

# THE JOURNAL OF THE BFES SCEA ASSOCIATION

Issue 52 Summer 2022

2022 AGM lunch to be held at the Abbey Hotel, Malvern, Worcestershire on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022



Royal Visit to East Shallowford

**“The harder you work,  
the harder it is to  
surrender.” – Vince  
Lombardi**

## Sue Adams reflects on retirement

I find it hard to believe that I have now been retired for 17 years and even harder to remember what I thought retirement would be like other than knowing I would be living in Somerset and hopes of further travel.

Once MFO boxes were unpacked, the new world of unmetabled life was there ready for a new schedule of activities.

During my retirement I have been involved with 19 different clubs/societies. Some no longer exist — membership has waned due to members becoming older or in some cases, people are still nervous of the Covid effect and the Society has ceased to function. This is particularly evident in local groups but those which are of broader status manage to survive. Obviously things change in 17 years and the challenges facing societies or organisations change too as society itself has changed.

Of the 19 original groups, I am now directly involved with just 6 and each one is requiring more of my time. This is mainly due to a lack of new people coming forward to replace those who have left.

One of the roles I have is as a trustee of East Shallowford Farm. I became involved with this trust via an introduction from a family history group (The Braund Society) which I had joined. I found that the lady who had formed the trust was a distant cousin - Elizabeth Braund. She had started a youth club in the sixties in Battersea called Providence House which still exists today. She recognised that many of the children/youth that she worked with had had no experience of the countryside and so in 1977 she bought a farm on Dartmoor - East Shallowford Farm, which she referred to as "A lung for the city".

Generations of children and sometimes their families have continued to come to the farm since that time.

Elizabeth died in 2013 and since then there has been much necessary refurbishment of old buildings to accommodate future groups. This has required much energy and time with fund raising. Now all the work is done with the buildings and we were honoured with a visit from the **Earl and Countess of Wessex** in May this year to officially open one of the barns. That does not suggest "Job done" - we still have to consider the best way forward for encouraging future generations to continue and appreciate a different environment on Dartmoor.

I hope they will.

**Royal Visit to East Shallowford - continued overleaf**

## In this issue:

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Retirement and Royal Visit  | 1  |
| Three BFES Experiences      | 3  |
| The Rest as They Say is ... | 7  |
| C'wealth War Graves         | 11 |
| Abandoned Buildings         | 12 |
| Churchill School & Verden   | 13 |
| New School in Kiel          | 16 |
| Another Time Another Place  | 17 |
| Bert Anderson               | 18 |
| Book Review - 1983          | 19 |
| 20 Years Ago ... the IAS    | 18 |
| Hubs                        | 22 |
| A Vanished Past             | 23 |
| Masthead                    | 23 |
| Queen's Jubilee '22         | 24 |
| Last Word - Chair           | 24 |

Photo Credits & Acknowledgements - where known these are published in close proximity to individual photos.

It is intended to publish the next issue in early December 2022. Deadline for contributions 20 October 2022.

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# Royal Visit to East Shallowford

Chair of the Shallowford Trust -  
Mr Robert Musgrave M.B.E.



Sue Adams chats to the  
Countess of Wessex



Their royal highnesses, the Earl and Countess of Wessex, visited East Shallowford Farm on Tuesday 3rd May for a special event and the official opening of the new barn accommodation buildings.

talk with the visitors, culminating in the official opening of a plaque to commemorate the occasion, at which Reuben Graham, third generation Providence visitor to the farm, gave the couple a gift.



A group of Providence House young people and staff were represented at the event, young people demonstrating moving sheep from one field to another, participating in a workshop to make bird and bat nesting boxes, and acting in various support roles. Other young people from schools in Devon took part in a search activity on the marsh, scone making in the new barn, and helping with the pigs.

Robert Musgrave in his short talk spoke of how the new farm developments were like a bridge between the values of the past in the story of Shallowford and the opportunities for the future. The countess spoke of the importance of 'providence' in the life of Elizabeth Braund, the founder.



Providence House trustee, and also Chair of the Shallowford Trust, Robert Musgrave, along with John Dracup, from Shallowford and Broadaford, accompanied the royal couple to visit all the different activities and to

Over two hundred invited guests attended the event and viewed with admiration the new developments for accommodation, for education and the new farmyard and extensive vegetable garden. Much is hoped for in the months to come.



# Children and Teachers ... Three Early BFES Experiences

## Three BFES Experiences continued from issue 51

In February of 2021 Bernard Allen wrote briefly about his late wife (then Jean Cotterell) who taught at BFES Cologne from 1954 to 1958, and lived in the Mess in Am Südpark and Linden Allee. Bernard was in the army at Wahn, met Jean and married her in 1959. Jean subsequently worked as a teacher in an army school in Catterick, and in BFES Verden. Bernard had begun to write her family history, and, of course, a lot about her time as a teacher. Three parts of Bernard's story have appeared in the Summer 2021 and Winter 2021 and Spring editions of the Journal - this is the final instalment in which Bernard recounts some of Jean's stories of pupils and teachers.

Jean's albums include photos of the children in her classrooms, on outings and at exercise.

This is a view of Class 1 in her classroom in 1954 with about 18 children in view, and there are about 20 pupils in Class J1 in 1955, with some outside, developing mentally and physically.



Her Class 1 in 1956, consisted of 29 children.



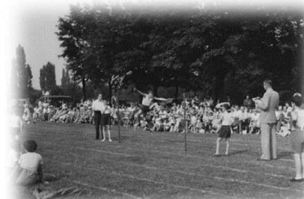
With her final class, also numbering 29, in the summer of 1958.



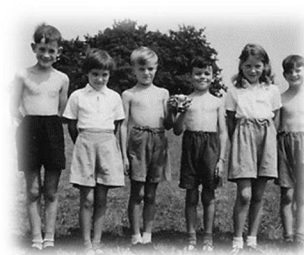
She took her class and the choir, which she ran, (she played the piano in school and in the church) on regular outings; to Cologne Cathedral and to Bonn, to see the University, Beethoven's house and the Bundeshaus.



No school year, including 1957/58, could end without a proper Sports'



Day: The high jump, the apple and bucket race, and a lot of spectators.



## What did the teachers do when not teaching?

The teachers volunteered for BFES in Germany for different reasons, but one common theme must have been their sense of adventure, and their conditions certainly encouraged this.

In March 1945, Montgomery forbade social contact with Germans, to instil a sense of defeat. It was unenforceable, because all ranks had to work with them. In June they were allowed to fraternise with children, in July with adults in public, and from September 1945 'non fraternisation' was replaced by 'conduct with dignity and common sense'. And after occupation formally ended in 1955, as well as living their own subsidised 'British' lives, the British serving in the Federal Republic became increasingly integrated into German life.

In 1954, nine years after the end of the war in Europe, many of the older British adults, who had gone through some harrowing times, still hated the Germans, and resented the more forgiving attitude of the younger ones. There was more than a bit of 'them and us' about in the Mess when the teachers made young German friends, particularly when these friends were invited not only to parties in the rooms in Am Südpark, but into the bar and dining room in the Mess in Linden Allee. Many heated discussions took place in Mess meetings, with some residents marching out! But gradually attitudes became reconciled.

Initially they had to familiarize themselves with local conditions and make an effort with the language. They had arrived in a British situation in a foreign country, nine years after the end of a major war.

The Deutschmark (DM) had been introduced as the standard West German currency in 1948, and was used for all purchases in German shops, travel on buses, trams and trains etc. But a second currency was introduced for use by the British in British facilities out of bounds to the Germans, and to avoid British currency circulating on the German market. Named British Armed Forces Special Vouchers (BAFSVs) they were known colloquially as 'Baffs',



and were used in the NAAFI for buying British goods, and in Leave Centres and British cinemas. Although there were paper three pence notes, mostly the lower denominations were plastic representations the same size and shape as standard British coins – 1d, 3d and 6d, with paper introduced from 1/- upwards to £5. Jean took her salary in a mix of BAFSV and DM – judging by the amount of shopping and travelling she did, DM

probably figured significantly. On a couple of occasions Jean mentioned that, when she went in to German shops to collect items previously ordered she did not have enough money, so it would appear that she did not have a German bank account and could not pay by cheque. She had to call in to the 'cash office' – so I imagine this is where she drew her combination of DM and BAFSV – before returning to the shop. Teachers were relatively well-paid. Jean was classed as a 'Captain', and if appropriately paid she would have received about 36/- a day (just over £12 a week, roughly equivalent to £320 today) and the rate of exchange between the £ and the DM was very favourable at roughly 12 (West) Marks to the Pound so she and her fellow teachers would have enjoyed shopping and a good social life, and still saved money.

Although British personnel could (and did) shop in German shops, watch films in German cinemas and go to German theatres and concerts and listen to German radio, they could also shop in the NAAFI, borrow books from the local library and use the British Forces Postal Organisation (BFPO) to send and receive letters and parcels using British stamps, from and to the Mess. There were British cinemas (run by the Services Kinematograph Company); ENSA sent touring parties round BAOR units to entertain the servicemen and there was a British radio service provided by BBC and

BFN, largely based on BBC programmes. Two-Way Family Favourites was broadcast on Sundays to connect Britons in BAOR with their families and sweethearts in UK:

*"From London, the tunes you asked us to play. From Germany, the tunes that make them think of you."*

The NAAFI, library and the centre of Cologne were within easy reach, by tram, car or on foot, so that shopping expeditions were not limited to weekends.

Mostly the teachers ate breakfast and dinner in the Mess, lunch at school and tea either in the Mess or – mostly – in each others' rooms. And it is clear from Jean's diaries that they prepared and ate some evening meals in groups in their rooms.

