



Arms News

Issue 14

The Newsletter of the ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION

2007

President:	Mr. E. D. Stratford
Chairman:	Capt. P. M. Feeney R.E.M.E.
Vice Chairman	Mr. N. Brown
Secretary:	Mr. C. Dennis

53nd ANNUAL REUNION

You are invited to attend this year's reunion details are:

DATE:	Saturday 1st September 2007
TIME:	1830hrs (Bar Opens 1730rs) Dinner 1930hrs
VENUE:	The Victory Services Club The Trafalgar Room 63/69 Seymour Street LONDON W2 2HF

Travel Note: Nearest Underground station is Marble Arch. Leave by the Oxford St. North side exit, turn right and after walking about 100yds turn right into Edgware Rd. Turn left into Seymour St. at the 1st set of traffic lights, approx 75yds. Secure parking is available at Cumberland Place, approx 400yds away. A discount is available to those who stay overnight at the VSC. The congestion charge does not apply at the weekend.

COST: £26.00 per head.

Please make cheques payable to: **"The Armourers' Association"**

Please Note: Cheques made payable to any other payee creates accounting problems. The introduction of the Euro mean we now have to pay a handling charge on "Eurocheques" and we have yet to deal with our first payment in euros.

- CATERING:** Starter, Various Cold Meats, Salad, or,
(Seated Buffet) Chicken Curry with Rice & Condiments
Followed by:
Cheesecake or Gateau, Cheese board & Coffee
- SECURITY:** Please be prepared to show membership cards or prove identity at the door. If you wish to have a membership card sent to you please inform the Secretary.
- DRESS:** Gentlemen Lounge Suits/Jacket and Association tie (available from the Secretary).
Ladies: Appropriate to the occasion.
- GUESTS:** Limited to one per member. **LADIES ARE WELCOME**
- SMOKING:** In line with government legislation regarding enclosed public spaces the Victory Services Club is a non-smoking establishment.

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION:

Accommodation is available at the Victory Services Club for VSC members and non-members attending functions. Those wishing to stay the night should contact Club Reservations: Phone: **020 7723 4474**; Fax: **020 7724 1134**; or e-mail: res@vsc.co.uk

The cost is approx £36.00 per night for a single standard room including breakfast for VSC members. Non-members are welcome, when attending functions, but must pay at the time of booking. En-suite, double and twin rooms are available.

Membership details are available at their web site: www.vsc.co.uk Annual Membership is currently £15.00

ABSENT FRIENDS:

If you are unable to attend the dinner but would like to pass on a message to your friends please inform the secretary when replying. If you are able to pass on up to date information of other members who are out of touch with the Association please feel free to do so and pass on the Association's contact details to them.

ASSISTED ATTENDANCE:

Thanks to the generosity of our members, the Association is able to offer financial assistance to any member who is unable to attend the reunion because of prohibitive costs. This assistance extends to all aspects of the reunion including travel, accommodation and the cost of the function. If any member feels they would be better able to attend the function accompanied by a guest then help to defray the costs incurred by the guest will be considered. There is no minimum or maximum amount each request being considered on it's own merits.

All Requests Are Treated in the Strictest Confidence

Please write to, or phone the secretary, if you feel we may be of help.
This scheme is a reflection of the Associations membership wish to help, many of the donations received specifically mention the Assisted Attendance scheme. It is felt by all that we would be letting down any fellow member who was unable to attend for purely financial reason

ASSOCIATION FUNDS

The President and Chairman, on behalf of all members, wish to thank all those who made donations during the last year. It is your continued generosity that allows the Association to be run on a no subscription basis and the Assisted Attendance Scheme to be offered. It is hoped you, particularly, will feel a warm sense of satisfaction at the Association's ability to make charitable donations, (*See below*)

ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS

A copy of the balance sheet for 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2006 is attached. Please indicate your acceptance of these figures, or otherwise, in the space provided on the reply form.

You may note that income for the Annual Dinner is exceeded by actual costs. This is accounted for by.

