



THE JOURNAL OF THE BFES SCEA ASSOCIATION

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Editorial

The *BFES SCEA Journal*, celebrating the publication of its 55th edition this spring, seeks to publish articles about the education of Service children throughout the world: from times even before Foreign Office supervision through to Ministry of Defence Agency status and beyond.

Here you will find the continuing story of service children's education. Through profound periods of change that often reflect significant military deployments, contributions are both encouraged, and indeed come, from all parts of the Services and from all parts of the world. Whilst dealing primarily with the lives of Service schools, it also reveals, quite fittingly, the personalities whose commitment both created and, in later years, formulated its successes.

On pages 16/17, we chronicle the passing of two such respected headteachers now no longer with us. Eddie Martin - Head of Dalton Middle and Duesseldorf Primary Schools and Jim Lovegrove - Head of Queen's school in JHQ and of Prince Rupert School at Rinteln.

This edition reflects upon both the history and closure of the schools in Malta and, with permission from the Times of Malta, reports upon a 50th year reunion to 'the isle of bells and smells'. Continuing the theme of closure reveals how the **Future Army 2020** study - initiated in 2011 by Lt General Nick Carter, a former British military commander in Afghanistan, inexorably led to a closure programme for the majority of SCE schools.

Other items to be enjoyed are the story of a host nation partnership, and the start of a tale of a childhood spent with the British Army in India. Former headteachers and occasional contributors, Sue Adams and Mike Bennett share - in very different ways - their most recent experiences of eastern Europe and of Asia.

1994, 30 years ago, marked the end of British schooling in Berlin. In July of that year I was especially privileged to participate in The Havel School's closing ceremony - a school that I had joined as Berlin Middle School, in 1977. And which gets numerous column inches here - as one contributor tells it "from the end of the runway".

To close, with what Association Chair Mike Chislett refers to as an "eye level picture" a front page photograph, to catch the eye when the Journal is opened or unwrapped - and a little enigmatic, so that reading about it (inside pages) is required.

Tom Nielsen-Marsh - Editor



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It was only when I, a new-comer from Mönchengladbach, joined Hardt Comprehensive School as an English teacher in 1992 that I realised that there was a "Little Britain" in the city, with a pronounced British social infrastructure, including nurseries, primary schools and the Windsor School, a secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18. Why the name Windsor School? Was the royal family involved? No, no one from the House of Windsor ever went to school here. As the school was an amalgamation of the Kent and the Queen's School, the name Windsor School is probably simply a continuation of the school's affinity with the monarchy. In keeping with the outstanding name, the school was also awarded the title of 'outstanding' by the Ofsted inspectorate in 2010.

It is notoriously difficult to find a partner school in the United Kingdom. So it made sense to try and find a

school in the neighbourhood. Attending an English school without crossing the English Channel! For the newly established bilingual lessons at GE Hardt in particular this was a welcome opportunity to meet real English-speaking contemporaries.

And so it came about that the Hardt headmaster Bernd Schäferhenrich and I visited Windsor School on Snyder Road for the first time in September 1992. Tim Kilbride, the headmaster at the time, gave us a very friendly welcome and was obviously very keen on the idea of establishing a partnership with a similar school.

We gratefully accepted his offer to show us around his school. We were – as teachers at a school under construction - extremely impressed by the facilities, the range of subjects on offer and the standard of the school. The classrooms were not like classrooms in German schools but were

rooms allocated to the subjects, mostly designed as "learning landscapes". There was a large, inviting library, very well-equipped computer rooms, extensive sports facilities, a cafeteria and art rooms, all of which bore witness to the creativity of the pupils in the areas of painting, sculpture and photography. And then there was the Assembly Hall, which could be equipped with a stage and audience seating for theatre and music performances.

We were invited several times to performances such as Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Wizard of Oz or The Little Shop of Horrors. It was admirable what was conjured up on stage with so much dedication and effort by pupils and teachers from all year groups. Theatre was more important at Windsor School than at German schools and was one of the subjects on offer. One group, for example, performed and created a

play about the problem of bullying among young people at GE Hardt.

Windsor pupils were not only taught according to the English "National Curriculum" and obtained English qualifications, but there was of course also - as at all British schools - compulsory uniform for pupils. This smacked of the military, and indeed, pupils there always seemed to me to be quite disciplined. However, this discipline was then completely overturned on Mufti Day, which takes place once a term when children were allowed to come to school in civilian clothes and sometimes in costume.

Things went haywire under the supervision of teachers! Crazy things took place such as shopping trolley races on the street in front of the school building, moderated and started by the **headmaster**. Not untypical for Great Britain: the freedoms on this day were

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Entrance to Windsor School, June 2015 (B. Weinberg)

A ROYAL NAME continued

A School partnership between Hardt Comprehensive School and Windsor School JHQ

BFES SCEA
Association



Joint games and sport activities, 1995
(B. Weinberg)

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"bought" by the pupils with a small contribution to a charitable cause.

It was interesting to note that Windsor School strived to let its pupils experience the German environment,

was therefore an obvious choice to choose the district of Hardt for the first joint project. After the participating pupils had first met at GE Hardt and then at Windsor School and got to know each other a little through a few games and



Field work in Hardt, 1995 (B. Weinberg)

the district, the town, and the region outside of JHQ. The geography teacher Peter Fieldhouse was very active in this respect. A geographic teaching project also seemed a good choice for the pupils in the bilingual geography lessons. It

sporting activities, the twelve to thirteen-year-olds set about investigating the building structure and development of the housing estates around Hardt Comprehensive School and recording them on maps and in photos. With slight modi-

fications, we carried out the two-day project three times.

A further project arose from another similarity in the curriculum: Medieval towns and fortresses.

The multi-day teaching projects "Mönchengladbach - Past in the Present" and "Linn Castle", which became a standard feature of the school calendar for many years, were developed in collaboration with Peter Fieldhouse and Chris Sholl, a new foreign language teacher from the British school in Dortmund.

With their "workbooks" written mainly in English, the pupils walked the "Wall Walk" and the "Abbey Walk" in Mönchengladbach city centre in mixed groups, and visited the abbey and the museum.

With the permission of the museum management in Krefeld-Linn, we regularly invaded the Krefeld district of Linn and its castle in early summer with around fifty British and German seventh-graders to explore the numerous features of the fortress complex.

Although not all of the participating British pupils had chosen German as a subject the Windsor pupils also faced some foreign language challenges in addition to the historical content.

The latter was also important to the German-English bilingual headteacher Anne Farrel, who unfortunately died unexpectedly and far too early in 2005. Her popularity and her humour were reflected in the funeral service held in

one of the churches at JHQ. I have never experienced a funeral service before or since that allowed laughter as well as mourning at the episodes from her life that were recited.

Certainly the largest and most elaborate projects were the so-called Joint Rhine Projects. The idea behind these projects was to make observations along the Rhine and to convey the European idea by travelling to Alsace and Strasbourg.

In the Lower Rhine region, there were excursions to the Duisburg Nord Landscape Park and Duisburg harbour. The tour then continued with a trip to Strasbourg, visits to the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp and the European Parliament. Part of the journey actually took place on the Rhine, namely from Bingen to Koblenz. Financial support came from the GE Hardt friends' association, and a grant was provided by the Member of Parliament Karl-Heinz Florenz. The trips were made easier by the fact that Windsor School was able to provide army buses for the journey.

With the decline in pupil numbers, in later years it was no longer possible to carry out such large projects. However, until the last year of Windsor School's existence – and also supported by the last headmaster Brian Davies – there continued to be reciprocal visits by pupils, joint sporting activities and one-day projects.

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Medieval scene in the Great Hall at Burg Linn, 1998 (B. Weinberg)

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Almost right up until the school closed, Chris Sholl organised excellent so-called Model British and Model European Parliaments in which sixth form students from Windsor School and several schools in the surrounding area first worked on and discussed predetermined political topics in small groups in order to then hold debates in the parliamentary plenary, whereby the formal customs and forms of address (The Right Honourable

Member of Parliament, the Honourable Member for ...) took as much getting used to as they were amusing for young Germans.

In addition to the close contacts with Windsor School, there were also contacts with kindergartens and primary schools, where some comprehensive school pupils were able to do their work experience placements. The connection with Ark School, the result of the merging of St George's and St Andrew's Schools, and therefore the last remaining primary school in JHQ in its

last years.

On several visits with groups of pupils, headteacher Mike Chislett guided them through the exhibitions that pupils and teachers at Ark School had created to mark the closure of JHQ. He invited a group to take part in a special farewell project.

The idea was to create a sculpture that symbolises the dispersion and communication of British military families stationed in Germany. It was to show birds flying to and from a Royal Mail letterbox. In the

primary school classes, the children painted flying birds, the best of which were selected as a template for a metal sculpture. An English blacksmith came to JHQ to produce the piece and a seventh grade class from GE Hardt were allowed to assist.

The sculpture with the title "**Posted!**" initially stood in Bielefeld, the last remaining British garrison at that time. Following its closure in 2020, the sculpture was relocated to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.



Group of British and German pupils in the parliament building in Strasbourg, 2001 (B. Weinberg)



Mike Chislett talking to pupils of GE Hardt (Christa Klingner)

SCE DRAWDOWN NEWSLETTER - FUTURE ARMY 2020 STUDY

Tom Nielsen-Marsh & Steve Wallace - July 2012

Future Army 2020 Study

In July 2011 the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) – General Sir David Richards (now Lord Richards) established a 'compartmentalised' Army 2020 design team to conduct an analysis of the future Army from first principles.

So where did that leave SCE

Lt General Nick Carter, a former British military commander in Afghanistan, was tasked with the job of predicting the likely size

and make up of the British Army in the next decade. The **Army 2020 Study** was established to determine the future design of the Army to face an unpredictable future. The programme was to result in the largest structural change to the Army since the end of National Service and as was **announced on 5 July 2012** by the Secretary of State for Defence - an **integrated regular and reserve force** of 112,000 personnel of which 82,000 would be Regular and 30,000 to be

trained Reserves is to be established.

Under the direct ownership of CGS and the scrutiny of the Army Command Group (ACG) solid progress was made by General Carter's Army 2020 team leading to the 5th July 2012 announcement.

So what did we - in SCE - know for sure?

The key elements of the new structure were the Reaction and Adaptable Forces. The **Reaction Forces** were to comprise three Armoured Infantry Brigades

and 16 Air Assault Brigade, trained and equipped to undertake the full spectrum of intervention tasks. The **Adaptable Forces** to consist of a pool of Regular and Reserve forces capable of undertaking a variety of roles including: overseas engagement and capacity building; follow-on forces for future medium scale enduring stabilization operations; our standing commitments and Homeland resilience.

The reduction in the size of the Regular Army

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announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) meant that adjustments had to be made to the Army's structure to ensure that it maintained the right balance of capabilities to allow it to fulfill its role within a Joint and multinational future environment.

So the key messages were 17 major units would be closed – this information was widely available on the internet and had been published in Sixth Sense.

Implementation of the Army 2020 outcomes/new structures would be gradual over a 5 year period

No units would be removed (closed) or amalgamated before August 2013

Details of basing would not be available until end of 2012 beginning of 2013

So what does this mean for schools in Germany?