Members had a good social life in the Mess, with parties to celebrate birthdays, promotions, departures and festivals such as Carnival. Cologne has two, the national carnival celebrated during the five days culminating on Shrove Tuesday (Jean in a party of Germans at the Kokaine Ball 1955), and its own carnival, opened on 11<sup>th</sup> November each year. And in summer they could always sunbathe in the garden. They also had access to tennis, badminton and cricket (or if not cricket, access to a cricket club dance!). It is not clear whether these were school facilities or at a local German club; and swimming at the Belgian Officers' Club (the Belgians had an extensive presence in Cologne). The Mess was less

than a half-mile from the Rhine, and they frequently walked along the river, which was always busy, sometimes frozen and sometimes flooded above its banks.



Cologne shopping centre was sufficiently close to school to allow shopping expeditions after school, either on foot or using the extensive tram system: this was the system terminus right outside Am Südpark.



## Three Early BFES Experiences



According to Google Maps the system still exists, although it seems to run on tyres rather than tracks, and the newspaper stand has also been updated.

Number 6 Leave Centre at Winterberg was a subsidised 'hotel' for all ranks all year round where skiing, walking and riding were available. Accommodation, food and facilities were excellent, and, only 75 miles from Cologne it was accessible to the teachers from Cologne by car (for those lucky enough to have one or a lift in one) or train.

Jean and her friends visited in both summer and winter.



The teachers were frequent visitors to RAF Wahn, to dances and to the cinema, and they reciprocated – with naval, army and airforce officers visiting the Mess in quantity. And because they taught the children of some Embassy employees, they were always invited to the Ambassador's garden parties. Although the embassy was in Bonn, the Ambassador's Residence was established by 1955 in Bad Godesberg, about five miles up the Rhine from Bonn. It was never really big enough, and nor were the gardens; for really large occasions an adja-

cent site was used as overflow. Jean went home at Christmas and in the summer using one or maybe two rail warrants – but they seem also to have been entitled to subsidised travel on the continent, and she made good use of the spring holiday, all half-term holidays and even weekends. She describes being able to travel on a 1<sup>st</sup> class rail warrant (certainly once, perhaps more than once, a year) to 50 miles outside the German borders; she did so with friends, lugging their cases along the corridors from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> class com-

partments at the appropriate station. In this way she visited Italy and Taormina in Sicily, Barcelona in Spain, Paris, Amsterdam and the bulb fields in Holland, Copenhagen, Luxemburg and Vienna.

And of course, much of Germany was within easy reach by car or train. By the end of her first term in 1954 Jean had visited Bonn, Düsseldorf, Altenberg, Bad Godesberg, Königswinter (by Rhine steamer), Munich for half-term, Garmisch Partenkirchen, and Oberammergau.

The pace of expeditions slowed down a bit in succeed-

ing years, but not much. The Ahr Valley, Brussels, and Aachen figured in 1955, as did Berlin, which she visited again in 1958. Ost Marks were available at the rate of six per West Mark when visiting East Berlin, although the number one could exchange was limited, and had to be re-converted on leaving. So getting into the Ballet and Opera was unbelievably cheap.

On reflection it is not easy to see when they got time for teaching – but they always seemed to survive visits by HMI!

# Three Early BFES Experiences



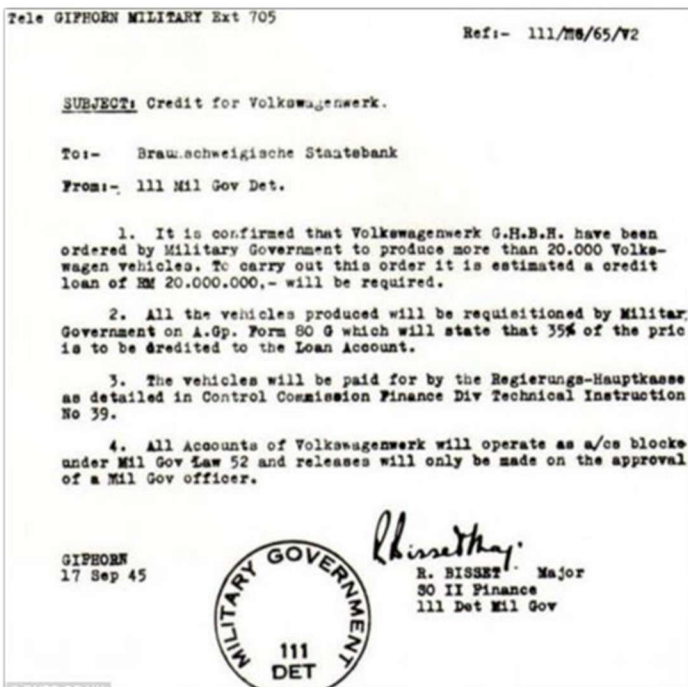
## The Volkswagen

Getting about locally – usually interpreted very elastically – was facilitated by the use of the ubiquitous Volkswagen car and its companion Kombi. [I recall when I was stationed in Senelager in early 1955 being invited to a friend's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party in Hildesheim, some 100 miles distant. I paid about 10/- for a ticket, and a German driver picked me up in a Volkswagen at about five in the evening, took me to Hildesheim, waited until the Dinner Night in the Mess was over and returned me to Senelager about three in the morning]. Locally the VW was the equivalent of a cut-

price taxi. The Volkswagen factory was a lucky find at the end of the war. Originally called the unappealing KdF (Kraft durch Freude) it was discovered by British Army officers and offered to the British car industry. The offer was soundly rejected because apparently:

- “It did not meet the fundamental technical requirements of a motor car.
- “It is quite unattractive to the average buyer.
- “To build the car commercially would be a completely uneconomic enterprise”.

But British officers re-started production and saved the business for German industry by ordering 20,000 cars for



the British Army – see photos and letter below. 20 million Reichsmark was practically worthless, but it kept the plant going.

Shown above left is the 1954 version ‘Beetle’, the subject of continuous improvement and capable of taking four adults and luggage; it was the universal run-around, but was complemented by the Volkswagen Type 2 – or Kombi – a ‘minibus’ type of vehicle. The one on the right was capable of practically infinite modification, but the teachers travelled to and fro in just



★ Köln (Cologne)

such a vehicle, probably eight or ten at a time.

(When production of the Beetle ended in 2003 21.5 million had been built! What a pity we turned it down). These were widely used for administrative purposes, both for duty and pleasure. Giphorn is less than 10 miles from the Volkswagen works.

## Farewell

Jean and Margaret Eveleigh both resigned in 1958 – Jean to return to Horn Park and marry me, and Margaret to marry Alan Fox, an RAF educator seen opposite; he became the Headmaster of a large independent school.

Jean was sad to leave, because she had really enjoyed her time. But she had made good friends and we kept up with some, particularly Margaret and Alan Fox, for many years. Two photos from her albums, taken at different times, indicate the friendly social atmosphere of life in Am Südpark 1.

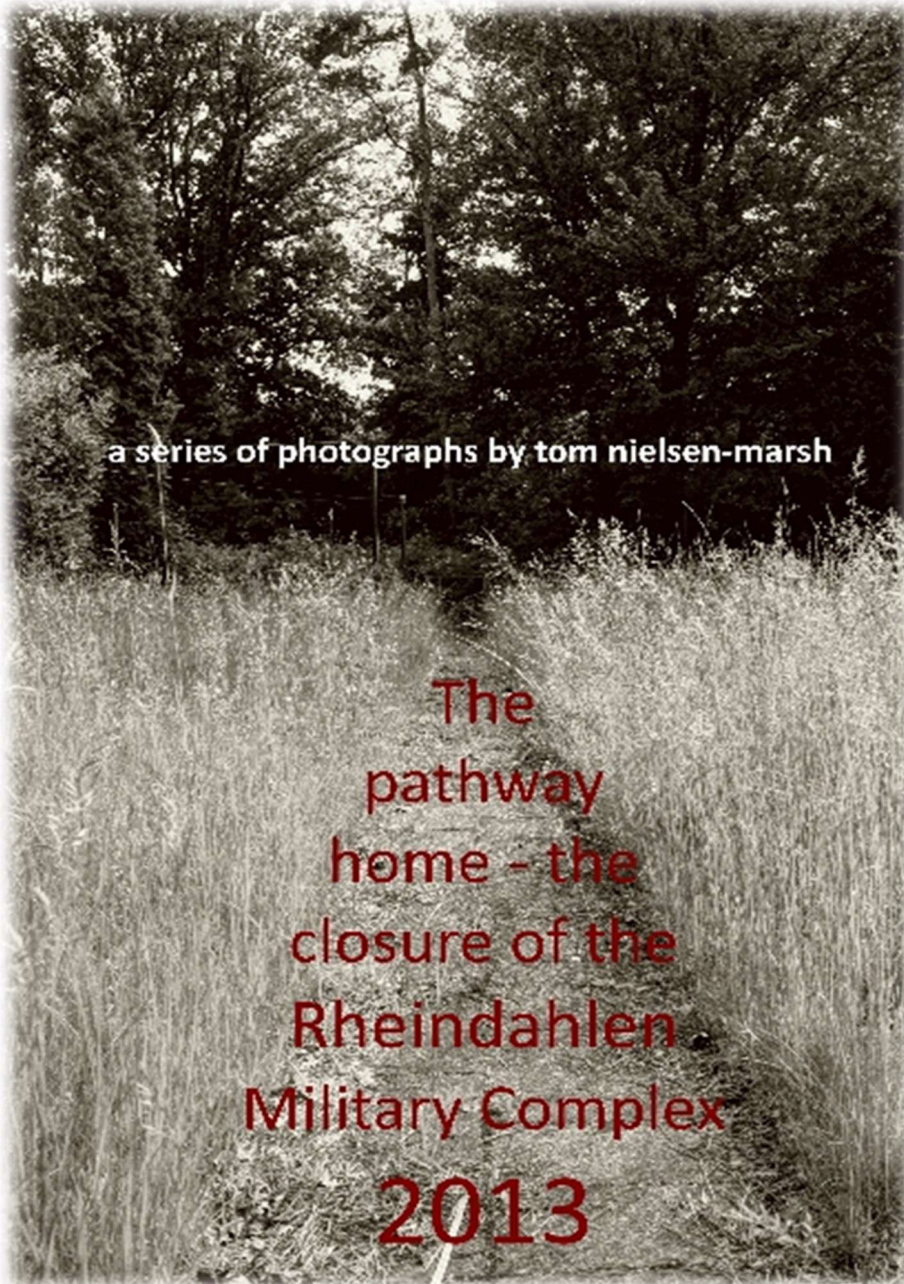


# The Rest as They Say, is History

Summer Journal 2022



Abandoned Buildings - the Closure of the Rheindahlen Military Complex - a series of photographs and quotations recording the last year of JHQ ...