- a) Two Assisted Attendance @ £24.00 each. The Association was pleased to be able to assist two members who would otherwise been unable to attend.
- b) Three members booking to attend and pay on the night and then subsequently being unable to attend. (*Having made the commitment to the VSC regarding numbers attending we are obliged to pay for those places*). In one case absence was caused by a family emergency and it is thought not to be in the spirit of the Association to demand payment when this type of unforeseen occurrence happens.
- c) Two places were booked for our Guests of Honour, unfortunately Carol Anderson was unable to attend owing to ill health on the night.
- d) The £300.00 received as a bequest and gift was used, having been previously

agreed with our benefactors, to provide wine and port for the toasts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE REPLY FORM

In order to save on costs replies will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

ASSOCIATION TIES Etc.

The secretary holds Association ties, lapel badges, plaques and glassware in stock. A list of the most popular items, with prices, is on the reverse of the reply form, which may be used for ordering. Other items may be available if the demand exists. Please contact the secretary with any ideas you may have.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP LIST

An up to date copy of the membership list is available upon request. Please supply a stamped S.A.E. (Size C5) with your request.

RETURNS

Numbers attending this year's reunion must be finalised by **Friday 24th August 2007.** Please try to avoid leaving it until the last minute to get your reply into the post. In an emergency a phone call or e-mail will do, but it means the secretary will swoop on you on the night for payment.

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we have to inform you that the following Association members have passed away since the publishing of the 2006 Newsletter.

David Evelyn Hayter Arborfield 43B	21 Feb 2007
David Cross Arborfield 42C	

David Evelyn HAYTER

Born: 28 October 1928

Died: 21 February 2007

David was born in Calcutta, returning to UK to join the Army as a boy soldier at Arborfield on 7 October 1943. Intake 43B of the Army Technical School (Boys). He spent the next three years learning his trade both as an Armourer and a soldier.

On completion of his training he was sent to the Depot of the Royal West Kent Regiment in Maidstone where he spent the next six weeks in continuation training actually training National Servicemen how to be soldiers. From there to Otley, West Yorkshire to the REME transit camp where his 2 – 3 weeks he described as “bloody cold”. Anyone who knew David and his taciturn manner will understand this was probably an understatement! Next it was on to the Parachute Regiment and naturally, for him, parachute training.

David's military life was to change course with a posting to Singapore and 13 Inf. Wksp. at Tia Ping. From there it was a posting to North Malaya and the Gurkhas. This was to become his spiritual home and a love of the Gurkhas that was to remain with him until the end. The next 3 years were spent with 1st Bn, 6th Q.E.O. Gurkha Rifles in Sungui Patani. He was the battalion 2nd Class Armourer working with a Gurkha Armourer Sgt. who had served as a 1st Class Armourer with the battalion throughout the war. From him David was to learn a lot about small arms and the Gurkhas as a military force. This posting was to fill David with confidence in his own abilities and he went to 40 Base Wksp. for his 1st Class course, which he passed with ease. Returning to the battalion he moved up through the ranks to become the Bn. Armourer Sergeant with a staff of 6 Gurkha Armourers.

Posted from there to the 4th Queens Own Hussars at Ipoh as their Armourer Sgt. He

remained with them on their return to Tidworth. It was here that David successfully applied for Artificer training but shortly after starting the course decided it was not for him and chose to remain an Armourer. From Bordon he was posted back to the now Army Apprentice School at Arborfield where he was to remain as an instructor for the next 3 years, he instructed on the Vickers M.G. it's tripod and the ACPAC Flamethrower.

It was during this time that he met Mary Hardy and they married in 1954, whilst still at Arborfield they celebrated the arrival of their first son, Richard.