The information above is strategic and, from an SCE perspective, there were still no firm dates for school closures in Germany.

The clear message was that the how and when would not be known for some time as the Army balances the intentions of the SDSR (complete withdrawal from Germany by 2020); Army 2020 changes listed above; the ongoing high operational tempo in Afghanistan; and MOD budget considerations.

As a principle, the Army accepted that, where possible, families with children in secondary education should be given 2 years notice of any changes to allow informed education decisions to be taken, and a minimum **2 years notice period** had been allowed for in Army 2020 announcements. Looking in turn at each of the Army 2020 measures that affect BFG-based units and the

impact on SCE schools the following information was known at that time ...

The 2 RRF move from Celle (Trenchard Bks) - previously announced as a preliminary move - reflected the closure of Celle Station and **Mountbatten School** in Celle, which would close on 13 July 2012. An additional classroom would be provided at **Slim school** to allow for the influx of pupils following the move of 1 Med Regt from Munster and the relocation of a few families from Celle Station.

9th/12th Royal Lancers in Hohne (Haig Bks) will amalgamate with The Queen's Royal Lancers (not before Oct 14), and it is expected that the amalgamated unit will be based in the UK. This will reduce the number of families in Hohne, but on current estimates this will not substantially affect **Montgomery, Slim and Gloucester schools**.

3 MERCIAN in Fallingbostel (Lumsden Bks) will disband (not before Oct 2014), and on current projections there will be a reduction in pupil numbers that will affect both **Heide and Shackleton schools** in Fallingbostel and **Gloucester School** in Hohne.

28 Engineer Regiment in Hameln is scheduled to disband (not before Oct 2015), and Hameln Station will consequently close in the same timeframe. This closure will affect both **Weser and Prince Rupert Schools**.

To recap: the SCE Drawdown Newsletter reiterated that:

Separate to the measures listed above but occurring

in parallel, **Programme BORONA and SDSR** rebasing to meet the Prime Minister's aim of complete withdrawal from Germany by 2020 would continue.

The **Rheindahlen Military Complex (RMC)** will close by Mar 2014. Both Ark and Windsor Schools to close at the end of the summer term 2013 and the remainder of HQ BFG, HQ SCE and other RMC-based Units move to Bielefeld. Primary schooling for personnel relocating to the Gütersloh / Bielefeld area would continue to be provided in Bielefeld, Herford, or Gütersloh depending on the Married Quarters area in which they live; Secondary schooling to continue to be provided at King's School Gütersloh for the foreseeable future. Separate arrangements have been made for current Windsor School termly boarders - and parents of students affected have been informed of the choices of education available.

The **Wildenrath married quarters** estate would be handed back to the German Federation by the end of September 2012, **Andrew Humphrey School** to close on the last day of the Summer Term - 20 July 2012. All assets that SCE wishes to retain will be removed during the week commencing 23 July 12 before handing the school to the Garrison on 27 July 2012 to complete the clearance and handover to the Federal Authorities.

Pupils scheduled to move to Brügggen School in September 2012 were to spend the last week of the Summer Term there. Arrangements for the final week of term for the remaining children were in hand and the Headteacher would continue to keep all staff, parents and pupils fully informed.

In the summer of 2013, **1 YORKS**, currently based in **Münster**, would move to

Cyprus. Following the decision to close **Münster Station** in early 2014, SCE's Executive Board has confirmed that **Oxford School** would close in summer 2013. York Barracks would close in the autumn of 2012, and the FS1 settings and the FS2 annex based in York Barracks would merge into one location in Oxford Barracks. Arrangements for these moves were well in hand and had been communicated to staff, parents and pupils.

Programme BORONA would also close **Javelin Bks Elmpt as 16 Signal Regiment** was rebased to the UK in 2015. In the same timeframe **1 MI Bn** would also rebase from Elmpt. This allowed the closure of Javelin Bks and **Brügggen School** in the summer of 2015.

Finally....

Following the **Army 2020 announcement**, wider SDSR rebasing work continued to make use of UK estate opportunities.

Courses of Action were being developed and a decision on how the Army would like to be based in UK would be made around the end of 2012; it would then be for the Defence Infrastructure Organization - DIO - to determine how, and more importantly for Germany, when the desired UK basing might be achieved. Only when this exercise had been completed would we be able to determine how drawdown from Germany would proceed, and from that how SCE would continue to provide a First Class education for our young people.

During the coming months of 2012 and 2013 rumours would inevitably fuel uncertainty however the SCE Executive Board aimed to ensure, through the Drawdown team that everyone would be kept informed of all drawdown decisions.

And then it was Friday - the last day had actually arrived.

No-one could say we went out with a fizzle.

The final week in the life of **The Havel School** was full of activity and celebration, making it a most memorable session for the last eighty-odd pupils. Two days were spent following unusual aspects of the curriculum:

Year 9 spent a whole day on a survival challenge, and survived to tell the tale; Year 8 wandered around the school looking for answers to a mathematical treasure hunt, and found their way back to the correct room; nearly everyone raced through the forests of Gatow following an

orienteering trail, and orienteered themselves safely back to school.

Tuesday saw everyone partaking of the Festival of Sport, red, yellow and blue teams competing in rugby, softball and athletics. Miss Jackson's customary excellent organisation meant we were all able to enjoy a great day of sport, and even forget who actually won on the day.

On Thursday, everyone boarded the buses for a big family outing to the Spreepark. Brains were loosened on the Corkscrew and other roller-coasters, and everyone had their fill of fair-

ground delights. All were reunited at the appropriate time, and safely delivered to quartering areas, courtesy of 62 Tpt & Mov Sqn RLC.

And then it was Friday - the last day had actually arrived. The pupils were entertained by the Staff Pantomime, which bore a vague resemblance to Cinderella. The glass slipper was a grotty old trainer, and who on earth were those jazz-besotted mice? Ancillary staff augmented the audience and enjoyed the performance nearly as much as the children.

In the afternoon, parents flocked to collect reports and

leaving documents which had kept teachers busy for the last several weeks. Most of the parents stayed for the Final Assembly which was a celebration of achievement of The Havel School. There was music and comedy and speeches, contributing to a memorable gathering, which was followed by refreshments in the dining hall. It was fitting that so many parents, pupils and guests stayed until the final bell. The Hall was alive with compliments and not a little sadness.

And then the buses left for the last time.



Lunchtime



Front view of A Block

A unique school!

Fifteen years at the **Berlin chalk face** came to an end for the staff of The Havel School at a closing assembly held on Friday, 7 July 1994, and attended by Brig D de G Bromhead, Comd Berlin Inf Bde, Lt Col AWE Brister, Comd ETS Branch Berlin, and Mr Ian Mitchelson, Chief Executive of Service Children's Schools. For the pupils it

was the end of a shorter time, but for many it was none the less an emotional occasion, although marked by light-hearted as well as serious presentations.

A unique school.

The Havel School opened in 1979 as a combined middle and secondary school. The Berlin Middle School had previously occupied the same site, but the new

school was one with an unusual age range. Combined first and middle schools are not unknown, but to cover the age range of 9 to 17 years was probably unique. For children who stayed in Berlin for long periods - and in the days of Teufelsberg there were many who did - this gave a welcome degree of continuity as they passed through these crucial years

in the education system. Previously, older children could not be catered for educationally in Berlin, but the new school was able to take them to GCSE level and further. Those who wanted to do A-levels still had to move away to boarding schools, as there were not enough pupils to justify a full two-year sixth form, although one-year

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IT WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO ...

And then the buses left for the last time.

Viv Ebbage - formerly The Havel School

AUF WIEDERSEHEN ...

Tears Laughter and Sound Advice

Bob Forde

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sixth form courses were offered.

The Havel School has been able to offer a high standard of education to Service children here.

Partly this has been because of the resources available, as the school has always been able to call on more funding than would normally be the case in the UK. This has resulted in the provision of modern equipment, such as microscopes and computers, and of transport for school trips in the days when West Berlin was virtually a landlocked island. However, another factor has undoubtedly been the continuity of staffing. The headteacher and both deputies have been in post for ten years or more, and several senior members of staff even longer. Such continuity not only enables people to develop ways of working together, it also makes for stability in school policy.

Like a military unit, a school is not just a place of work; it is a community, and the dispersal of any community which has been part of the lives of so many people for so long is bound to be tinged with sadness, whatever the reason. This was much in evidence on the last day, when pupils, parents and distinguished visitors gathered in the school hall for the final assembly. This was the culmination of a

week of special activities - detailed separately by Viv Ebbage - and marked the end of teaching activities at The Havel, although staff would be staying for two more weeks to complete the closure and virtual dismantling of the school.

Laughter and sound advice.

The ceremony was part traditional assembly, with hymns and addresses by senior staff and visitors, and part reminder of what schools are actually about. Thus, after a welcome from the headteacher Mr Ebbage and a hymn, we saw a presentation by Year 7 pupils called "Oom-pah-pah", a rousing music hall song featured in the play "Oliver". This was followed by some Year 8 pupils with an hilarious spoof sketch based on the Sherlock Holmes stories. Puns and misunderstandings had the audience in fits. This was followed by an address by Brig D de G Bromhead, Comd Berlin Inf Bde, who recounted some incidents from his own schooldays - both amusing and serious - and stressed the value of a good education to the children present. If he had had some success in life, he said, it had been thanks largely to a good educational grounding, and he urged the pupils

present to make full use of their school days.

After this the music department treated the audience to two musical pieces, one of which they had written themselves using some of the school's fine musical computing equipment and keyboards.

Like the other presentations from pupils this was not a special concert piece, but was taken from the work which they had been doing in class. The quality of these presentations certainly suggested that Brig Bromhead's advice had been taken seriously! After another hymn the staff choir showed that they too were no mean musical performers, ambitiously undertaking "Sleepytime Bach and a rather operatic comic rendition of "Old Mother Hubbard".

Mr Ebbage followed this with a speech, aided by one of the teacher's regular audio-visual aids - the overhead projector! He took the letters of

"The Havel School" and suggested how each one might stand for a quality or resource from which pupils had benefited. This was followed by Bible and poetry readings respectively from the two deputies, Mr Jim Ford and Mrs Moira Forde (no relation, but that's another story!). With a final hymn and closing prayer the final assembly

of The Havel School Berlin came to an end.

Goodbye? Not for all...

Afterwards there was a reception in the dining hall for the visitors and a number of pupils, and many emotional farewells took place here. All the pupils received a commemorative mug marked with the school's bear-and-crown emblem and name, and the legend "The best of the West in the East". Not all of the separations will be permanent, however. The pupils will mostly disperse to other schools in the UK and at other military locations abroad, where they will stand a chance of meeting not only their fellow pupils again, but in some cases their old teachers! Although some staff are retiring, most are relocating to other schools.

Some are going back to the UK, but the rest are moving to the four remaining secondary-level Service Children's Schools in Germany- Gloucester School at Hohne, Prince Rupert School at Rinteln, Kings School at Gütersloh, and Windsor School at Rheindahlen. So for some it will not be goodbye but "auf Wiedersehen"

Wherever it is, it won't be the same.