## DAYS OF FUTURE PAST ...

*"All is as if the world did cease to exist. The city's monuments go unseen, its past unheard, and its culture slowly fading in the dismal sea."*

— Nathan Reese Maher

## 13 December 2013

### It was a week before Christmas

The approximately 420-hectare military site of JHQ now lies abandoned. For around 60 years, up to 15000 British and other NATO soldiers lived here, mostly with their families, in what was a fully functioning city. In the summer before its closure a farewell party took place with a musical parade, a flag-raising ceremony, and an impressive fire-work display.

### Now silence has fallen.

JHQ Rheindahlen was a military base north of Rheindahlen in the district of Mönchengladbach West. It served as the headquarters of various units of the British armed forces and NATO from 1954 to 2013. Amongst other functions, it housed the staff of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), a NATO rapid reaction force. JHQ Rheindahlen formed its own district (headquarters) with about 2000 buildings, including schools, 3 churches, a (former) theatre, a swimming pool, two cinemas, sports fields, and a German and British shopping centre.

Between 2011 and 2013 former AEO - Tom Nielsen-Marsh set about recording the draw-down and closure of SCE schools and offices across parts of British Forces Germany. In 2015, together with his daughter, he was invited to contribute to an exhibition of paintings and photographs in the eastern town of Herzberg. The photographs on the following pages explore some of that emotional journey and in turn contributed to a published photo-book. (See bottom of page 11).

*"There is a difference between saying goodbye and letting go. Goodbye is not permanent. You can meet years later as old friends and share what happened in your life. You can smile and laugh about all the nonsense that you both went through. However, letting go is being okay with never seeing this person ever again ... being okay with never knowing how their life turned out."*

Shannon L Alder

[www.cnm-art.com](http://www.cnm-art.com)



## Ending (Endung)

“Well, here at last, dear friends, on the shores of the Sea comes the end of our fellowship in Middle-earth.

Go in peace! I will not say: do not weep; for not all tears are an evil.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Return of the King

## Time (Zeit)

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo.

“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring



## Streets of our lives (Straßen unseres Lebens)

“Time remorselessly rambles down the corridors and streets of our lives. But it is not until autumn that most of us become aware that our tickets are stamped with a terminal destination.”

— Joe L. Wheeler

## Yesterday's gone (Gestern ist weg)

“Renew, release, let go. Yesterday's gone. There's nothing you can do to bring it back. You can't “should've” done something. You can only DO something. Renew yourself. Release that attachment. Today is a new day!”

— Steve Maraboli,

Unapologetically You: Reflections on Life and the Human Experience







**I was here – do not forget me** (Ich war hier, vergiss mich nicht)

“It is upon such stones that men attempt to permanently etch history so they will not exist in a vacuum; it is the final statement after a lifetime of scratching out divisions upon the ground, over ephemeral time itself, merely to give their short journeys meaning, to tell others “I was here – do not forget me, do not let my brief blast dissolve into nothingness.”

— Rob Bignell



**How quickly time passes** (wie schnell die Zeit vergeht)

“There are things I need to tell you, but would you listen if I told you how quickly time passes? I know you are unable to imagine this. Nevertheless, I can tell you that you will awake someday to find that your life has rushed by at a speed at once impossible and cruel. The most intense moments will seem to have occurred only yesterday and nothing will have erased the pain and pleasure, the impossible intensity of love and its dog-leaping happiness, the bleak blackness of passions unrequited, or unexpressed, or unresolved.”

— Meg Rosoff, *What I Was*



**Emptiness** (Leere)

“There's just something obvious about emptiness, even when you try to convince yourself otherwise.”

— Sarah Dessen, *Lock and Key*



**Winter Fairies** (Winter Feen)

“Frost grows on the window glass, forming whorl patterns of lovely translucent geometry. Breathe on the glass, and you give frost more ammunition. Now it can build castles and cities and whole ice continents with your breath's vapour. In a few blinks you can almost see the winter fairies moving in. But first, you hear the crackle of their wings.”

— Vera Nazarian, *The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration*

## The Rest They Say is History - The Pathway Home

Tom Nielsen-Marsh



**It matters not if you are here** (Es spielt keine Rolle, ob Sie hier sind )

“He would have told her - he would have said, it matters not if you are here or there, for I see you before me every moment. I see you in the light of the water, in the swaying of the young trees in the spring wind. I see you in the shadows of the great oaks, I hear your voice in the cry of the owl at night. You are the blood in my veins, and the beating of my heart. You are my first waking thought, and my last sigh before sleeping. You are - you are bone of my bone, and breath of my breath.”

— Juliet Marillier, Daughter of the Forest

### **Lost Memories** (Verlorene Erinnerungen)

“Do we not each dream of dreams? Do we not dance on the notes of lost memories? Then are we not each dreamers of tomorrow and yesterday, since dreams play when time is askew? Are we not all adrift in the constant sea of trial and when all is done, do we not all yearn for ships to carry us home?”

— Nathan Reese Maher



### **Memory of Odours** (Erinnerung an Gerüche)

“I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers. I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer -- and what trees and seasons smelled like -- how people looked and walked and smelled even.

The memory of odours is very rich.”

John Steinbeck, East of Eden



### **Nostalgia** (Nostalgie)

“But in that moment I understood what they say about nostalgia, that no matter if you're thinking of something good or bad, it always leaves you a little emptier afterward.”

— John Corey Whaley, Noggin





**Childhood's End** (Kindheit End)

"When we are children we seldom think of the future.

This innocence leaves us free to enjoy ourselves as few adults can. The day we fret about the future is the day we leave our childhood behind."

— Patrick Rothfuss, *The Name of the Wind*



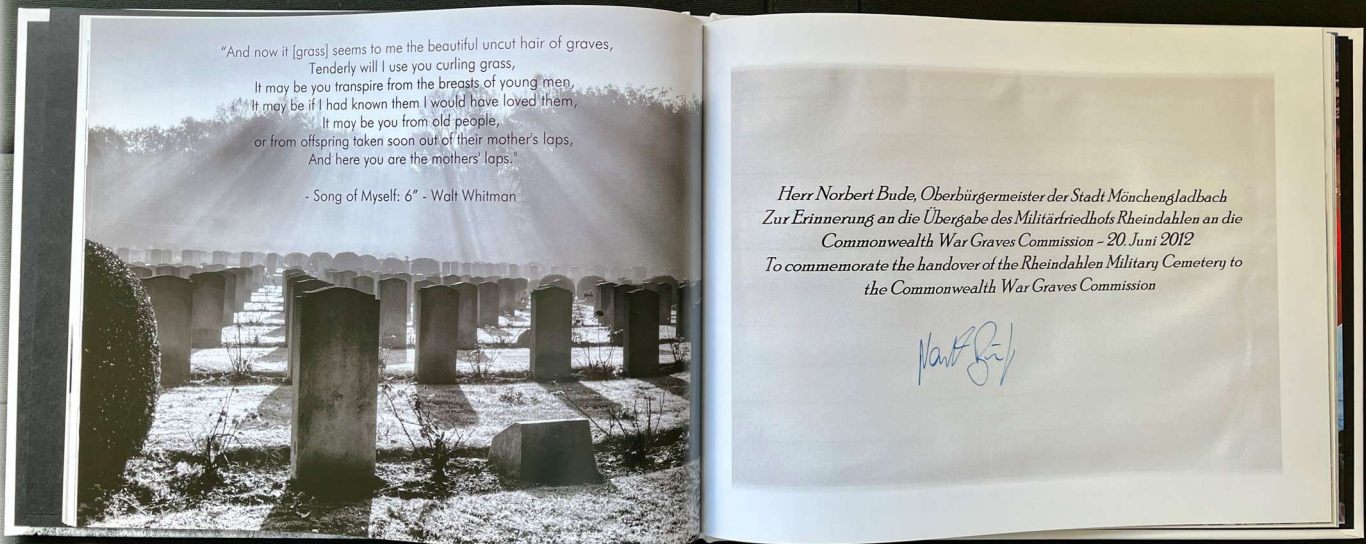
**Ghosts** (Geister)

"I am empty of everything. I am empty of everything but the thin, frail ghosts in my room."

— Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*

**OPENING HOURS** : From 1 October till 31 March : **Rheindahlen Military Cemetery** is open Monday till Friday from 8.00 Hrs till 17.00 Hrs and on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.00 Hrs till 16.00 Hrs.  
From 1 April till 30 September : open Monday till Friday from 9.00 Hrs till 19.00 Hrs; Saturdays and Sundays open from 10.00 Hrs till 20.00 Hrs.

|||||  
COMMONWEALTH  
WAR GRAVES  
|||||



"And now it [grass] seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves,  
Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you from old people,  
or from offspring taken soon out of their mother's laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps."

- Song of Myself: 6" - Walt Whitman

*Herr Norbert Bude, Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Mönchengladbach  
Zur Erinnerung an die Übergabe des Militärfriedhofs Rheindahlen an die  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission - 20. Juni 2012  
To commemorate the handover of the Rheindahlen Military Cemetery to  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*

*Norbert Bude*

# Abandoned Buildings - The Rise and Demise of Shackleton School in Fallingbostel...

**Mike Bennett**

There had been a school in some form in Fallingbostel on the Luneburg Heath since 1947. Based in an Army Quarter with 16 children on roll, it would have been one of the first in the British Sector of Germany.

