returning to previous venues that had been enjoyable and some new ideas were listed by members. A general preference for a military or historically interesting venue was expressed by many members, although some also demonstrated interest in smaller, low-key events closer to home.

Illness, prior commitments, distance to the venue and the lack of friends attending were offered as the main reasons for members not to attend any event. 17% of members had not attended any event. The Curry lunches in Winchester came out as being very popular with 55% of members indicating they had attended a lunch here. The reason became clear as it was noted that many ex-colleagues from the Far East got together for this particular event.

**Sustaining and promoting membership:**

The third aim of the survey to consider how to promote and sustain membership brought forth many good ideas for spreading information about the Association to potential new members, including more use of social media and generating more publicity for the

Association. There was also a strong feeling that it was time to open up membership to other, interested and connected groups. As for sustaining current membership, sharing information about who is attending events and generally welcoming and introducing new members to others and so encourage friendships were suggestions highlighted within the feedback.

**What next?**

The Committee will be debating the issues arising within the survey and considering how best to meet the continuing needs of the membership. There were many good suggestions made by members that will help the Committee in moving forward. All will be thoughtfully considered.

Thanks to all of you who completed the survey, your input has been much valued and appreciated.

A fuller report can be downloaded from the Association’s website.

**Members in each region:**

- 1. 9
- 2. 12
- 3. 10
- 4. 9
- 5. 19
- 6. 31
- 7. 32
- 8. 45
- 9. 9
- 10. 11
- London: 4
- Ireland: 1
- Overseas: 16

\* AGM events  
 \* Other events  
*Approximate location*



## Obituaries

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#### Member

Jane Tull

#### We're on the Web!

<http://www.bfes-scea-association.org/>

#### Association Membership

Membership of the Association currently costs £15 per year. Membership is open to anyone who has served with BFES, SCEA, SCS(NWE), SCE or latterly is serving with the remaining MOD Schools. The membership year runs from 1st January to 31st December and payment can be made by Standing Order or cheque.

Further information and a membership application form are available from the

Membership Secretaries -  
94 Headcorn Drive -  
Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7TX



#### Jonathan (Jon) Pryce 23 Aug 1949 - 1 May 2020.

Jon joined Kent School, near JHQ Rheindahlen, in September 1973 as a Biology teacher. Jon married his lifelong partner Helen, in December 1973, and moved to Windsor School some years later. Jon took early retirement in 2001

and returned to the UK to live in Bromsgrove. Soon afterwards he took a job at King Edward Five Ways School. In 2003 Jon was diagnosed with Parkinson's and gave up teaching a few months later. Jon and Helen have 2 children, Jonny and Caroline, and 3 grandchildren, Romy 5, Matilda 3, and Rafferty 1. Jon

was well known for his subtle, dry wit and went about his business in a refreshingly understated and humble manner. He was loved and respected as a friend and colleague to many. Jon is missed enormously by all his family and his friends but will forever inspire happy memories among those who knew him.

#### Brian Birkby - AEO

Southern Region who died peacefully at Cottingley Hall Care Home - Giggleswick on August 14, 2020 aged 83. A highly qualified German speaker with expertise in Secondary and Middle School education, Brian was equally highly respected for his warm,

quiet sense of humour and ability to make good judgements. Brian had an intuitive understanding of the pressures on his teachers and heads. He loved France and retired there, but sold up a few years ago. He was around at the time of the beginnings of the "training" industry

which grew up around education, so consultants can reap rewards which should, perhaps, have been going into schools for children.

It was not Brian's scene - saying that "we'll be training birds how to fly soon!"!



#### Maurice Hann 1939 - 2020

Sadly, Maurice passed away on 9th September this year in Dorset. It was back in 1967 that Maurice applied for a job with the Far East Land Forces in Singapore successfully obtaining work as a woodwork and technical drawing teacher in Bourne Secondary School. His wife Juliet taught at the Tanglin Preparatory School and his daughter, Anita, was a pupil there. Maurice often

remarked that the years the family spent in Singapore were the best years of his life. Indeed, he devoted 55 pages of his biography to life in Singapore commenting upon the changes to the country writing, 'we were lucky to live there when we did and had the chance to experience so many things before they disappeared forever'. After he left Singapore in 1971, he continued sharing his interest in the country and in the

Gurkha community, writing an article for this newsletter back in 2001 entitled "Return to Singapore".

He also posted many of his photographs of school life that can be viewed on the 'Memories of Singapore' website [www.singas](http://www.singas)

His daughter, Anita, proudly states that donations at his funeral raised funds in excess of £1,100 for the Gurkha Welfare Trust and Marie Curie."

**Garth Collard** joined King's School in the late 1970's as the Head of Humanities and continued to serve in this capacity until the mid 1980's at which time he departed to take up a Deputy Headship in Cambridgeshire. During our time together I quickly came to realise I had recruited a first-class member of staff who had a good sense of humour. He had a sharp intellect consistent with someone who had studied at Cambridge university. I quickly realised he was a

member of staff who rather enjoyed keeping the school management on their toes and this was often evident in Heads of Department meetings. Whenever there was a verbal joust in meetings he always did it with a smile on his face.

When the time came for his departure, I rather enjoyed saying to him he would now come to realise that school management was not an easy task, to which his reply was "I am

sure you are right" again with a smile on his face.

When I met him subsequently at a King's School reunion I organized in September 2010, along with Ian Stoter, I was truly shocked and sad to see him suffering from a stroke and having real difficulty speaking and having major problems of mobility. In the following 10 years he has been superbly cared for by his wife until his death earlier this summer.

**Ken Jones former HT Kings School. 1972 - 1990**