FOR GATOW, IT WAS THE BERLIN AIRLIFT.

“The weeds on the airfield have seen it all come and go”
July 1994 - Ron Miller reflects from the end of the runway ...

Then, in 1978, a most welcome - and scheduled - landing. Spectators were transported back in time as they watched the arrival of Handley Page Hastings TG503 on its final landing to spend its retirement at Gatow.

There is something evocative about a disused airfield - particularly so with one which was in use until only a few days ago. When I stood in the middle of the main runway at Royal Air Force Gatow, with the asphalt stretching away in each direction, I was impressed by the size and organisation of the open space required to operate flying machines. The impeccable surface of the runway, the lines of runway lights, the little blocky buildings housing who-

knows-what equipment. But all this now-dead hardware could not disguise the melancholy. I have served as a RAF pilot for 10 years and have many times bus-tled around busy airfields clad in a helmet and an aeroplane, concentrating on what to do next.

Standing now reflectively in my jogging kit on this deserted runway, out of bounds until last week to everything but hurtling metal and screaming engines, I could hear and see what was invisible then. The lark overhead, the wind in the untended grass, the shimmering distance.

"They can not scare me with their empty spaces" wrote the American poet Robert Frost. Quite the contrary. On

the airfield one could be, like the Prince of Denmark, a king of infinite space. But space also makes you small - and it gives you room to think.

The airfield - this now sleeping dinosaur - had been awake for 60 years, since the Nazis first cleared the trees and levelled the hillocks of the Ritterfeld, as the woodlands here were known.

To the south, adjoining the airfield, they built a flying school. Large, long, well-appointed buildings spaced amongst the trees. No expense was spared - large rooms, chunky doors, vast cellars, concrete attics - walls like air-raid shelters. The entrance complex was particularly striking. The long building containing the arch of the main gate curved purposefully like a buffalo's horns towards the road outside.

Beyond that, across the Kladow road on the shore of the Havel lake - similar buildings for a luxurious staff college and technical school. **Luftwaffe Gatow** was a prestige project on the edge of the first city of the Third Reich - Göring boasted of it: in November 1935 **the Führer himself had opened it.**

But that was nearly 60 years ago. It was now July 1994. For two days after the airfield had closed for flying, it had rained.

Two days of rain in a hot summer.

The weeds sprouted to knee height as if to proclaim the new order. Groundsel, smooth sow thistle and common couch - weeds and joggers may now take possession of the airfield.

Where I stood now, aviation history had roared, rumbled and spluttered past. Anxious student-pilots of the Luftwaffe lurched over the grass wartime airfield in Messerschmitt 108 "Taifun" trainers and bounced into the air. On 25 April 1945, in the last hours of the war, with the sound of the Red Army's distant artillery growing ever closer across the airfield boundary, the diminutive **Hanna Reitsch**, the famous female test pilot, and **Generaloberst Ritter von Greim** took off in a Fiesler Storch light aircraft and dropped to tree-top height on a last, desperate errand across the ruined and embattled city to rendezvous with a deranged Hitler in his bunker. Reitsch managed to land the aircraft amid the smoke of combat on the road before the Brandenburg Gate, struggling with the controls over the shoulder of a wounded and unconscious von Greim.

The very next day, to use the terminology of Goebbels, the "storm broke loose" over Gatow airfield. The hardened

little soldiers of the Soviet 47th Army, soaked in the sweat, grime and malevolence of a thousand-mile battle with the Wehrmacht, poured across the western airfield boundary.

Filling the air above Gatow with the whine and crump of bullets and shells, they overran the stubborn defenders of the academy. This was then a Soviet airfield for two months - the only RAF station with such a pedigree.

On 25 June 1945, amid the ruins of a defeated Germany, a line of vehicles bearing the men of 2848 Squadron, RAF Regiment, snaked its way from Magdeburg to Gatow to stake the RAF's claim to the airfield.

The conference held by the leaders of the victorious allies in nearby Potsdam had agreed to partition Berlin, with the airfield falling in the British sector. The Soviet commander at Gatow, however, had either not seen the paperwork, or chose to ignore it, and the British and their vehicles were confined to a hangar, under a wary guard, for over a week. But, in the end, even the surly Red Army had to bow to the will of the politicians. With reluctance, they withdrew - but only to the other side of the trees to the west of the airfield boundary. And there they were to stay squinting at us through binoculars from their watchtowers, for almost the next 50 years.

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Handley Page Hastings TG503



Every airfield has its moment of glory. For Biggin Hill it was the Battle of Britain. For Gatow, it was the Berlin Airlift. Photo TNM 1978



Berlin Middle School Staff - Photo Gordon Outhwaite 1978

Every airfield has its moment of glory. For Biggin Hill it was the Battle of Britain. For Gatow, it was the Berlin Airlift

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We were in - and Royal Air Force Unit, Berlin, became **Royal Air Force Gatow** on 1 August 1945. BAFs, free issue cigarettes, the black market, vitamin pills instead of fresh fruit, the Malcolm Club, no "fraternisation" with the locals, all drinking water to be boiled. In 1947, as if forewarned of the events of the following year, the British embellished their new grass airfield with a concrete runway.

Then, in 1948, after 3 years of deteriorating relations with the West, the Soviets cut all landlinks between Berlin and the Western zones of Germany. In response, the Western Powers launched an air armada over the top of the stranglehold. This time, the Allied aircraft streaming towards Berlin were not dark bombers laden with death, but silvery transports bearing life. Avro Yorks of Royal Air Force Transport Command, fat with coffee beans and flour, appeared over the pines of the Gatower Heide to the east and waddled onto the runway at 6-minute intervals.

Ever-ready Dakotas and sit-up-and-beg Hastings also reached to island-Berlin across the Soviet zone of Germany during those desperate days of Operation Plainfare. For over a year, the airfield, like a Lowry painting, teemed with activity.

Every airfield has its moment of glory. For Biggin Hill it was the Battle of Britain. For Gatow, it was the Berlin Airlift. But the Airlift was also a significant event for the whole city. Through it, the War became history - the Berliners and the Western Allies became a team.

Then the calm after the storm. RAF Gatow reduced to care-and-maintenance in the early 50s. Only 126 airmen inhabit-

ed the vast station - a handful of peas in a barrel. The old Luftwaffe academy buildings across the Kladow road were now a civilian hospital. On **Christmas day 1952**, a competition for the best decorated bunk. Judged by the station commander, the prize was 10 shillings per occupant. On Boxing Day, a station treasure hunt.

The monotony was occasionally broken by Mig fighters of the Soviet Air Force, which thundered across the airfield, air-intakes agape, on some mission of reproof or intimidation. On 23 October 1952, one of these open-mouthed intruders, thinking that it was at a Soviet airfield, landed unexpectedly. A pantomime ensued as realisation dawned on both friend and foe. A Mig 15, a fire engine, a grass-cutting tractor and a car-borne station commander manoeuvred desperately on the airfield - the aircraft to escape; the vehicles to prevent its escape. But at last the British, in exasperation, had to watch as the jet plane, engine screaming, took to the grass and struggled into the air.

In 1954, the enterprising Squadron Leader Drury, the station commander, farmed pigs and vegetables on the base.

In the early 60s, changes took place in the world outside the airfield which were to set the tone for the remaining life of RAF Gatow. The Soviets and their East German allies built around the western zones of Berlin a barrier of concrete and barbed wire - the Berlin Wall. Not a stone's throw from the western boundary of the airfield ran part of this Iron Curtain made manifest - a double fence with a killing zone of lights, watch towers, guards and booby-traps within.

The Station built up again. More families came to live in the newly-built flats. More

people, more life - more aircraft. In April 1964, flight number 505 from Gatwick, a Viscount airliner of British European Airways landed on the airfield. It was the inaugural flight of direct trooping between Berlin and the UK.

The Royal Anglian Regiment, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the Royal Regiment of Wales, the Queen's Lancashire Regiment and many more came for their tour in Berlin. For thirty years, until March 1994, when Britannia Airways completed the service, the airfield saw thousands of servicemen, their wives and their children arrive and depart on the regular weekly "trooper".

26 Signals Unit, a name almost synonymous with Gatow, arrived to begin a long and distinguished stay. Some 26SU families grew up in Berlin. The Unit's now abandoned site at Teufelsberg is still visible from the airfield, shining distantly in the sunlight on its man-made hill to the east - like the minarets of old Baghdad.

The airfield also received its own dedicated aircraft. Some years earlier, in 1956, two RAF Chipmunk aircraft arrived. This type had been resident ever since, flying throughout Berlin's aerial control zone, asserting our "right to be there". Later, in November 1970, 7 Flight Army Air Corps arrived and added a Sioux helicopter to the Gatow air force. The soldiers were to make 3 Hangar their home until they left, now with 3 Gazelles, in July 1994.

Life became a pattern. There were attractions to being a member of the Allied Protecting Powers in the three decades of the trooper. Families Ration Issue, (FRIS), fuel coupons, the NAAFI at Summit House, mountain bikes for dollars at the American PX, duty-free Berliner Kindl, visits

to the opera, free travel on the U-Bahn. The West Berliners, themselves growing more prosperous in their beautiful, forested, enclave-city, felt just as exclusive - and begrudged us not a pfennig.

There were also moments of high drama. In Easter 1966 a crippled Soviet Yak "Firebar" fighter roared over the Heerstraße and crashed, amid smoke and steam, in the Havel Lake. RAF Gatow became a hive of subterfuge as quiet and studious gentlemen arrived from the UK to inspect the wreckage, retrieved by the British from its watery grave. The dead crewmen and, after a respectable interval, the mangled aircraft, were returned to the Soviets using barges on the lake boundary.

In 1976 the communists repaid us in kind when, in a ceremony on the Glienicke Bridge, they handed over the remains of a wartime Lancaster bomber and its crew - discovered during an East Berlin excavation. And in 1978 the airfield received another unexpected and unauthorised landing when two young brothers landed in a Zlin 42m - the culmination of successful escape attempt from East Germany.

Then, in 1978, a most welcome - and scheduled - landing. Spectators were transported back in time as they watched the arrival of Handley Page Hastings TG503 on its final landing to spend its retirement at Gatow. Since then, the old propliner has languished contentedly as Gatow's "gate guard". Children hurry to Gatow's primary school along the path beneath its port wing as it stands quietly between the tennis courts and the Astra cinema.

But since 1945, no event has been so momentous for Gatow and its airfield - or for Germany - as the events of November 1989. Berliners

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climbed onto the wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate, where Reitsch and von Greim, in their shrapnel-peppered aircraft, had spluttered to a halt 44 years earlier, and signalled the end, not only of the German Democratic Republic, but of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Empire - and RAF Gatow's raison d'être. To the west, across the Havel lake, the aircraft waited for a new chapter in its life to begin.

Now, in the summer of '94, the future of the airfield is already congregating on it. Its flying days are over, but two grey ex-Luftwaffe aircraft sit patiently on the end of the runway baking in the midday heat. A bright orange Canberra dozes in front of No 1 Hangar with a hood over its cockpit.