It changed its site frequently and by 1966 there were over 500 primary aged children in converted barrack blocks, which had been missed off the camp modernisation plans and still needed the boilers to be lit each morning.

In December 1969 Shackleton was officially opened as a junior school and the neighbouring Scott as an infant one. When I was appointed headmaster in Easter 1974, several classes were still being taught in the barrack block, which when the Heide Middle School opened in 1974, became the home of the Station Youth Club. With the completion of The Heide, Shackleton became, together with Scott, (5-9 years) first schools. In 1980 due to falling numbers, especially in the middle school age range (9-13 years) the Heide and Shackleton became (5-11 years) primaries, and Scott closed.

When Shackleton was built, it was a CLASP (Consortium of Local Authority Special Programme) design utilising a light steel frame with prefabricated sections, which offered a low cost solution to the MOD. The CLASP was widely used in the Midlands which are rarely exposed to the sub-zero temperatures of winter in Northern Ger-

many. The heating system regularly broke down and the flat roofs leaked. Concern was expressed that the ceiling voids were not partitioned off to prevent a fire sweeping through the space. This defect was corrected but no one at the time mentioned asbestos which had been used in the construction. It could escape where joints had not been properly secured, hopefully not in the ceiling of the office where I worked for 20 years! The use of asbestos was banned in 1985.

Now, 25 years after I retired, I returned to Shackleton for the first time, although I had revisited Germany itself many times. The school had closed in July 2015 and the camp handed back to the German authorities. I would never have gained access if it had not been for Glynis Green (nee Hall), an Association member and a former valued member of the teaching staff. She still had a friend living in Fallingbostel who knew a man who had security clearance. Both could not have been more helpful.

My son who had attended Shackleton and other schools in Germany, had invited his parents to join him on a trip down memory lane as he wanted to show his son where he had lived, gone to school and spent his holidays. It was only now as the school was being dismantled that precautions were being taken against asbestos. There were no workmen present when we visited but we were able to walk throughout the build-

ing. It was in a desperate state with ceilings sagging and wires hanging off the walls. There was no furniture in the school and it had a Marie Celeste-like atmosphere. In one classroom children's work and photographs were scattered on the floor. I pocketed a March 2007 copy of the Heide Station magazine. Its contents were interesting and included quite a few advertisements from local estate agents, presumably aimed at military personnel hoping to stay in the area. Only after I left the building did I reflect on the good times I had experienced there (sitting beneath the asbestos). It had been like so many other service children's schools, a vibrant place of learning. Hopefully the hundreds of children and people who passed through its doors will remember it as it was and not as a victim of CLASP (a Collection of Loosely Assembled Parts!).

Afterwards we went to our old Quarter. It was empty, but had been updated and was in immaculate condition. **I felt more sad about the house than the school.** At least the former was habitable. Apparently, the Quarters are being kept in case they are ever needed again. Some asylum seekers were still living in part of the camp, about 500 out of the original 10,000. Fallingbostel Stadt was also a disappointment and obviously the withdrawal of the British had affected businesses, of which many had closed, especially cafes and restaurants. Finally, we visited several of the football pitches on which I had



played so many times. They were still there. Unfortunately, our favourite place on a Sunday afternoon, the Krelingen bakery and coffee shop had closed. They say never go back!



# Memories of Churchill School and Verden

## Three BFES Experiences - Bernard, Jean and Sarah Allen

Summer Journal 2022



I was posted to Verden in the Autumn of 1969, but there were no quarters so my wife Jean and two children moved into a house in Bournemouth. Shortage of accommodation was more or less a constant, and I moved into the Officers' Mess and got on with the job. Tim was coming up for nine, and, to ensure continuity of education we arranged a boarding school for him from January 1970, actually before his ninth birthday – a great family wrench, but not unusual in Service families. Jean and his sister Sarah took him to his new school when it reopened after Christmas, dropped him off and drove home to Bournemouth; about a mile from the school Jean stopped the car in a lay-by and they both burst into tears.

Sarah was just eight when, in July 1970, a quarter became available and they were able to join me.

She started at BFES Churchill School, which was in the local

Barracks, in September. Rather like at BFES Cologne, the school was subject to regular turnover of pupils and teachers. The children were the sons and daughters of officers and soldiers who were 'trickle-posted according to the exigencies of the Service'; and the teachers were often single and long-staying, but also frequently the wives of Servicemen, who came and went according to their husbands' postings. Many children started mid-term, and many left mid-term, and strong friendships were heart-breakingly terminated at the drop of a hat. The intake of a conventional school in England in September would all have all been the same age, started in the bottom class and worked their way up year by year. But in Verden my eight-year old daughter did not start at the bottom; she may have been the only new pupil, or, more likely, she may have been one of a number at different ages and stages of their education.

**Fortunately our quarter** – like many others – was close to the school, so Sarah could

walk, meeting up with her friends on the way. This Google Maps section illustrates her route from our house in **Anna Wöbse Strasse** (bottom left) to the school in the barracks, which has been demolished and is now an open green space.

Many of the soldiers lived in quarters much further away, with some of the most junior living in hirings, rented from German civilians, and their children were bussed to and fro.

Since Sarah was a pupil and Jean was an experienced teacher, with knowledge of BFES from her time in Cologne 1954 to 1958, she applied for and got a job as a teacher at the school.

*It may be coincidence, but on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1970 BFES Hamm 'placed her name on the panel of supply teachers for the Verden area'; the letter was signed by the Assistant Director, FH Buckley MBE. Perhaps the same Mr Buckley who visited Cologne so often in the 1950s?*

She wasn't the only Service wife to do so; Yvonne Wilson was another teacher married to an army officer, and one of the single teachers married an army Sergeant Threlfall Season. They all moved

afterwards with their husbands when posted.

**Sarah's version of life in Verden, and at the school is as follows:**

"I started in September 1970 with a great big plaster and bandage on my knee having ridden my bike into a neighbour's car while looking behind me, and had 5 stitches for a gash caused by the number plate. There was a family picnic in the grounds of the school during the summer and I suspect we went in order to get to know some of the children/parents before I started there. We sat on a picnic rug. Mum took my glasses off, saying I didn't need them while I was playing (not quite sure how she always said that with such confidence!) but I proved her wrong by running straight into a (possibly 3' high) horizontal metal bar used for swinging/somersaulting on which I didn't see at all. It totally felled me and I was quite dazed. Presumably I returned to the picnic blanket in tears as it must have really hurt.

To get to school I used to

## Memories of Churchill School and Verden

Jean and Sarah Allen

walk along Lönsweg to Schiller Strasse and pick up my friends on the way - Debbie Barker who backed onto us (no. 18 according to G Maps). I think we went along Schiller Strasse to Elizabeth Landau's house halfway along on the same side as Debbie, and then I think there was a snicket maybe opposite their house, which took us to the main road (There is! It's shown on G maps!). Can't remember where we went from there.

Walking home from school along Lönsweg once, I was chased by a 'jumping jack' firework that a boy threw at me. I must have had my own key as I do remember letting myself in and sometimes I was the first one home - possibly only rarely, maybe if mum had a meeting after school or something. I must have just played on my own or read a book, as we had no tv. Claire Eddinton lived next door with a little brother. She had the same bedroom as me up in the roof and we were mucking about one day pretending we were adrift on the high seas and I jumped from the windowsill onto the bed (our stormtossed ship), catching my eye on the top of a toy lantern we were using to 'light our way'. There was blood everywhere and we thought we would be in big trouble but I think you and her parents were just glad it was a flesh wound and hadn't got my actual eye.



Her dad (a doctor) declared it didn't need a stitch; I have a small scar there to remind me. The school itself was single storey (at least I don't remember ever going up-stairs, or seeing any stairs). The Staffroom was on the left as you went in the main entrance and there was a corridor going to the right that had classrooms off to the left. The hall was opposite the entrance (opposite side of the corridor to the classrooms). We sat on the floor in the hall for assembly (and for a sex education talk about where babies come from - I think parents came to it if they wanted to. Was full of line drawings of people, but I don't think I was particularly interested!)

The uniform was grey jumper, grey skirt/trousers, white shirt and silver and gold striped tie (equal sized wide stripes). It was a very long tie for an 8/9 year-old and I remember sitting on the floor in assembly fiddling with the end of it

which poked out from under my skirt. We must have worn plimsolls indoors (as we did in all my other schools) but I remember having brown fur-lined boots with zips up the sides as it was so cold in winter and we had to walk a fairly long way.

Head was Mr Trevor Rushby - I only knew he was Trevor because mum worked there. He had 2 daughters, one called Cordelia - both a few years younger than me I think. He had very dark hair but I think Cordelia was auburn. We had a young, black haired teacher called Miss Czerniak (pronounced Cherniak) who we liked. Also Nola Nixon and Mrs Threlfall Searson (Tim just reminded me about).

We had to line up in the classroom ready for lunch in two lines (boys/girls) in alphabetical order before we were released to go to the hall. I was always first in my queue and someone once dared me to kiss Paul White - I did, which was

incredibly daring as he was last in the other queue - no idea what the teacher was doing at the time!! Paul's dad was something to do with the stables where I rode; I probably did it hoping that I might get a few extra rides!

We ate lunch in the hall, but I can't remember anything about it really. Presumably the tables and chairs were put out every morning by the dinner ladies and then put away again at the end. The hall was also where they put out the pictures in the art competition where I did so well...!

Mum taught us singing. We sang in the hall, presumably where the piano was. I loved singing but always felt annoyed because I was never picked to sing the descant or any special bits - she told me it was because she could not show any favouritism, but it may well have been because I wasn't a very good singer - that didn't occur to me at the time. Apart from practising songs like "We plough the fields and scatter" for harvest, we sang a lot of sea shanties. "Heave ho and up she rises...." etc. Possibly because it didn't require a great deal of talent to belt it out in a rousing chorus. Or maybe they were easier to play on the piano than other things.

Apart from singing I don't remember mum teaching my class ever, but I did hate

# Memories of Churchill School and Verden

Jean and Sarah Allen

Summer Journal 2022



having to say "Good morning Mrs Allen" if I passed her in the corridor. If I spotted her coming I would duck into a classroom, or be busy looking the other way to avoid it. Particularly as she was often called "Mrs Allen" by the other kids - I wasn't, which is a bit odd - I think they all knew she was my mum, but kids' brains don't work very logically.

So, I started in Year 4 and left part way through Y5 (Jan 1972). I would only have had 2 different classrooms and I remember they had windows all down one side, looking out to the front of the school. We had quite a lot of reading books in the classroom, but the only work I really remember was doing 'Topics' which I loved! There was a big (probably foolscap sized) cardboard box which had a flip top lid and inside were lots of laminated cards with info and questions on. They were colour-coded and there was a numbering system like A9 on the top. Having just looked them up it seems they were just about comprehension <http://hackeduaction.com/2015/03/19/sra> but I remember them being about things like history and geography and science. Presumably the text was subject based, but the questions were more about comprehension. Anyway I loved them as I was good at them and so I worked my way through pretty quickly.

This is a bit like the box, except I remember it more as being more cereal box orientation with A4 sized portrait orientation cards.

There was a tarmac playground round the back of the school and one day in winter it was really icy but we still played out. One of my friends fell over and banged her forehead really badly and a massive lump just appeared immediately. We ran and got the dinner lady on duty who came to deal with it whereupon the girl was sick all over her shoe. No idea whether she went to hospital or anything, but I do remember all we talked about was her being sick on the dinner lady's shoe!

Not sure what else I remember. Harriet Ladd lived right at the end of Schiller Strasse (possibly no. 46) and her mum taught a couple of us sewing maybe on a Saturday morning. She showed us how to use a sewing machine and I made a bright red skirt which even had a zip (guessing she did all the tricky bits but made me feel I had actually made it myself!). Harriet had 2 brothers and a sister I think. Further along Anna-Wöbse Strasse was a house where someone babysat someone's little boy (Rupert?) who slept with his eyes open but they didn't mention that to the babysitter who went to check on him and thought he was dead. Irresponsible parent-

ing if you ask me. There was a John

Harrison and a John Lord - no idea why that is worthy of a memory.... Think it was John Harrison who was married to a German and they had daughters Sabine and Sarah who were both bilingual from babies.

## Other memories of Verden

The white baby grand piano in your bedroom where we used to play (occasionally) while you were having a lie in. Must have been a good reason to get out of bed if you ask me!

The dinner party where someone threw something at a big candle in the corner of the dining room covering the walls with wax - seems an odd thing to do, now I think about it; I saw the waxy aftermath but presumably was in bed for the party itself.

Warnick's advocaat - probably the only place I have ever seen it drunk, by one of your guests I presume.

The bright orange kitchen and the painters' faces when they realised mum was serious. Dancing round the sitting room singing Auld Lang Syne at 'midnight' on New Year's Eve then going to bed feeling very grown up and not learning till years later that you had changed the clocks and it was only about 8pm.

You turning the top floor bathroom into a darkroom -

can't remember anything except the big wooden frame you made that covered the window.

Watching the helicopters from the attic window (or rather writing down the details in a notebook as Tim - standing on a chair in the window as 'spotter' called them out to me. I don't think I was allowed a look). We used to go up to the barracks and see the Scout and Sioux helicopters on the ground - very exciting it was.

Propping the ladder up to access the little nook above the attic doorway - and then bouncing down the ladder one day with rather too much energy, knocking the ladder which fell on top of me and my big toenail went completely black - not sure we ever told you about that...

Riding our bikes down to ToCH to get the newspaper (?) and having to cross the railway crossing. It must have been very busy as we were always having to wait for trains. And it was uphill on the way back and Tim always beat me home - I was always really cross because I'd arrive out of puff telling you about who we'd seen/what had happened, and you used to say "Yup, Tim already told us" or something similar. You could have at least pretended!!

The NAAFI at Hohne - it was round or octagonal or something, and quite an

exciting trip Riding. I think I rode a lot. But the various stables and horses in my childhood get muddled. I think it was Verden where I liked a pony called Charlie and Tim rode Prince - mine was short and Thelwellian and Tim's was rather better looking - but it was a bit mean and was apt to kick and bite.

Curry lunches - huge ornate rooms with endless patterned carpets usually blue and gold, and long tables with white tablecloths and massive silver tureens of curry (one child - not me -

once swapped the labels on the curry dishes as a joke). And cartoons on a big screen in another room to entertain all the kids - presumably run by whichever soldier was 'on report' that day as it must have been a grotty job.

Saturday morning cinema which had cartoons and an audience solely of children who, annoyingly, rarely sat in their seats but cart-wheeled up and down the aisles. I saw Ring of Bright Water there, and came home to tell you all about it, full of tears! Also think we saw Fantasia there. No idea

where the cinema was but I think we could walk as I don't remember you dropping me off and collecting me in the car.

The dentist (somewhere to the left of Lönsweg I think) where I went to have two teeth out, who greeted me with "Hello, so would you like me to take your teeth out today then?", to which I replied "No". Mum was really cross (with him for being an idiot, rather than me, who had simply been honest) as she'd had to take me out of school for the appointment and we had to go back the

following week instead.

There was a problem with my posting when my time in Verden came to an end. Inevitably we left for England part way through a term, with no job to go to and nowhere to live. So, for most of a term we lived with my mother-in-law and Sarah had to be home-schooled by Jean. By law local schools should have taken Sarah, but because no one knew when we would be moving on, or where to, they all refused. Such was the inevitable fate of many army children.

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## and a New School in Kiel - an annex of Churchill School in Verden ...

*IoE Archive Reference Number (BFE/A/3/1/10)*

The photograph shows WOI Brian Blackford, the Administrative Officer; Miss Jenny Walker (seated); her assistant, Mrs Lyn Walker, and the nine children.

For twelve years, there has been no Junior School in Kiel. The elder children of servicemen, stationed in the predominantly Royal

Engineer Kiel Training Centre go to an American school, but the younger ones have had to attend German schools in the area, where language problems and the later starting age for German children, resulting in lost school time, has made the education of young children very difficult.

However, a visit from the Director of the British Forces Education Service, Mr E Lowe, CBE, MA, in February, has put all that right. He, the Commandant of the Training Centre, Major Hamish Esslemont, and the Administrative Officer, Warrant Officer I Brian Blackford, together with the parents concerned, all agreed that something had to be done quickly. Major Esslemont supplied the room, and the Education Service provided a delightful teacher, Miss Jenny Walker, and all the teaching aids and furniture to open the Kiel Annexe to the BFES Junior School in Verden. Because Kiel is also a NATO establishment, children from other English speaking nations can attend

the school, and at the moment, the school, which opened in February this year, has nine pupils, including two American children. The project is altogether proving a huge success, not least for Brian Blackford, who will not have to worry any more about cancelled postings-in, as in the past, when parents found out that there was no school.



**This article is reproduced from the Autumn 1975 edition of the SCEA Bulletin. We don't have an exact date for the photo though, sadly.**

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# Another Time Another Place - Part 1

Monika Gruber

Summer Journal 2022



Dear readers,  
If you read my "Letter from Berlin" in issues 47 - 50, you may remember that I spent one year at an American high school as an exchange student in 1954-55. The other day Sue Adams suggested I should continue writing that Letter from Berlin by also sharing my memoirs of that year with you. America in the mid-fifties, seen through the eyes of a German exchange student of 17/18 years from West-Berlin - would you be interested?

Again, as in my "Letter", I will not report chronologically, but follow my own stream of consciousness, the more so, as what I am going to write about happened some 70 years ago. Most of my memories are still very vivid, specially the ones which deal with all those new, unbelievable (positive and negative), unexpected and unforeseen (positive and negative) incidences and events I experienced. Things have changed a lot since then, here and there, and what surprised (positive and negative) me then beyond belief may now be just common knowledge and routine.

I had already told you briefly that I had applied for a scholarship in the USA with the American Field Service but had not even been considered third choice, because - as I found out later - I had a grandfather, who lived in Leipzig, in the "Soviet Zone", the GDR, and was "sure" to be a communist, so I would be made a communist spy according to American belief. After that disappointing experience I was only too happy to be chosen by my teachers to go to **Pennsylvania for one year**. The AFSC, the **American Friends Service Committee**, i.e. the Quakers, had already been active in Germany after WW I by reaching out quickly and unbureaucratically to former enemies by seeing to it

that children, who were suffering from the aftermath of the war, were given a hot meal every day, then known as "Quaeker-Speisung", Quakers' meal. Now, after WW II, it wasn't only meals the Quakers ladled out (we had to bring our own vessels and spoons, because school meals were something completely new then, so there were no appropriate facilities in German schools at all), but they also set up **affiliated schools**, because the Quakers have always believed in mutual love and understanding, be it through food or enabling young people from different countries to live and learn together. The Friends' exchange programmes were "one-sided" at that time, at least in Berlin, i.e. no real exchanges, because Berlin living conditions only 9 years after the end of WW II were still rather restricted, hardly anybody would have been able to accommodate a young American. Most of us plainly would not have had enough room.

An **affiliation** had been set up shortly after the end of WW II **between my Berlin school, Die Waldschule** (near Dickensweg, for the "Berliners" among you), **and Radnor High School in Wayne, PA.**, not far from Philadelphia. As far as I know, the understanding was that Radnor, or rather the town of Wayne, would pay for the upkeep of a student from Die Waldschule, while the Friends were responsible for the organization and travelling costs from our meeting point in Duesseldorf/Germany to London, via Ostende - Dover, and then on to Southampton to the boat and eventually New York. So the only costs which fell to my family were for the train ticket to Duesseldorf. Unfortunately we, i.e. my Mother and I, could not afford it, as my Mother was unemployed then (my Father had been killed in action in Russia in 1942 and my Mother's family had been expelled from Silesia, now Poland, so they had lost

everything by the end of the war). But my wonderful teachers decided they would help out and made a collection for me.