They are waiting for the Luftwaffe Museum to arrive from Hamburg after the British have gone.

One day the airfield will be full of aircraft again - stationary aircraft. A huge aircraft

park with family groups trooping between exhibits. To the south, the rest of the station will be a non-flying unit of the new German air force - except for the serried blocks of flats, which will disgorge government workers, instead of the airmen of the RAF, bustling to work each day.

Another defence cut. Another "challenge for the men and women of the RAF". Let me take you by the hand and lead you through the shops and schools, the work places and the living spaces - a way of life. I'll show you something

to make you change your mind.

The weeds on the airfield have seen it all come and go. The Cold War is over. Who knows what lies ahead. The RAF has lost some fine airfields

- and the loss of its Berlin outpost is one of the unkindest cuts of all. But for a few months in 1994 at least, the airfield was returned to nature - to the larks, the hares, the cabbage whites, the joggers and the weeds of RAF Gatow. Berlin is once again Germany's first city - Gatow once again a Luftwaffe base. A Bridge no more.

TWO WOMEN STANDING IN FRONT OF A BUILDING

Sue Adams (formerly HT in Berlin and BFG)

Sue Adams and Gaye Waters have travelled many miles together over the years, since becoming colleagues in Sennelager in 1975. (Gaye was in William Wordsworth and Sue in Robert Browning). This year they decided to visit Uzbekistan and had a fascinating insight into the country.



Registan square in daytime

I'm not sure what it was that prompted me to think of visiting Uzbekistan (UZB) and follow part of the Silk Route - perhaps it was the enthusiasm of Joanna Lumley in her TV programmes that set the seed of curiosity but whatever the reason I set off with Gaye in May last year, flying from Heathrow to Tashkent, the capital.

It was a delayed flight and with UZB being 5 hours ahead of GMT, we arrived in

the early hours of the morning and had only a few hours sleep before setting off the next day.

Our tour guide was excellent and sensed the tiredness of the group (12 people) and suggested that we might like a coffee

stop after a brief tour in a coach around the city. It would be fair to say that Tashkent has been completely rebuilt over the years - it was once destroyed by Genghis Khan and more recently devastated by an earthquake in 1966. Very little architectural history survives to demonstrate the importance of this city on the Silk Route. So it has been rebuilt with new wide roads

and imposing buildings, typical of the Soviet style, some of which have been replaced when UZB became independent in 1991.

The coffee stop was very welcome and gave an opportunity to meet local people - everyone we met spoke perfect English, were genuinely friendly and pleased that you were visiting their country. Any preconceptions of women being restricted in their lifestyle quickly vanished as we saw young girls enjoying a coffee and wearing western style clothes.

UZB is proud that it is a self-sustaining country and nowhere was this

more evident than when visiting a huge local market - the variety of meat, fruit and vegetables was extensive. This was reflected in the very enjoyable meals that we had. Bread features very evidently with all meals and I was fascinated to watch 2 young boys, after their day at school, kneading dough and weighing it precisely for loaves for baking. Quite a responsible job! Outside the market was a huge bazaar

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the boys in the bakery



Koran museum

selling clothes, ceramics and everyday household requisites – no supermarkets here – this is where you would shop.

We were then taken to a museum that had previously been a Madrasah and housed a beautiful collection of ancient copies of the Koran, most had been painstakingly written by hand.

Our final visit of the day was to the Metro, the only city in UZB to have one. It was extremely busy but, despite that, anyone who realised that we were British, wanted to talk and ask questions about who we were etc. Each of the stations has its own design and décor – they are spotlessly clean and all trains were running on time. Apart from the Metro, public transport, taxis, and in some parts, trolley buses were easily available. Our group had the luxury of an air-conditioned coach which, given the rise in temperature during the day, was very welcome. UZB becomes very hot in the summer with temperatures well into 40c. Their winters are short, often with snow and rain. The rain is very welcome as this fills the main rivers of the country and it is hoped will gradually fill the Aral Sea, which was hugely depleted during the Soviet era. UZB is the second largest cotton producer in the

world but despite this, the Soviet powers wanted the output to be doubled and this drained the natural resources of water.

So it was with some relief after a busy first day that we returned to our hotel for an early night before a very early flight the next morning to Khiva. There was also a hope of a gin and tonic but no such luck – neither ingredient was to be found anywhere on the tour!

Khiva is like an open-air museum with a beautifully conserved fortress which has the Emir's palace, mausolea and Madrasahs (old schools). It dates from the 14th Century and still has a small population living in some of the houses. The beauty of the artwork inside and outside of the buildings is staggering to see. The blue coloured tiles which we saw on so many buildings were so intricate in forming symmetrical patterns. The Emir's winter palace was especially elaborate and had many entrances for his wives rooms and also his concubines. The mosques were equally beautiful in their design, many had high ceilings and domes for coolness. The pillars seen outside one of the mosques were carved sandalwood.

Lunch that day was provided in a local restaurant – there was plenty of choice and very courteous service. Black or green tea was found to be very refreshing with many meals. Khiva is a tourist dream – there is much to see and plenty of opportunities for retail therapy – here we

saw silk scarves, kaftans, camel hair garments, ceramics, puppets all of which could be bartered for in a friendly fashion. I never really came to terms with the currency – the local currency is the soum and prices seemed to be in the thousands. However, American dollars were very well received, Euros also and credit cards. ATMs were easily available.

Our hotel was just outside the fortress walls and we had a free day to wander around again, sample local food and soak up more of the unique atmosphere. Everywhere we went, people stopped to talk and practise their English – this included children who would ask “What is your name?” “How old are you?” (I settled on 50 here!) The hotel had a beautiful garden and many Mulberry trees which were bursting with fruit – some destined for the silk worms.

It was really in Khiva that I felt I had met the real UZB – Tashkent, in comparison, was a modern city. We noticed the difference in generations – older women were still in more traditional style of clothing and the younger generation, not so. Respect for the elderly was very evident and everyone seemed very happy. Everywhere was clean, I did not see any litter anywhere during the whole visit.

The next part of our journey was by coach across a desert area to Bukhara – it was a massive desolate area and took 8 hours to reach our

destination. Lunch was provided at a roadside restaurant, I would think specially placed and organised for the many intrepid travellers passing that way. A very enjoyable BBQ was served with fruit to follow and vodka! At times we passed military guarded areas near the



Metro Tashkent

country's border but there was little to see until we reached the outskirts of the city. Bukhara is more than 2,000 years old. and uniforms on sale It is the most complete example of a medieval city in Central Asia and has remained largely intact.

One of the oldest buildings is the Mausoleum of the Samanids, believed to be built in the 9th-10th century by Emir Ismail for his father. The architecture is extremely simple, a cube crowned with a hemisphere and made of brick tiles. Nearby is another ancient monument – the well of Job, who according to legend created a well by hitting the ground with his staff. The old fortress was well maintained and included a beautiful mosque.

I was very amused to see Russian badges and uniforms on sale in some

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Sue Adams (formerly HT in Berlin and BFG)

(Continued from page 11)

bazaars and it reminded me of my days in Berlin where similar reminders of Soviet occupation were on sale. Wandering around Bukhara enabled more opportunities for walking through bazaars which were strategically built for easy trading with early travellers of the Silk Route.

Our final destination was Samarkand which is the oldest city in UZB, founded in 700BC. It was to become one of the largest cultural, scientific and trade centres of its time. Many monuments and statues were to be seen of Amir Timur who gave the city much peace and prosperity during his reign (1370-1499). He created a huge army and led many campaigns and extended his empire from the Volga river to India. He also made valuable contributions to the national state system, education and culture.

The Registan Square is the heart of Samarkand and consists of 3 Madrasahs (Muslim educational institutions) where clergymen, statesmen and scientists were trained. It was said that those who did not learn well enough had their feet whipped with a horsetail whip. The square is lit up at night with a son et luminaire

display and is very popular with local people. The conservation of the buildings is remarkable for the care of the decoration inside and out.

The Gur-Emir Mausoleum is a place where Timur, his sons and grandsons are buried.

We had the opportunity to visit the summer palace of the last Emir on the outskirts of Samarkand. This was a very grand establishment with a white marble room for welcoming visiting dignitaries. The palace showed many rooms which were used and also housed a national collection of traditional costume both rural and regal. The last Emir was disposed in 1926 and he went to live in Kabul. Our visit coincided with school children visiting on the last day of their school term and we saw a group learning about the UZB flag.

We also had the opportunity to go into the mountains and visit a fortress built by Tamir. It took 25 years to build and he never actually lived in it. The building has not been restored. The journey to the fort took us through many rural areas of small villages which were lush with vegetation. We stopped at a small roadside market which was selling a variety of local produce – in particular cherries were for sale as it

was the cherry season.

Our very last journey was by train from Samarkand back to Tashkent by high-speed rail. The station was very stately in appearance and immaculately clean. The journey gave a good overview of the countryside and that the fields were mostly cultivated by hand, families working together in a field. It gave me time to reflect on my visit and how much I had enjoyed it – the genial welcome we had had everywhere we went, the personal values they had as a nation in the pride of their country. It was heartening to see how education was valued and that all children now have access to schools. They are tolerant of differing creeds – in fact our tour leader was Christian and wore a cross around her neck. She was also divorced! She told the group that her son was the national youth champion for ballroom dancing and his greatest ambition was to go to Blackpool to dance. (She was very quickly shown an excerpt of “Strictly come dancing” on an iPhone). Our guides for each city we visited were fluent in at least 3 different languages and couldn’t have been more helpful or knowledgeable. The food was excellent everywhere and fresh salads were plentiful and enjoy-

able. The quest for a G&T failed miserably but we were consoled with local wine or a beer or green/black tea always served in ornate cups with great courtesy. All hotels were immaculate in cleanliness and the rooms well equipped with anything you needed. I felt perfectly safe at all times wherever we were. Old traditions are still being upheld (we encountered a circumcision party on one occasion) and early marriages are encouraged. I lost count of the number of wedding dress shops I saw. Arranged marriages are less common now. And despite the many battles for supremacy which have been fought in the past, it is now a content country, welcoming international influences as it has done for the past centuries as part of the Silk Route.

The return journey home went smoothly and having opted for travel by National Express coaches to avoid any hassle of the threatened rail strikes, I arrived at Heathrow coach station with some relief. It was particularly busy and I eventually managed to find a seat in the waiting area, only to find myself sitting next to a lady I thought I recognised. It turned out to be Christine Pay – a member of the association. It is a very small world!



Registan square at night



The winter palace white room for receiving visitors



Samarkand mausoleum



'WHAT I LOVE IS STILL HERE – YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK HARDER'

Teachers return to 'the isle of bells and smells' after 50 years

[Fiona Galea Debono](#) [Timesofmalta.com](#)



The group of former teachers from the UK on their trip down memory lane in Malta. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

Malta has come a long way from "lifesaving" kerosene wagons, 'shoots' roaming the streets and stray dogs howling at 6pm to the peal of church bells. But a group of former teachers from the UK, who taught in the British Forces schools in the 1970s, say the country has not lost its magic 50 years later.