After that problem had been solved, I was ready to apply for a **passport**. It wasn't at all easy to get one in those days, because West Berlin had its own rules and regulations, as we were not considered part of West Germany by the GDR. So our identity cards, which we always had to carry with us (s. my Berlin Letter), said "Behelfsmaessiger Personalausweis" (Provisional Identity Card). Likewise a passport would say "Behelfsmaessig". Most people then did not have, nor need, one anyway, because travelling to foreign countries was not what you did a lot. Even today applying for a passport takes a while to say the least, and in 1954 you had to be careful to apply for it well ahead of the date of departure.

After I got my passport, I applied for a **visa** with the American Embassy or rather with their West Berlin branch, as Embassies were not allowed here, they were all in Bonn, the capital of West Germany at that time. The Friends had to help with my visa, because I had to get permission to stay in the States for one year. In the early 50s only comparatively few people travelled there. Tourism as we know it today did not yet exist, business people usually did not stay that long. I don't know which papers were necessary in my case to get a visa. But I do know that I also had to undergo some medical tests. An x-ray picture was made of my lungs which I would have to present in New York to the Immigration Officer, my fingerprints (every single finger once + 2 groups of 4 fingers each, without the thumbs!!) were taken. Likewise I was meant to get vaccinated against small pox, which funnily enough they forgot to do. Luckily I was "found out" on the boat shortly before arriving in New York, when they checked all the

passengers' papers. So I was immediately vaccinated on board the boat, with the result that nobody rejected me entering the United States of America, but presented my poor foster family with their new "child", who was already quite ill from that vaccination on arrival. Thus I spent the first few days in Wayne in bed, rather miserable and with a fever. The doctor made me drink a lot, so I learned to enjoy ginger ale, which was new to me and whose taste will always remind me of those rather sad first few days in my "American home". I also had to have a visa for the United Kingdom, since the boat sailed from Southampton. I cannot remember whether that was as complicated to get as was the one for the USA, it probably wasn't, I suppose. Another problem could only be solved with the help of my uncle, who was in the film business and knew the right people: I needed at least some **English pounds** pocket money for the 2 days I would spend in England on my way to Southampton, and some few **American dollars**, too, to be on the safe side in an emergency. We - and I cannot remember today whether it was only us West-Berliners or all of us Germans - could not just go to a bank then and get foreign exchange, no way, neither here nor in England. You had to apply for a permission or try to get what you needed "somewhere". The official exchange rates were approximately 11 DM for 1 pound and 4 DM for 1 dollar.

While I was busy getting all those documents together, I had to think of **what to pack** for a one-year-stay in Pennsylvania. In the early 50s young people like me in West-Berlin didn't have a large choice to choose from when it came to clothing. You were not and could not be expected to wear special "brand names". In Die Waldschule, where many lessons were held out in the open, beneath the Grunewald

pine trees, with our feet on/ in the Berlin sand, fancy dresses would have been highly inappropriate anyway.

Would my American family, my classmates be shocked by what I was wearing? Funnily enough most of them seemed to be quite "charmed" by my old-fashioned winter coat and some of my skirts and blouses. What they were actually horrified by, though, was my swim suit, which I had "inherited" from my mother : It was a rather tight one, like professional swimmers have today. It suited me perfectly well, I must say, but when my family took me swimming in a lake some time after my arrival, my foster mother almost fainted, when she saw me coming out of the changing rooms! I suppose to her I looked almost naked, highly indecent anyway. She told me to get into, and out of, the water quickly and took me to a department store right afterwards to buy me a proper bathing suit with a sort of little skirt to cover my hips and some ruffles around the bust.

Eventually my Mother and I decided I would just take a basic set of clothing, because

a.) I was only allowed one big suitcase anyway and b.) we didn't really know what the weather was like in Pennsylvania. I would just have to depend on my American family to provide me with what I needed. And they did! One of the first things I got was loafers, those shoes without which American teenagers just didn't feel right. And of course "bobby sox", those white cotton socks which went with loafers and which had to be worn from a certain day on in spring, no matter what the weather was like and how high or low temperatures were. I don't remember the exact date, but I do remember that when I came down to breakfast one day in early spring wearing the same "winter" shoes and "winter" socks I had worn the day before, I was told off by my family and made to change immediately. Strange!

**Then finally in early August 1954 the big adventure began.** In those days going to America as a student was extraordinary, unbelievable, hardly ever heard of, enviable, maybe like thinking of flying to the moon today. In a way **Wayne was even farther away than the moon**

**is today**, because the astronauts can communicate with Earth easily, while in 1954 the internet had not been invented yet, and telephoning was extremely expensive. A private call from the USA to Germany had to be booked well in advance and was limited to 3 minutes and cost \$ 20, as far as I remember, i.e. about 80 DM. In all that year I spoke to my Mother only ONCE on the phone. It was a Christmas present from my American family and had to be well planned, too, since my Mother did not have a phone yet, so she had to go to my uncle's.

Telephoning in Wayne was a bit old-fashioned to say the least. I remember you had to lift the receiver, the local operator, whom everybody called by her first name and who would also spread the daily gossip, would then ask you which number you wanted and connect you. By far not everybody in Berlin had a telephone in 1954, but those who had could communicate without the help of an operator! And I did not believe my eyes when I made my first call from a public telephone : The receiver was

a somewhat pear-shaped gadget, which hung from a hook, and you had to talk into a trumpet-like device, which was attached to the wall!! Stone-age as it were in what I had expected to be the most modern country.

So letters were my means of communication with my family, my class-mates, my friends. An air mail letter took about 5 days then, so if you think of how quick communication is today via the internet, you'll realize how separated from Berlin I was. Mind you, I was quite happy with that. It contributed to that fantastic, overwhelming feeling of adventure. I had to cope with everything alone, be it good or bad. Nobody in my new surroundings spoke any German and my English was rather scanty to say the least. I would have hated it, if my Berlin family had visited me as so many parents do today , when their children spend a year in America. Just hop on a plane and see how the offspring are doing. And phone them every night on their smart-phones.

Oh no!

## Herbert (aka Bert) Anderson



It is with great sadness that the Association has learnt of

the death of Herbert (aka Bert) Anderson, who passed away on Saturday 23 July 2022 at his home in Sydney, Australia.

He was 86 years' old.

Bert was Deputy Head at Kent School, Hostert, BFPO 40 from 1972 to 1977 and Headteacher at Edinburgh School, Munster BFPO 17 from 1977 to 1991.

A true gentleman, Bert was a brilliant teacher and Head.

He will be greatly missed by his family -

Ian, Gavin and Pauline Anderson

## Paul Cunningham

The Association Congratulates [Paul Cunningham](#) for starting a new position as Honorary Foreign Principal and Educational Advisor of Concord Academy Shanghai.

Paul who lives and works in Shanghai is an occasional contributor to the Journal - read his most recent articles - including his experiences of lockdown in China - in issues 46, 48 and 49.

Paul taught in British Forces School Naples, Stanley Fort School in Hong Kong, Seria SCE in Brunei and at St Christopher's School in Gibraltar.



Mike Bennett

1983 The World At The Brink by Taylor Downing  
391pp ISBN 978-1-4087-1052-4 - Price £20  
Dimensions 9.5" x 6"  
First published in UK 2018  
Little Brown Book Group



In the early 1970's I occasionally noticed **Soviet Military Mission (SOXMIS) vehicles in the Herford area.** The British equivalent, BRIXMIS was based close to the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. Both were allowed to drive around the other's respective zones of Germany, but not to (overtly) snoop around military installations.

The Soviet Mission was located in Bünde and seemed content to cruise around avoiding situations which might affect their access to the NAAFI and its tax free facilities.

Formed in 1946 their purpose was to 'maintain professional contact.' Naively, I thought their presence and other less obvious intelligence gathering would keep us safe. Downing's book dismisses this myth. We were often close to the nightmare of a nuclear war.

Taylor Downing, who co-authored Cold War with Jeremy Isaacs (published 1998), is an experienced historian who skillfully uses Soviet archive material released after 1991, and formerly classified American documents to reveal how 1983 in particular presented

an even more dangerous threat to world peace than the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

An excellent introduction provides an outline of the mutual mistrust and tensions which existed after 1945. It explains how the aggressive attitudes and provocations of successive US presidents could so easily have resulted in terrifying consequences. Both sides spent billions preparing for Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Even after the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) there were sufficient nuclear weapons remaining to wipe each other out many times over.

Soviet paranoia and weak and ill Soviet leaders such as Andropov and Brezhnev feared a first strike from the USA. There were (and probably still are) pre-designated targets for attack and retaliation. In reality, there would be little point hitting back at sites which had already released their nuclear missiles. There would be nothing of value or threat remaining. Instead, cities, government buildings and similar installations would be targeted. And we should not forget that nuclear submarines could patrol for up to a year, and therefore exact revenge on what remained after Armageddon had already taken place.

The ever suspicious Soviet intelligence agencies were organised to look for any signs of imminent attack. 'Do not miss anything' was the instruction. This resulted in agents supplying what they thought the leadership wanted to know rather than genuine intelligence gathering. This approach perpetually kept the Soviets on edge, and in 1983 almost over that edge. False alerts were common on both sides and Downing uses them to build up the tension to 1983.

In August 1983 a South Korean Airlines 747 was shot down by the Soviets resulting in the deaths of 269 passengers and crew. What exactly happened is still not known but it was hundreds of miles off its flight path and well inside

Soviet Pacific territory at the time when US spy planes were operating in the same area.

In October Hezbollah detonated a car bomb at the US embassy in Beirut incurring over 240 casualties, most of them US marines. In the same month, without informing the British government, the US invaded Grenada in the Caribbean. Whatever its political status under a Marxist prime minister it was still part of the Commonwealth. Now every US military installation was on high alert and there was increased communications traffic, much of it between the US and the UK as Mrs Thatcher told President Reagan what she thought of him. The Soviets did not 'do the maths' and assumed something more sinister was happening.

During this time the United States were also involved in psychological warfare, not realising how seriously the Soviets took every provocation. NATO naval exercises took place intending to prevent the Soviet navy from breaking out of its Northern Pacific bases into the North Atlantic. Able Archer 83 was part of this and although an annual exercise, this year involved massive movements of troops and materiel involving airlifts from the USA.

The war gamers invented ever more imaginative and lively scenarios which simulated NATO forces losing a conventional war and accordingly requesting permission to access the codes to deploy nuclear weapons. The Soviets were listening into all these exchanges. Their intelligence services continued to deliver confusing and incorrect information ignoring that civilians in the West were going about their normal daily routines and President Reagan was even embarking on a tour of Japan and the Far East. These examples of normalcy were rejected. Instead they interpreted material gathered from Able Archer to imply that the manoeuvres were possi-

bly a subterfuge for an actual 'first strike.' Paranoia, as always, was never far from those in the KGB centre in Moscow.

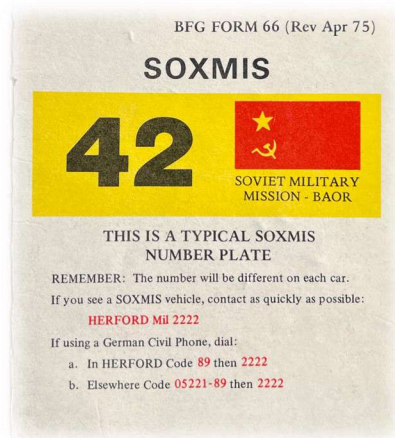
How would the Soviets react? Fortunately we are still around to read how a Soviet chief engineer was unjustly blamed for the failure of a satellite and computer system. He was dismissed from his post and left with a reduced pension in virtual poverty. In his tiny Moscow flat is displayed a small globe resting on an open hand. He proudly points it out to visitors. It is inscribed with the following words from **Kofi Annan**, Secretary General of the United Nations.

**To Stanislav Petrov  
The Man Who Saved the  
World.**

It would appear that while so many of us were enjoying 'Happy Days In Germany' we were permanently on the brink of a nuclear war without ever knowing.

We had avoided a third World War - for the time being. If like me you need further proof of how we were and are constantly in danger, try reading General Sir John Hackett's tomes, 'The Third World War' August 1985 (published 1978) and 'The Third World War: The Untold Story' (published 1982), detailed and convincing. You will have your eyes opened, and you probably won't sleep very well.

Carpe diem!



**It was 20 years ago this month - July 2002 - and  
yes - I remember them well ...**



Operating under a number of guises over the years (Inspection and Advisory Service/School Effectiveness Branch, this group of support staff existed to ensure educational standards were maintained in Service Children's Education (SCE) schools. Led by an Assistant Chief Executive, (in this photograph Mrs Judith Morris) the service consisted of a team of inspector advisers, advisers and advisory teachers who provided support and challenge to schools on leadership, standards, curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning. Schools were encouraged to carry out regular self evaluation and all teaching staff participate in SCE's performance management programme. These activities were intended to help identify schools' strengths and weaknesses and inform school improvement planning and SCE's Education Development Plan. In consultation with headteachers, inspector advisers agreed schools' targets and priorities and the programmes of support necessary to achieve them. Resources and training and development opportunities, targeted in response to identified need, were provided in the workplace and at professional development centres (PDCs) located at Bielefeld and Wegberg (in Germany) and at Episkopi and Dhekelia (in Cyprus). Advisory teachers offered a range of courses and worked alongside teachers in classrooms. All SCE schools were inspected by HM Inspectors (HMI) who followed the OfSTED Framework for Inspection used in England. Their reports were published by OfSTED.

Gathered on an evening's Rhein cruise to mark Diana Batt's departure from SCE are (some names are missing after 20 years!) Anne and David Bowdler, Mike and Sue Chislett, John and Judith Berry, Tim (sadly deceased) and Ursula Nicholls, Dianna Batt and husband, Alison Iveson, Helen Marshall, Kathryn and Phill Forsyth, Graham and Nicole Marshall, Jeff and Angela Williams, Michael Hughesman, Maria Rees-Johnstone and husband, Sue Lannon and Tom and Maureen Nielsen-Marsh.



Gathered with Chief Inspector Adviser and one-time Deputy Director **Peter Gaskell** at Haus Reineberg Lubbecke - Harold Fairhurst, Paul Rogers, Ian Forrest, Michael Vaughn, Jan Fisher, Andrew Gavan, Janet Bowen, Brenda Titley, Marianne Jones, Paddy Powell, Dianna Batt, Cindy Lancaster, Jan Coats, Oswin Hall, David Harfield, Chris Webster, Stuart Dyke, ??? Judy Dawson, Cheryl Williams, Christine Caulfield, ???(IT), Maureen Elliott, Stuart Gill, Peter Gaskell, Chris Ingham & Tom Nielsen-Marsh

**“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” — Mae West**



***I found myself standing all alone before a sea of wide eyed faces. For a moment I felt like running ...***

It is not often that pupils have the chance to see school life from a teacher's point of view. Since I hope to become a teacher I inquired into the possibility of visiting a school to find out if I'd really like the job of teaching. I obtained permission from the appropriate authorities to attend **Pasir Panjang Junior School** and Mr. Wheeler permission for me to go every Wednesday morning.

At first I merely observed the methods of teaching the various subjects. Then after a few weeks I graduated to helping with small tasks such as marking books and listening to reading. It wasn't till about half way through the first term that I was allowed to actually give a lesson. I was given a few days to prepare it, then, all too soon, I found myself standing all alone before a sea of wide eyed faces. For a moment I felt like running but I managed to control myself. I had never made any sort of public statement

before. A few seconds passed and the children were still waiting expectantly. I took a deep breath, glanced hurriedly over the faces before me then nervously began my first lesson. At first my voice seemed a whisper, even against the deathly silence; but after the first few sentences I gained confidence and the rest of the lesson went smoothly.

As I only attended the school on Wednesdays and Saturdays the pupils thought I was an important personage who toured the schools, consequently everyone was on their best behaviour whenever I was around. All their illusions would have been shattered had they known that when I wasn't at their school I was sitting on the other side of the teacher's desk, amongst the pupils.

After the first lesson the others were not so bad. The next step up on the ladder was when I was promoted to two lessons a day. Usually it was left to the form teacher of the class I was in to choose the lessons and this way I learnt their various likes and dislikes. Naturally they always gave me the subjects they didn't like. Sometimes they even changed the timetable around so that I could take a subject they were not fond of.

After the first term I was allowed to take one class for the whole day. By the end of morning I was usually exhausted, and at first not used to talking for so long a time, my jaws were

stiff.

The classes I preferred teaching were less intelligent ones. They didn't ask too many questions, they needed illustrations for almost every subject to both capture their interest and make a more vivid impression on their minds, one could really enjoy oneself drawing pictures on the blackboard. It didn't matter so much if I made mistake while talking either, because unless repeated it would just pass over their heads.

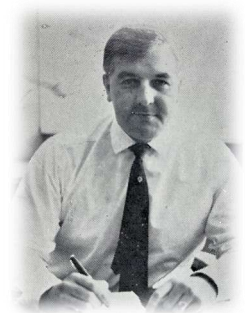
It was rather a come down to have to return to school the next day as a pupil, and wander round during break instead of sitting drinking coffee in comfort discussing the morning's with my fellow teachers.

**Pat O'Dwyer L VI (1965) St John's School "Summit Magazine" (Singapore)**

*The things we do, activities we take up in school, have a deeper effect on our future lives than we dream of at the time. So how much was Pat 'Dwyer's future life and career influenced by her short time in front of the children at Pasir Panjang Junior School in 1967?*

At around the same time **Peter Gaskell** sat down to write his Headmaster's Review for the tenth edition of that self-same school magazine (1966/7). Did Peter dream of his future lives in

Germany I wonder? That year Peter felt, alongside many senior colleagues, that the coming academic year would be the finest yet in the short history of St John's. The friends of **St John's School Association** concluded an eventful year by sponsoring **SJS 68** in aid of the nine house charities and school funds and Peter urged all parents to join and support the Association if they had not already



done so!

And - a long way back in Blighty - in **1967/8** Loughborough - a young and incredibly inexperienced student teacher set out on a career that would lead him to serve for over 40 years with BFES/SCS (NWE)/SCE earning the gratitude and Civil Commendation of the last GOC BFG - Major General J Mc N R Henderson. (Photo below - COS BFG Presents Tom Nielsen-Marsh with his GOC Commendation - July 2013.)



**Rain did not stop play!**

The planned South West Hub Area 1 (SW1) get-together at the Wellington Monument on June 25<sup>th</sup>, which was to be a picnic at the Wellington memorial, did not take place due to the rain that morning. Luckily with advance warning from the weather forecast, the venue was swiftly changed to a pub in the nearby hamlet of Clayhidon.

Twelve people (including 2 grandchildren) and together accompanied by 2 dogs, gathered in the "Half Moon Inn" and enjoyed a convivial chat which stretched from Singapore to Hong Kong to Cyprus to Malta to Germany and Berlin. Many miles and years were recalled, often with disbelief that the time spent there was so

many years ago. It was also a great opportunity to catch up on more recent news and share interests on a rather wet Saturday.

It was agreed that a happy time was had by all and there are plans for another meeting towards the end of the year. The Area Hub Leader, **Sue Adams**, would like to extend her thanks to all who came and made the event so enjoyable.