Around 25 former teachers recently visited Malta for a reunion and to relive old times.

One of them, Tom Jordan said many had never returned to the "beloved country" since the military schools closed in 1978 but still considered Malta "our home".



Tom Jordan

Now in their 70s and 80s, they still share a love of the island and its people.

Jordan and his wife lived in Old Railway Track, Santa Venera, at the time. He has great memories of the warmth of the Maltese, who kindly welcomed them into their communities, both socially and also via the Catholic Church.

The recollections of the teachers paint a vivid picture of life in Malta half a century ago, and while many people complain about subsequent overdevelopment, the former teachers had mostly praise for the way the island had changed in the subsequent years.

Jordan reminisced about "long hot summer days, the kerosene wagons, a lifesaver in winter, swimming at Robb Lido and the Gozitan ladies knitting on their doorsteps".

He said he could write a book about how Malta has changed. "Back then, it was a very laid-back existence. Not now!"

Sliema and Buġibba had become thriving tourist centres, and their "21st-century

fast-living lifestyle" was not necessarily for them anymore, he admitted.

British teachers in 1970s Malta at St Andrew's School located within the British Army garrison at Pembroke.

Life did not get any better than this

Among the former teachers was Bernadine Ryan, who said Malta was her first overseas posting and, "until I left, I did not know life did not get any better than this".

Like her colleagues, she loved every minute of her time in Malta – including the social life for the single girls.

"It was a whole new world, including cocktail parties on board Royal Navy

ships," Ryan recalled.

Appreciating the progress over the past 50 years, especially the air-conditioned buses, she noted that so much of the past and the history was still valued and maintained.

"Coming back to Malta is like coming home – but even better. I will never tire of returning," Ryan said, echoing her colleagues' sentiments.

Susan Royds too spent her time in Malta "teaching and having a lot of fun". Being able to plan and not have events rained off was another bonus, she said.

Hoping hotels would not cover the whole island, she said the increased roads

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British teachers in 1970s Malta at St Andrew's School located within the British Army garrison at Pembroke

It was a special time, and we were all extremely lucky to have that experience

‘What I love is still here – you just have to look harder’

Teachers return to ‘the isle of bells and smells’ after 50 years
[Fiona Galea Debono](#) [Timesofmalta.com](#)

(Continued from page 13)
were much smoother.



“Most of what I loved and was homesick for is still there, but perhaps one has to look a bit harder.”

Malta was also the place where many couples formed and tied the knot.

Reunion organisers Hugh and Christine Ritchie were teaching in different schools in the early 1970s. They met up and married shortly afterwards.

Their fondest memories include the atmosphere of the island: friendly, warm, colourful, plus the special connection with colleagues”.

The bond between fellow teachers – because they arrived and left the island at the same time – was part of the “Malta magic”.

Like the rest of the world, Malta has changed, they noted, with more traffic, more ugly, high-rise buildings and more tourists, which meant it could now be “any Mediterranean country”.

But many changes were also beneficial, they maintained, including improved pavements and food.

Freedom in the sunshine
Kath Quinlan came to Malta in 1972 as a single girl to teach and left as a married woman in 1978,

having met her husband, Peter Rawcliffe during her

field and flown back to the UK.” Following successful



Tom Jordan and reunion organisers Christine and Hugh Ritchie in Malta to relive their past. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

time in the country.

Kath married Pete Rawcliffe at the Phoenicia Hotel and have returned over the years with their two sons, watching the island develop into a major tourist area.

“The quiet hustle and bustle of the 1970s has changed into a very busy and thriving island,” Rawcliffe said.

“But the Maltese people have not changed. Their kindness and friendliness always shine through.”

In December 1971, when Mike and Hazel Harland, who also met during their time in the country, were staying at the Calypso Hotel, they heard the British Forces were being withdrawn from Malta.

“We caught the first ferry back the following morning and our packing cases arrived as we got to our flat. Within 10 days, we had packed our home and our schools, left our car in a

negotiations between the British and Maltese governments, the Harlands returned to Malta in 1972 when the schools were reopened.

Although they have come back several times since, they said this year was probably their last visit as they felt that country had become too busy.

Too many cars, traffic jams and parking nightmares meant they tried to visit towns and were unable to stop.

The land of bells and smells
Pamela Jacobsen recalls when Malta was still known as “the land of bells and smells”.

At precisely 6pm each evening, every dog on the island would take to the flat roof or balcony of their abode and howl in unison with the pealing bells, she recalled. This year, “we duly waited for the dogs to perform at 6pm, but alas, not one appeared. Nor did

we encounter the tick-ridden brown hounds, placidly basking on pavements, quaysides and roads.”

Jacobsen also missed the once ubiquitous ‘shoats’ – a cross between a sheep and a goat – that used to wander through villages and were often observed bumping along in the back of an ancient car. These too have been replaced.

Malta’s “wonderful” old Bedford buses, with elaborate shrines next to the driver, were also missed and the new ones were “not half as much fun”, she joked.

She was sad to see the “wholesale neglect” of many traditional, balconied houses and villas – empty properties that could have been restored were just left to rot. Sliema, she observed, has completely lost its Maltese character and was going vertical, destined to resemble Hong Kong in the near future.

Gozo too was being overdeveloped, with much of the real estate either lying unfinished or empty, Jacobsen continued.

But she was pleased to note *lampuki* vans were still circulating, beach-cleaning groups were organised and the MSPCA was active.

The teachers often wonder what those “sun-kissed ‘sprogs’ with peeling noses” they taught – now in their 50s – were up to.

“Hopefully, they remember something of those halcyon days in Malta, while their fathers served in the British forces.

“It was a special time, and we were all extremely lucky to have that experience.”

Book Review - Aftermath

Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich by Harald Jähner

Mike Bennett - Former Headteacher - Shackleton School Fallingbostal

Mike Bennett, who arrived in Germany in September 1963, is a regular contributor to the Journal sharing his knowledge and experience of working and playing in Germany.

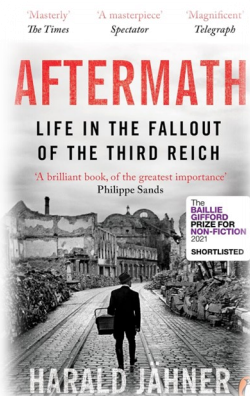
After a career spanning over thirty years, Mike returned to the UK in April 1994.

At a time when teachers were appointed to SCEA rather than to a specific post, Mike had been "appointed to Germany" and was interviewed again at Hamm on arrival, by which time headteachers better understood their staff requirements for the Autumn Term. This system perhaps didn't suit all new arrivals and the Authority almost certainly lost some good teachers by posting them to isolated detachments (ISODETS) or other unsuitable locations. When I (Editor) arrived in BFG in 1973 it was clear that teachers either "came and left quickly" or came for an extended period of time gaining promotion to beat the "two tours" rule.

Mike started his career in Victoria School Dortmund; two years later he married one of his colleagues – Fran and in 1969 he acquired the deputy headship of Fleming School, near Herford.

He often wonders what would have happened to him if his new headteacher had wanted "a Catholic piano playing man" instead.

In his time, and as a very keen sportsman, Mike became an enthusiastic student of, and traveler in, Germany. In his review, Mike offers Association members a well crafted analysis and readers interested in this aspect of German history should consider reading Mike's review of **Anthony Mann's "Comeback"** in Journal issue 54.



Harald Jähner is a former editor of the *Berliner Zeitung*. **Shaun Whiteside** is an award winning translator who works in German, French, Italian and Dutch.

When I received *Aftermath* as a present I thought I should read 'Comeback' first which had been in my collection for 40 years.

Jähner, a journalist like Mann, approaches the subject in a more clinical manner compared to the latter's anecdotal style. Both methods are successful and thought provoking. Jähner has the advantage of recent archival evidence and retrospection to support his opinions. He opines that the Economic Miracle evolved more because of Adenauer's willingness to appoint ex-Nazis in key positions in government and industry rather than the Marshall Plan. He surprises me by saying that the Germans viewed themselves as victims instead of supporters of the Nazis.

He draws our attention to the problems caused by the DP's who roamed the countryside robbing and often

committing 'revenge murders'. German POW's were treated badly and even the Jews released from concentration camps often spent a considerable time behind barbed wire before accommodation could be found for them. He describes the effects on families when husbands and fathers returned home to find their women had become more independent and their children resented discipline from a 'stranger'. GI's were warned of the dangers of being infected by Veronika Dankeschön. Cigarettes, coffee and chocolate were useful currency. The 1949 Cologne Fasching (Carnival) procession stretched for two kilometres and the floats dared to ridicule the Occupying Forces.

There are chapters covering developments in abstract art and fashion. Avant-garde entered people's homes in the designs of vases, bowls and especially furniture. Anything was acceptable as long as it was not symmetrical, especially kidney shaped tables in the cafes. Their spindly splayed legs were a huge contrast to the heavy Biedermeier style and probably a precursor to Mary Quant's miniskirts. Perhaps the most innovative design was Berlin's Kongresshalle, the Pregnant Oyster.

It was not long before the former test pilot Beate Uhse introduced a business model promoting erotica, shocking the traditional Germans

who were already accusing Western culture for young people turning away from their elders. Jazz music, Hollywood trash and American casual clothing were blamed for this lack of respect.

Recommended as Book of the Year by many respected reviewers it does not need this amateur to draw your attention to its important contribution to the post war history of Germany.

Both books are thought provoking and left me feeling, how could a nation that perpetrated the Holocaust become a dependable democracy? The authors do their best to provide the answers.

Harald Jähner

Harald Jähner is a cultural journalist and former editor of the Berliner Zeitung. He was also an honorary professor of cultural journalism at the Berlin University of the Arts.

*Aftermath was first published in Germany as *Wolfszeit*, where it was a Spiegel bestseller and won the Leipzig Book Fair Prize for non-fiction.*



Walter Lewis (Hon Archivist) wrote to members of the Association Committee ...

"October 26th 2023 it was with much sadness that I today received a card from Roswita Martin telling that her husband, Eddie had died on 4th October 2023.

Eddie was a delightful man; headteacher of Dalton Middle School in Lohausen - Düsseldorf, throughout the 1980's & early 1990's and later Headteacher of Düsseldorf Primary School. A very good colleague & friend.

Mike Bennett recalls "Frances and I first met Eddie in Dortmund in the late 60's when he arrived to teach German at Cornwall School.

Like Fran, he was from Liverpool and their mothers

knew each other. Everybody liked Eddie and his attractive German wife Roswitha.

After he became head-teacher of Dalton Middle School in Düsseldorf, we would meet regularly at Loccum for the Director's Conferences. He was a charmer with a quiet sense of humour (like all scousers!).

In the 1960's social life revolved around mess life and hence all the teachers in Dortmund belonged to the Garrison Civilian Mess.

The photograph (Below left) shows some of Cornwall School staff at our, Frances and Mike's Farewell Drinks in 1969.

Happy days.

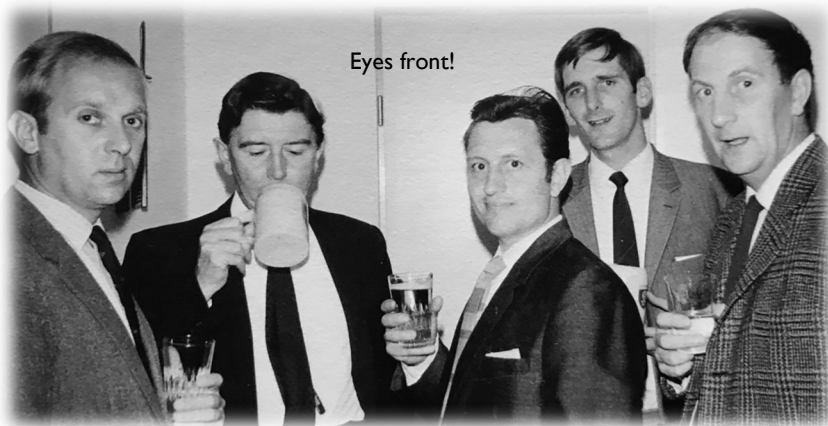
Tom Nielsen-Marsh - AEO and latterly Editor of the

Journal recalls "We met Eddie when we were offered a quarter in Lohausen, from '96 to '98, and when the quartering and Düsseldorf Station closed. I recall Eddie (by this time HT of Düsseldorf Primary School in Lohausen) as an avid collector of SWATCH watches. Eddie moved on to the International School Düsseldorf (ISD) just up the road in Kaiserswerth. We moved to JHQ where I was Professional Assistant at HQ.

Maureen Nielsen-Marsh remembers Eddie as a kindly gentleman; remembers winning a Christmas cake at the school raffle drawn after a nativity play; remembers secretary Adrienne Pickett who we first met in Berlin in 1977. We

recall Eddie's quarter in Lohausen being burgled. All the quarters on the patch (except ours) were burgled at that time: we housed a RMP unit on our top floor for a month as they staked out the area trying to catch the burglars. (The German Civil Police did eventually succeed.) The RMP gave the game away a bit by parking their police car in our driveway. We had bought a burglar alarm for our quarter which obviously acted as a deterrent. At that time we occasionally drove to Muenster on a Saturday morning to meet John and Dot Lord for breakfast.

Fond memories of Eddie, his school and of the others we met at that time.



Hywel Williams John Gibbons Graham Hunt - Eddie Martin - Ian Anderson



Mike and Frances (Fran) Bennett (Dortmund)

Brian Davies and Ken Jones here share thoughts of Jim Lovegrove former Headteacher of Prince Rupert School in Rinteln who passed away on Friday 26th January 2024.

Brian Davies - former Headteacher of Queen's School JHQ recalls that Jim became head of Queen's School in 1976. He was formerly deputy headteacher at Queen's School and acting headteacher at the school for one term on the departure of Peter Gaskell in 1976. On the amalgamation of Queen's (JHQ) and Kent Schools (Hostert) in 1987 to become Windsor School, (JHQ,) Jim became head of Prince Rupert School (Rinteln), before returning to the UK in 1991.

Jim Lovegrove is remembered by many former pupils and colleagues as an inspirational teacher and headteacher. Many refer to him as 'Gentleman Jim' for his kind ways and mild manner. He has always been held in high regard by the JHQ community, testament to the invaluable work he did in leading the school and ensuring that it played a major role in the day to day life of the garrison.

"he had an ever ready smile"

Continued overleaf

Here, Ken Jones OBE, former Principal Welbeck Defence Sixth Form College, former Chair of this Association and former Head of King's School in Gütersloh shares his thoughts ...

The news of the death of Jim Lovegrove brought great sadness to both Brenda and me, as we had both got to know Jim at different times in Kent School Hostert.

When I arrived in Kent School in September 1968, as the new Head of Geography, I was lucky to be able to take over the flat that Jim and his wife Di had in the little town of Hardt, which was fortunately only a short distance from the school at Hostert. Jim and Di were the ultimate handsome couple, who would go out of their way to be friendly, engaging and helpful. Jim had arrived a matter of two years earlier as a teacher of French and German. His linguist ability regularly came to my assistance, especially as I had made up my mind I wanted to buy a

Mercedes car when I arrived, which meant dealing with German dealers.

In many respects our careers in BFES followed a similar trajectory. Jim was promoted to be the Head of Rochester House in the school, whereas I was promoted to be the Deputy Head in Kent School, in September 1970. Shortly after this, Jim was appointed to be the Deputy Head in Queen's School, Rheindahlen, working with Peter Gaskell. On Peter's appointment to HQ BFES Jim was promoted to be the Headteacher of Queen's School. Shortly before this, I had left Kent School to be the Headteacher of Kings School, Gütersloh. On the merger of Kent and Queen's schools to create a new Windsor School, Jim was obliged to transfer to be the Head of Prince Rupert School in Rinteln, a move with which he was not happy.

This meant we met every term as members of ASH where I ultimately took over from Peter Gaskell as the

Chairman. Essentially, we were a group of secondary head teachers who took delight in planning the best way to put pressure on Nolan Clamp the Director every time we met at a Director's Conference. In this context, I always found Jim to be the ever helpful and supportive member, the quality, which had been very evident when I first met him.

As the Head of Rochester House I became very aware that the pupils in his house had an immense respect for him as a person because they quickly recognised his caring qualities. Moreover, he had an ever ready smile and the willingness to go the extra mile for the pupils in his care. He really was an outstanding schoolmaster in every respect, and that is why I had such a high regard for him. His caring qualities were also very evident in the manner in which he would look after newly arrived single teachers.

I also got to know Jim in a different context as we were both members of Kent School teachers' rugby team, given our respective height, we were fellow members of the second row!! Despite his considerable height, Jim was a very proud owner of a small MG sports car.

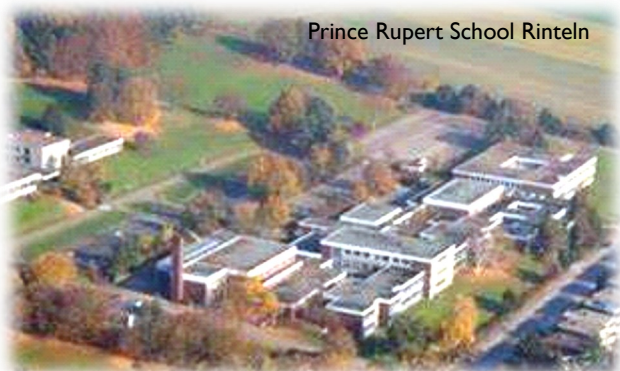
Brenda's memory of Jim is one which she has never forgotten, she had just arrived as the new House Mistress of the Chatham boarding house

in Kent School. She always remembers the time when this very handsome young man came into the boarding house and made an immediate, very favourable impression on her, only for this to be shattered when Jim said to her " Could you possibly ask if one of the sixth form girls would care to come and babysit our two children tomorrow night" Her hopes were immediately dashed!

I was fortunately able to meet Jim and Di again in 1997, when I hosted a week-end reunion in Welbeck College, for all the secondary head teachers I had worked with in Germany. What was especially important on this occasion was that Glyn Williams was present, as he was the Headmaster of Kent School, who had brought the two of us together in 1968!

By this time, Jim and Di had retired to St Annes-on-Sea where they had fortunately decided to build, in the grounds of their house, a home for Nikki and her husband. This certainly proved to be a great help for Nikki and her new child, as well as her being on hand to provide support to Jim and Di as their health declined, which was sadly so evident the last time I met them at the burial of Mike Back the former Headmaster of Gloucester School.

"Rest in Peace Jim"



Prince Rupert School Rinteln

Information for Members

Monthly Email Bulletin: The Association sends out a monthly email Bulletin to all members - those without an email address get their copy by post - and we all hope that you enjoy reading the shorter stories and news items that the Bulletin contains. It is usually sent out between the 12th - 15th of each month, so if yours does not arrive in your inbox, first check your spam/junk folder and if it is not there, let the membership secretaries know so that they can resend the message for you.

The Journal usually contains longer, historic articles and reviews, whereas the Bulletin focuses upon shorter, more personal items and updates related to events and reunions. Both publications rely upon members sending in documents, photographs and stories to share with members, so do not hesitate to share your memories and news items. And, if you have any thoughts about what you would like to see within either publication, they would be welcome too.

Dear friends and supporters of the "British Forces in Germany" project,

Although the new year is already a little advanced, I hope that you will still accept my best wishes for the year 2024. I hope that the year will bring more peace on earth. As I deal with wars and occupations in my work and with the question of how it was possible to overcome enmity, I am always struck by how much the issues of the past still concern us today. I hope that a better understanding of the past will help us to better shape the future.

2023 was a very busy year. The university extended my contract by a year, which meant that I had to teach as well as work on my book. That was a lot of fun, but also took up a lot of time. What I enjoyed most was a course on memorial culture, which I prepared with a colleague from Aston University in Birmingham. Students from both universities met online to discuss how the bombings during the war are remembered in Paderborn

and Coventry and how the cities deal with the legacy of the war.

As there were no longer any travel restrictions, many conferences took place again. I have taken the opportunity to meet colleagues from other universities and countries who are working on similar issues, to discuss our projects and explore opportunities for cooperation. In April I attended the European Social Science History Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden, and in October the annual conference of the German Studies Association in Montréal, Canada. Both were very exciting and I came back with lots of new contacts and ideas. I also took part in a few smaller conferences and workshops in Germany, which were also very interesting and productive.

Most of the time, however, I have been digging deep into the many exciting memories and documents you have shared with me as well as into the books and materials I have collected in the various archives, in or-

der to write the first draft of my book. My aim is to highlight how Anglo-German relations developed between 1945 and 2019 under changing social, military, and political conditions, focussing on personal experiences and relationships. I am trying to combine different perspectives and bring together stories and examples from different regions and cities. This will take some time, so I had to postpone the submission of the manuscript to Routledge. I now hope to have the book in print by the end of 2025.

My contract at Paderborn University ends at the end of February, but I will remain connected to the university for a while yet. From March, I will be working at the LWL Institute for Regional History in Münster. The institute has the task of writing the history of Gütersloh from 1945 to the present day. Because the occupation and the stationing of Army and Air Force units are an important part of the city's history, I have been asked to research this topic and write the chapter.

I'm really looking forward to the project, because it's exciting to focus on a single town for once and to get to know the different points of view there. If you would like to share your memories of Gütersloh, I would be delighted to hear from you!

I intend to dedicate the last months of 2024 and the first months of 2025 to finishing my book.

Furthermore, I am continuing to work with my Japanese and Australian colleagues. We are writing an essay together and working on a funding application for a comparative project on everyday life during the Allied occupations in Japan and Germany.

Last but not least, I am very happy about the friendships that have developed and grown through the project over the last few years, and I hope that they will last for a long time. I would also like to thank you once again for your support and interest in the project. Please stay in touch.

Best regards

Bettina

Editor's note

Betina has promised to write something for the Journal about her forthcoming research on schools in Gütersloh.