**About hubs and how to find out your area Hub:**

Members have been grouped according to the area in which they live, each area being called a 'hub'. Some Hubs cover fairly large geographical areas, so have been further divided, with, for example, the South West being divided into four areas. The idea behind Hubs is to enable members to meet in small

groups nearer to their home. The members section of the website will soon have the full Hub list so you will

be able see who is in your hub. We do still need Hub Leaders to co-ordinate the get-togethers in several



**The rain, not only in Spain falls ...**

As I write this article for the Journal, it is raining. Of course it is raining - this is the week of the Glastonbury Festival and cricket fixtures at the Taunton Cricket Ground (known locally as 'Ciderabad').

What should I expect - Macca may stay dry in the famous pyramid, but the crowds of course accustom themselves to the feel of squelchy wellies and cricket fans will have their gamps. So why did I arrange a SW HUB meeting on June 25<sup>th</sup> assuming that all would be well for an open-air picnic in the Blackdown Hills next to the Wellington Monument?

I confess it was optimism for a sunny summer and of course it would be fine. Well, it wasn't. I agree with May Berry on this - Soggy bottoms should be avoided at all times. So with thanks to an

accurate forecast, it did rain on cue on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Undeterred, the 12 disappointed picnic stalwarts (which included 2 grandchildren and 2 dogs) navigated themselves to the nearby hamlet of Clayhidon and the "**Half Moon Inn**" for an enjoyable lunch and get together. Conversations recalled many happy memories of times and places spent in schools which ranged from Hong Kong to Singapore, Cyprus, Malta, Germany and Berlin and the disbelief that it was that lang ago.

This hub hopes to meet up again -but one thing is sure. I shall check St Swithun's Day weather and the dates of other notable national events when it usually rains.

Well done to the stalwarts who came and I hope we meet again soon - I promise it will be a dry location.

**Your Email Bulletin** We hope that you have been enjoying reading the short news items and notices that appear in the email Bulletin. It is sent out in the middle of each month, the next one going out between 12- 15<sup>th</sup> August. If you haven't seen it in your inbox recently, please check your SPAM/JUNK folder to see if it has landed there. If, however, you have not been receiving the Bulletin, please contact the Membership Secretaries.

# Witnesses to a Vanished Past - An Afternoon with Cake and Coffee and Some School Magazines

Summer Journal 2022



We were delighted to receive an afternoon visit from Bill Johnston (and boyhood friend John Phelps of Garndiffaith) recently who was dropping off some resource materials for the Journal.

Bill - after 29 years in schools (plus three added to the pension for six years in the 'debilitating' Singapore climate) often describes himself as going to seed in rural Leicestershire. Affectionally known as "the Video Man" Bill's career with MOD SCEA Schools began way back when in the 1960s - encompassing both the Far East and Germany. 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.

In the next few issues of the Journal your editor will be exploring some of those links to schools in both the Far East and Germany - and also the video work that Bill was engaged to produce on behalf of SCEA... Perhaps when readers catch up with some of Bill's recollections - and with both the schools he worked in and visited - they will be encouraged to contribute their own reminiscences ....

Bill and wife Norma 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. Norma and Bill, together with colleagues and past pupils who have become lifelong friends, can scarcely believe how fortunate they were to have lived in such an exotic place as Singapore in the 1960s. (And later came exotic Hildesheim and exotic Bünde!) Singapore was so different nearly 60 years ago: the highest building had just 20 floors, taxis relentlessly hooted to attract the custom of any European seen walking, their grocer called six days a week to bring the provisions they had ordered (Waitrose springs to mind!) the day before, the amazing "amah's market" stretched alongside Orchard Road at night lit by paraffin lights - and so many more new amazing experiences for a young couple of 24 years whose first ever flight had been from London Airport to Singapore (with fuelling stops at Istanbul, Bombay and Colombo).

Bill and Norma initially stayed in a boarding house named Rochdale in Rochalie Drive where, after their first night they awoke to see a lizard (known locally as a harmless chit-chat) high up on the ceiling above their heads; where they had to half fill the bath with cold water before going to school because, due to a drought, the taps didn't work during the daytime; and where they were occasionally enter-

tained by a travelling gulligulli man (snake charmer) on the drive in front of the building.

## School was fantastic.

Bill taught at Pasir Panjang (later named Wessex) Junior and Norma at the 'rival' Alexandra Junior just off Nepal Circus—so called because of the Gurkha camp which stretched along Portsdown Road where "we never saw an inactive soldier". There were more than a thousand children in the two schools plus almost the same number in the two separate infant schools—and many of them were more sophisticated and certainly better travelled than Bill and Norma, with postings in those days almost worldwide. Because no part of the schools was air conditioned the school "day" began early and finished just after 1 p.m. but a wide range of extracurricular activities took place for an hour or so each afternoon. In those early days they spent the later afternoon looking at rentable flats, guided by Pasir Panjang Deputy Head Gwyn Roberts, who had met them at Paya Lebar Airport with a pushchair for the child he mistakenly expected we had brought with us.

That tradition required them to meet and greet newcomers the following September and that's where they met, and looked after for the following few weeks, Sally and Brian Johns - two of the five lifelong

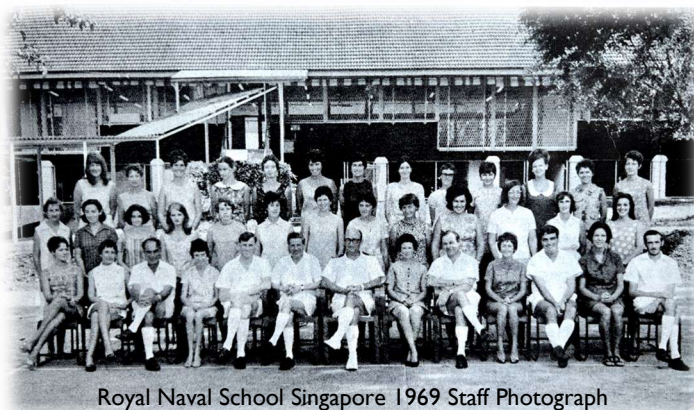
friends referred to above whom they have met up with for a week's catchup and nostalgia every autumn for the past 20 years.

As yet Bill hasn't sat down to pen some Far Eastern memoirs for the Journal but has agreed to bend his mind to it when he gets stuck back into his memoirs. At present these have only reached Singapore in 1969 just before they were packed up and moved to BFES. The resources that he brought that July 2022 afternoon to Rural Monmouthshire have though opened your editor's eyes to the wealth of historical information contained in school magazines.

Bill's first foray into magazine editorship was in 1963 when he produced, duplicated, and stapled his first 28 pages. When he left for Exotic Hildesheim in 1969 his last magazine for Wessex Junior School in Singapore encompassed 152 pages of children's work plus an excellent section entitled "Do you Remember?".  
**More Anon ...**



Tom & Maureen Nielsen-Marsh - July 2022



Royal Naval School Singapore 1969 Staff Photograph

Instructor-Commander  
ACK Robertson RN  
Headmaster



In 1969 Cdr ACK Robertson RN wrote - as did most if not all of his predecessors and successors across a whole raft of SCEA-focussed schools worldwide - that "It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since the last magazine was produced. It has been a happy and busy year for all of us in the R. N. Schools and some idea of our activities can be obtained from the (following) pages, together with army snippets from the children's work". It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since the publication of last summer's Journal - and my twenty-first edition as Editor. As the heading for this page alludes, school and SCEA magazines are repositories of a wealth of our recorded past. In the next few issues of the Journal - and thanks in particular to one of our members - the Journal will turn its attention to those magazines and the wealth of past history they contain.

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**We're on the Web!**

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Thank you, Tom, for yet another BFES-SCE Journal packed full of historical interest. Our journals represent important documents in their own right as they record memories that would otherwise be lost. The journal is a 'long read' - settle down with coffee or cocoa and dip in and out for best results. It is the perfect counterpoint to our monthly bulletins, which aim to keep you up to date with the here and now of BFES-SCE and members' activities. Please consider contributing to both - activities and current news to the bulletin (via Christine and Hugh, Membership) and ideas for historical tales and records to the journal (via Tom, our editor).

Sue Chislett and I recently hosted a small reunion of fellow teacher-training college reprobates from half a century ago. The weather was balmy and we learned to play croquet correctly with a fabulous view of Bath Abbey behind us. As the wine and beer flowed later, BFES and MoD Schools came up. I'd

taught in Wiltshire through most of the 80s and 90s, not joining SCE (as was) until 1998. However, old house-mate Andy had discovered SCS (as was) much earlier and enjoyed tours at Collingwood (Celle) and Maas First (Laarbruch) in late 70s and early 80s.

We checked our increasingly encyclopaedic web-site for any information on these locations and promptly recruited a new member as Andy filled in and emailed an association application on the spot. A week later a small package arrived in the post with a collection of original staff photos. When I have had a chance to scan them, we will post on the BFES-SCE Facebook page with the hope that more of the teachers' faces can be identified. In due course, the images will be added to the schools' 'cards' on the web-site.

Original photographs of schools, their staff and any activities are priceless. I am fairly sure that many languish in albums and attic boxes and are lost when members pass on to the big

staff-room in the sky. We can scan photographs and any other document and upload to the website for the future. Walter Lewis, our archivist, passes original photographs to the Institute of Education in London, who catalogue and maintain the history of MoD Schools overseas.

Walter is planning to set up a modest exhibition of archival material at our AGM in Malvern on 9th September. Interest in this event has been such that we have negotiated a larger room with the hotel. As Christine and Hugh (membership) noted in their July bulletin: 'this means that if there are members who have not booked but now wish to do can come along too. Contact Bill Bowen (telephone or text: 07397973701 or email: [billandjan-bowen@gmail.com](mailto:billandjan-bowen@gmail.com)) to reserve a place or get more information.

Everyone bringing at least one staff or school photo along on 9th September will be entered into a free prize-draw ..... I will try to come up with a suitable prize on the day!

## Making History - The Queen's Jubilee 2022

Sue Adams and friends



And where were you? Photos and text to the editor please ...

### 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 is available from the

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