Previous articles from Prof Bettina Blum - The British Forces in Germany Project appear in Issue 53 (Spring 2023) and Issue 41 (Winter 2018)

Similar articles - which may be of interest - from Dr Grace Huxford (Bristol University) - The British in Westphalia Project appear in Issue 41 (Winter 2018), Issue 49 Summer 2021, and Issue 50 Winter 2021

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A Brief history of schools in Malta - and their closure in 1978 - Christine Ritchie

PART 1

Background

As an island in the Mediterranean Sea, Malta has long been of strategic importance to the Royal Navy and other services. It is of little surprise that the British wanted the island as a naval base and so established not only as a safe harbour for its ships but also built barracks to house the soldiers and their families who then needed some schooling. The history of service schools counts many small schools scattered across the island, but towards the end of British dominance in the 1970s, just a handful of schools remained. So, it is just these last handful of schools that this "history" relates to, and as a history, it is more about the school buildings than the people although without the people, there would be no buildings and no history!

Of these schools, the naval school has most recorded history, thanks mainly to the efforts of the late Captain Mike Law, who gathered as much information from previous Headmasters' reports of Tal Handaq School as he could to publish in the last school magazine in 1978, along with many other contributions from pupils and staff about their experiences in the school. So starting from Captain Law's thorough history of schools on the island, here is an update of history then and something of what happened after 1979 when all the British service personnel left the island.

Like many areas where the British had a foothold, the schools developed from the

different services. Malta was primarily a naval command, so the first schools are dominated by that service and there is a rich history of Naval Service education on the island. In the 1970, Tal Handaq, as the only secondary school, took children from across the island, with the Head being a naval officer with a mainly civilian teaching force. Originally, the navy also had a primary school within Tal Handaq site area, named Verdala School, but the school grew in size and eventually moved to its own premises. The Army had its primary school at St Andrew's Barracks, based at the north of the island at Pembroke, in buildings dating from 1906. The last service to have its own primary school was the RAF, Luqa School, although it is thought that a school catering for the RAF was built close to Kalafrana situated near to the wonderfully named Octopus Creek. Lastly, in the 1970s there remained an infant school St. David's, located at Imtarfa close to the Naval Hospital. When the final closure of schools began, Imtarfa was the first to close.

Now, in 2024, we are all aware that nearly all services schools are closed and just a handful remain open. In the 1970s however, this was still some way off. The first real indication that there was a problem in Malta was with the expulsion of all service personnel during the Christmas and New Year of 1971/2. It was a political decision, made by the then Maltese government under the Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, when

an argument with the British government about the 'rent' paid by the services resulted in everyone having to leave the island at very short notice. It was the Christmas holidays, many teachers were visiting family in UK or on holiday, so the packing up of schools and homes was done with the speed that superman would be proud of! After a couple of months, the argument was resolved and the British returned with a new agreement to use Malta as a British base until 1979 so schools began to reopen. The Headmaster of St Andrew's Primary School, Roger Frost, describes the return to school after the shock of having to pack up and leave at short notice:

"My last memories of S.C.S. St. Andrews in January, following the decision to withdraw the British Forces from Malta, were of a newly decorated School Hall piled high with text books and equipment, piles of school documents which had been completed in the space of two days, and of a workman loitering in with a new wall blackboard, who on enquiring as to where it should be attached was told basically that the ceiling would be as good a place as any such was the feeling of sadness, frustration and loss.

To skip lightly over the dark sabbatical months that followed, we arrived at Thursday 19th April, when a Co-ordinating Conference to discuss the re-opening of the Malta Schools was held

at Empress State Building, Fulham. The three Primary schools and one Infant school were destined to open on 12th June 1972, and the Secondary Comprehensive School Tal-Handaq, in September 1972.

A Planning Group was formed and started work at Eltham on 17th April, and those involved were the Officer IC Schools, Capt. H. Briesley RN, and the Headteachers of the Schools and some Deputy Heads and Heads of Department.



Happy days are here again! Some old faces feature in the Junior School, seen here against the background of the Married Quarters at St Andrews

Priority was given to vital problems of re-staffing and re-equipping. Many staff had been placed elsewhere in other commands, and therefore re-placements had to be found.

Staff Officer Schools, SqN Ldr J.D. Edwards, had returned to Malta from Cyprus together with Inst. Lt. Commander C. McCafferty to facilitate the 'On the spot details' of re-opening, while Officer in Charge Schools remained in Eltham to attend to the problems of re-opening Tal-Handaq, and to lend impetus to the operation of returning books and equipment, and to expedite the swift

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reordering of new materials. Without these things our task in Malta would be almost impossible. It would have indeed been a case of "A box of chalk and bags of breath!"

On visiting the school again that afternoon my heart was warmed by a number of things. Firstly, the black-board was not on the ceiling! The decoration in the hall looked as fresh as when I left – indeed D.O.E. had done more during the week prior to my arrival. All bookshelves, black-boards, chairs and desks were in place. Our Maltese staff were also back and proved to be invaluable. During our absence they had managed to keep things left behind safe, so now, if I should ask for anything – "Mr Bonello, what happened to so and so?" the article in question usually appears by the time I next return to the Office. A gem indeed.

On Friday 24th May, 41 crates arrived from Bicester and during the day we unpacked 17 of them. The rest of them were unpacked on the Monday and all books and equipment once again taken to the hall. Although nearly all the heavy equipment, tape recorders, projectors etc., had arrived intact, much of the smaller equipment, and textbooks were missing. However, on this day of opening, new books had already started to arrive, displaying another facet of the efficiency of the organisation.

The school re-opened with a complete feeling of normality, and tomorrow

we start swimming instruction, which we have done for a number of years at the Robb Lido. We hope to have a mini Swimming Sports before the end of term, and to have taught most of the present school population to swim.

In September we shall welcome eight new members of staff, whereupon we shall be really home and dry. In all, my staff that is has been a most interesting experience – not one they or I would wish to repeat, but never the less quite a brightener to life's feast! So, on the 12th June, where of all things it is raining, and having just finished our first Assembly we commence another chapter in the history of St. Andrew's School. "(by R.W.L. Frost and appearing in R.A.F. Luqa News, July 1972)

It is against this gap in education driven by the traumatic turn of events caused by the sudden departure and subsequent return of services, teachers and families that the rest of the history of the schools is based.

2. Mtarfa Infant School by Maggie Threadingham:

As 1978 approached, the schools on the island lost pupils and were closed in sequence Mtarfa was the first school to be closed. Maggie writes:

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

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

1970.

Captain Mike Law, the Naval officer in charge of schools, when writing on the history of schools in Malta said, "*I am afraid I have no knowledge of the history of St David's*". Having trawled through some of the archives I believe the school could have opened in 1920. There was a Military hospital in Mtarfa which became known as the Royal Naval hospital in 1965. An increase in hospital staff occurred in 1967 when the RN hospital in Bighi closed. Accommodation was needed for these families and St David's would provide education for the young children of the transferred staff. It was a purpose built school with 3 classrooms, cloakrooms, a medical room and a large hall. The walkway to the school office, staff room and swimming pool provided a shaded area in part of the playground. School times and children's uniform changed in accordance to military winter and summer routines. Children began school at 4 years but at 7 years transferred to one of the Primary schools in Luqa, St. Andrew's or Verdala.

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

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

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

Sadly the situation changed when preparation for the end of a military presence in Malta in 1979 began. Military personnel were leaving which affected school numbers resulting in Bernie Ryan moving to Verdala and Dot Wilson to Luqa. I became class based. After a year, a further change was made. Chris Ford (née Spibey), the remaining class teacher joined the staff at St. Andrews and I became an advisory Early Years teacher to the Primary schools including the one in Naples. Mtarfa School became a Teachers Centre.

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

Sadly, what little remains of the school at Mtarfa has disappeared, absorbed into the lovely village of Mtarfa that remains. Part of the hospital and other buildings became a school, but the main hospital buildings are now derelict and unsafe due to lack of maintenance over the last 50 years or so. In 2023 you could still discern the military style of buildings in the area, but not identify the specific use of many of them.

[Part 2 - Issue 56 Summer 2024](#)



OH I DID LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEA-SIDE

BFES Singapore - Steve Wallace

I did not know when I attended the British Families Education Service (BFES) Royal Naval School in Singapore, that I would end up working for the same organisation some 36 years later, albeit under a different name (SCE).

My Singapore adventure began in 1965, when my father took a job in the naval dockyard as a draughtsman. I was only eight at the time, but I do recall thinking that we were going on some big adventure holiday.

Back in 1965 we flew from the UK by BOAC airliner to Singapore via Beirut, Bahrain, Bombay (as it was called then), Colombo and Kuala Lumpur. It was a long and tiring journey. I can recall having to remain seated in the aircraft at Bombay airport in sweltering heat while the plane was being refuelled.

Initially we lived outside the Naval Base, having to get the bus to school. Latterly we moved onto the base, where our house backed on to the school playing fields, which was very handy for my sister and I to be able to simply hop over the fence to school every day. Our house was a typical colonial style on stilts. The living area was enormous,

so much so that it included accommodation for our Amah, Linda and her husband and young child. She did everything in the house, the cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing. So exactly what did my mother do all day?!

As regards the school uniforms, there was a tailor shop outside the Naval



School Class (Can you spot me)

Base at Sembawang called Wong (Toothy Wong was the nickname) where they were made to measure. Navy shorts and white shirts for the boys, and blue and white check dresses for the girls. The school was a set of single story buildings with 3 or 4 classrooms in each block.

The sides were open, otherwise the heat would have made them impossible to work in. The assembly hall was a wooden building on stilts, with a balcony, which was mainly used for music and drama.

For me, the beauty of

school in Singapore was that the school day ended at 1pm. It was far too hot and humid to have lessons in the afternoon, so instead I would spend most of my time at the dockyard swimming pool, where I first learnt to swim. Over the years I managed to progress as a swimmer to such an extent that I won a number of races at the annual swimming gala.

I can recall that school was a happy time for me in Singapore. The teachers were friendly and well liked, especially my

form teacher, Mr. Nutter, although his name always raised a laugh. I managed to get into the school football team as a goalkeeper, which is hard to believe when you see the height of



me now! My mother used to give me extra football coaching after school... not sure why she did it and not my father. Our biggest rival was Changi school. Our matches were always competitive, although I remember the parents getting more vociferous during the games than we were! The school often organised trips into Malaya. I can recall on one occasion

sitting on an abandoned World War II tank in the middle of a jungle just outside Jahore Bahru. At the time I was too young to realise the significance of this, when you consider that the war with Japan had only ended some 20 years earlier. That area was littered with abandoned vehicles that had just been left when the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

Throughout our time in Singapore we had several holidays in Malaya. We enjoyed visiting the island of Penang on the west coast of Malaya where we would often enjoy a banyan' (barbeque) on the beach. Most days were spent on the beach, which we loved.

Port Dickson, or PD, as it was known, was another favourite place on the west coast. Great beaches and crystal clear water meant I enjoyed our time there, apart from one incident...which I didn't realise how serious it was at the time. I'd been playing football on the beach with my father who'd inadvertently kicked the ball into the sea. I went to retrieve it and felt a sudden sharp pain in my ankle, which disappeared quite quickly, so I thought nothing more of it. Some thirty minutes later I felt a bit tired and said to my parents that I was going to the chalet to lie down. I can recall my father coming to check on me a few minutes later. I was feeling sick and my ankle had stiffened up to such an extent that I couldn't walk

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View of school from my back garden

Thaipusam festival

(Continued from page 21)

properly. Immediately my parents took me off to the hospital where the doctor examined me and diagnosed that I'd been bitten by a sea snake, which could prove to be fatal if the antivenom isn't administered in time. Thankfully that was not the case and I made a full recovery in a couple of days.

Scary moment though.

Although I love being at the seaside, to this day I am always quite wary when swimming in the sea. Not that sea snakes can be found in European waters, as far as I'm aware...

Every January/February, depending upon the full moon, Singapore celebrates the Hindu festival of Thaipusam. I remember going to the area of Rochor, not far from the Naval Base to witness the procession of men walking on their pilgrimage from one temple to another. As part of the ceremony the men and quite often young boys would be put into a trance and have skewers

pierced through their lower lip, tongue and cheeks, as well as having hooks and spikes in their body in order to carry pots of milk and large metal structures decorated with feathers and flowers along the route between the two temples. Remarkably the men undertake this sacred task without feeling any pain and there is no sign of blood when the metal implements are removed because they have freed their mind and body from material and physical needs. Although I was only young at the time, I do remember the procession through the streets quite vividly, even if I didn't understand its significance at the time.



We returned to the UK in 1968 immediately after I'd taken my 11+ exam. I wouldn't know whether or not I'd passed for three weeks because we were travelling back home on an ocean liner. It was the Achille Lauro, which was made famous a few years ago when it was hijacked

by the Palestine Liberation Front near Egypt in 1985. The Suez Canal was closed in 1968, so we had to fly to Perth in Australia to catch the ship from Fremantle, which sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, stopping at Cape Town and Tenerife before docking at Southampton after 22 days at sea.

I am visiting Singapore in April for the first time since I left in 1968. I know that the island has completely changed over the last 55 years and will be almost unrecognisable compared to when I lived there. Nevertheless, I will be interested to discover where I used to live and where I went to school all those years ago.



Achille Lauro
(Free Cultural Work)

*This is my first memory of the beginning
of the war ...*

This is my first memory of the beginning of the war, which otherwise didn't impinge on our lives apart from the fact that the radio was on incessantly, day and night, and our days were punctuated by the voice of the news reader droning on

and on. I remember thinking that when peace was finally declared he would simply say 'This is the end of the war', and there would be no further bulletins.

When my mother was 21 (in 1925) she was invited by a friend to travel to India on

what was jokingly called the 'Fishing Fleet. From the late 19th century, many young men went out to India to work as administrators, soldiers, and businessmen. These were followed by countless young women in search of eligible husbands, as described by

An Indian Childhood
White Bread and Brown Sugar - Ann O'Donoghue -

Anne de Courcy in her book "*The Fishing Fleet - Husband hunting in the Raj*". The women who were unsuccessful received the unfortunate title of 'Returned Empty.' But luckily my mother was not one of

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An Indian Childhood

White Bread and Brown Sugar - Ann O'Donoghue -

BFES SCEA
Association

(Continued from page 22)

these as she met my father, an officer in the Gurkha Rifles, at an army dance almost as soon as she arrived in India.

My parents had a rather grand military wedding in 1932 in Quetta, a city on the North West Frontier. They lived in Queen's Road, Quetta for a couple of years before moving to Chaman on the Afghan border, where I was born. Chaman is now in Pakistan, but it was then in British India. Because it is the border crossing point it often featured in the national news during the now not so recent Afghan conflict.

My mother, who was romantically inclined, christened me Daffodil Ann, and picked a daffodil from the garden as a memento. She pressed this into my baby book.

Army families lived in bungalows scattered around the cantonment. I have an album of faded photographs showing my grandmother sitting on a rug, holding me on her lap in a neat little garden filled with pots of canna lilies, geraniums, and marigolds. The album also contains photographs of the bungalow's interior rooms furnished in my mother's inimitable style (gleaned from fashion magazines): flowered chintz chair covers and curtains, scattered Persian rugs, copper jugs on polished dressers, warming pans gleaming on walls and vases filled with pyramids of

tall flowers worthy of Constance Spry. One day in the 1950s I came across a 1928 copy of Ideal Home Magazine and there, in an article on the art of decorating a country cottage, was my mother's drawing room, complete with chintz, rugs, copper and flowers.

The bungalows were the property of the army and let fully-furnished. My parents brought their own collections of photographs, ornaments and framed pictures (mainly watercolours), some of which survive to this day.

At 2.33 am on May 31st, 1935, an enormous earthquake struck Quetta killing 6,000 people. Although Chaman was 60 miles away, the shock was still felt, and my father travelled to Quetta to photograph the ruins. A state of emergency was declared in the city where the army now took charge and a city of tents was set up on the racecourse. However, some of the victims were never recovered and were left buried beneath their bungalows.

In early 1937 my father took a year's army leave in England. We stayed with my great uncle Wilfred (my grandmother's twin brother) and his wife Barbara, in the New Forest, which is where my sister Bridget was born in June of that year.

We travelled back to India in the latter part of 1938 shortly before war broke out. This time we lived in Manipur in

Assam in another remote town called Imphal on the borders of what was then called Burma. We had a large bungalow with an enormous garden. My sister and I slept in a little whitewashed wattle and daub extension built on the back of the bungalow. It had a thatched roof and I remember lying in bed and watching the lizards running up and down the walls. We were warned that if we touched the lizards, they would lose their tails. We never tried!

The extension had two rooms, so Bridget and I were able to have a room each. One of my earliest memories is of a dream, or nightmare, that I had at the beginning of the war. I was lying in bed and Bridgie, who was next door, was crying loudly. At the same time Hitler was knocking on my door, threatening to kill me unless I stopped crying. In vain I shouted that it wasn't me who was making all the noise.

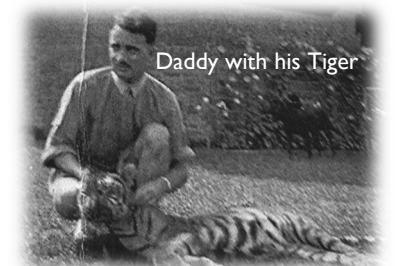
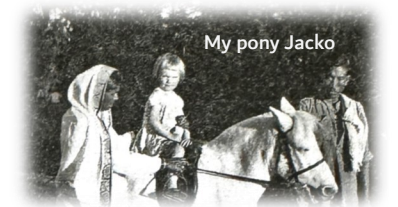
So!! This is my first memory of the beginning of the war, which otherwise didn't impinge on our lives ...

We led a quiet life; Bridgie and I spent most of our time playing with children from the nearby army bungalows. I also had a pony, Jacko, and the garden was large enough for me to practise riding in it.

We had two Labrador dogs: Powder and Pup, who would be taken out shooting by my father. My mother used to go with him and I remember he

usually shot game such as snipe, partridge and wild duck, although he once shot a tiger after sitting in a tree all night and using a goat as bait. He had the skin made into a rug and I used to enjoy sitting on its head pretending I was riding through the jungle.

The tiger skin was inherited by my brother; but a few years ago he sold it at auction as he no longer wanted to have the skin of an endangered animal on display in his house. Luckily, he got a good price for it as he was able to include its history, together with a photograph of my father and the tiger taken after the shooting.



LAST WORD ... Mike Chislett - Chair BFES-SCE Association

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Tom's front page photograph shows a 1979 parade at The Havel School, Berlin, by what I guess is the pipe band of one or more Scottish regiments. Is this a Queen's Birthday Parade or could it be a 25th anniversary of our former Queen's accession to the throne? If school log-books were online, we could perhaps find out!

One day, log books may be searchable and readable on the Internet, but they are not yet. I have written before about these historical wonders and BFES-SCE Association members will know that those from MoD Schools that have been saved or discovered are entrusted to the National Army Museum, Chelsea. According to their log-book list, Havel's are lost or, perhaps, just not yet found.

One of the oldest of a number that were saved when BFG finally closed in 2019 - and duly passed to Wally Lewis, our association archivist and then on to Chelsea - covers the first four years of Bielefeld School, starting in 1947. Since any child attending in that period will now be at least 77, I feel fairly safe in quoting from it.

Pondering my contribution to this winter edition of our Journal, I turned to January 1948. I expected an entry about lack of coal deliveries and frozen pipes, but instead found three autographs from distinguished visitors.

The distinguished three turn out to be:

The Secretary of War,
Emmanuel Shinwell MP,

The MP for Dudley,

George Wigg

The General Officer Commanding British Army of the Rhine (BAOR),
Lt General RL McCreery.

Beneath the autographs the headteacher (Miss Johnson) has written:

"Jan 12th: Visit of Mr Shinwell, Sec, for War, Mr Wigg MP for Dudley & Lt Col Sir RL McCreery. Mr Trevelyan and Mr Owen were here with Miss Hartly, who in the absence of Miss Johnson conducted the visitors round the school." Mrs Fripp and Mr Fischer (German teachers) were in the school and met and spoke with Mr Shinwell. Colleagues will have spotted that the headteacher missed the visit. School holidays, at least in Bielefeld, had not yet settled into the pattern we are now used to. The summer 1947 closure had been from 8 August to 8 September and the Spring Term began a week after this visit - on 19 January 1948.

Colleagues from the West Midlands will, I hope, forgive me never having heard of Dudley's MP, but the other two autographs are from well-known personalities of the time. Log-books may not yet be on line, but Wikipedia is a great resource:

Emanuel Shinwell was a long-time Labour politician who served in Ramsey MacDonald's government (1929-1931) and again in Clement Atlee's post WW2 administration. Both Shinwell's parents were Jewish and he had grown up in Glasgow. The log-book has no comment on the content of the meeting with the two German teachers, but it could have been

fascinating. Shinwell died in 1986, aged 101.

Lt General Richard McCreery had followed Montgomery as commander of Eighth Army during WW2 and as commander of BAOR after it. Between those positions he had commanded the British occupying forces in Austria. He was wounded and decorated for gallantry in WW1 and served with distinction in France, North Africa and Italy in WW2.

McCreery counted the inventor of tarmac (Robert Macadam) among his ancestors and, in common with five other WW2 generals, had one of the horses that drew Elizabeth II's 1953 coronation coach named after him.

John Trevelyan didn't leave his autograph in the log-book, at least not on that occasion. Trevelyan was, of course, the first director of BFES. He went on later to chair the British Board of Film Censors (1958-71) and so his autograph appeared on screen ahead of every film shown in British cinemas during my childhood and adolescence. I am sure colleagues will remember the text: 'This is to verify that xxxxx has been passed for UNIVERSAL EXHIBITION' (or not, as the case sometimes was).

Any clues to The Havel's event (front page) will be gratefully received! Someone must recognise the tartans.

Mike Chislett - Chair
25 January 2024

Editor's Note: John Trevelyan is mentioned in the article "Three Early Arrivals" in Journal no 53 (Spring 2023)

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.