1956 and it was back to the Gurkhas, this time the 2/7 Duke of Edinburgh's in Fanling, Hong Kong. David attended a Gurkhali language course and he soon became fluent, this endeared him to the soldiers he worked with. He remained with the battalion when they moved Kluang in Malaya. In 1957 James their second son was born here. It was also here that Mary attended her first Dashera festival, the Hindu festival that can only be compared with Christmas in the western calendar. Whilst at the Gurkha Sgts Mess a waiter offered Mary, Beer Lemonade or Ruksi. Not knowing but not wishing to offend Mary asked for Ruksi. David whispered a warning that it was strong stuff, Gurkha rum in fact, but Mary was determined to give it a go. After an enjoyable function getting off the transport home Mary wandered off in the wrong direction hotly pursued by David before she disappeared into the jungle.

1959 and it was back to the UK, first to 14 Command Workshops, Ashford and then on to 2nd Scots Guards in Wellington Bks. Soon after arriving they were told the battalion was on it's way to Kenya, Mary thrilled at the thought of seeing another continent had reckoned without David seeing a request for volunteer to serve with 1/2 KEO Goorkha Rifles in Malaya. To David this was a call home, to Mary a disappointment; she'd already been there. They remained with the battalion when it

moved to Hong Kong in 1964. The following year David's close association with the Gurkhas came to an end when he was posted back to the UK. His love of these hardy soldiers was fully reciprocated and on his departure he was presented with a kukri and scabbard decorated with gold, silver and semi-precious stones a gift reserved for those held in the highest esteem.

After home leave it was off to Berlin on promotion to Armourer Quarter Master Sergeant (AQMS) with 3rd Bn The Royal Anglians. This was a comparatively short tour and David was posted back to SEME, not he felt the highlight of his globetrotting military career. From here David was discharged, initially buying a house in Lindford, he took a job with Vauxhall in Dorking. In 1970 it was back to the North and a house in Pudsey, Leeds. David finally retired as the Vehicle Manager for a hardware company called Goodman Crogans. This was not suited to David's active nature and he was soon back at work, this time voluntary for the local chemist delivering prescriptions to those unable to collect them

Throughout David's life he always kept busy. As a young soldier in the UK he would take every opportunity to go to motorcycle race meetings on his Triumph Tiger 100, setting up the gearbox for racing on arrival, partaking in the event, then reversing the process before returning to camp. His proud boast, "Although I never won a race I never lost one either"

A keen photographer David set up his own part time business in Pudsey as a wedding photographer also taking it upon himself to record the annual Armourers' Association dinner. He joined the REME Association in 1986 and became Chairman of the West Yorkshire Branch in 1987-88.

David's love of the Gurkhas remained with him to the end, having spent more than half of his 22 years service with them, donations in place of floral tributes were accepted and

over £700.00 was passed on to the Gurkha Welfare Trust in his memory.

Our deepest sympathies are sent to Mary, his wife, and their two sons, Richard and James.

*Our thanks to **Bill Hayles (Carlisle 63C)** for allowing us to use the eulogy he gave at David's funeral on which this obitury is based.*

Vincent Coultas **(Arborfield March 1941)**

*Vince passed away in Feb 2006, unfortunately there was no obituary available at that time. We are indebted to **Bill Wenborn (Arborfield 41)** for providing the following.*

It is with deep regret that I report the passing of my good friend Vincent Coultas who died on the 9th February 2006 from a heart attack, he had survived a serious one in July 2005, and only a couple of weeks before his death was telling me how much he was improving.

Vince arrived through the Army Technical School gates on the 18th of March 1941 to be joined by another 99 fourteen year olds, all hoping to become Armourers one day. We were equally divided between A,B,C and D companies, and Vince spent his whole three years in J5 of D company.

He was always a happy go lucky guy with a great sense of humour and fun, and would always join in any barrack room fun and pranks, he was a bit of a dare devil, (this shows up later in one of his chosen sports). We both owned cycles after about 18 months at the school, which enabled us to enjoy a lot more freedom, in particular, in and around Reading, (the local talent was not so familiar with Arborfield boys).

When the school closed down in 1944 prior to D-Day, he was sent to York Command Workshops on the 28th February, accompanied by several other lads. Here he met a young lady called Mary, and they

were married on the 27th November 1945. (The *wise ones* said they were too young for it to last) but they defied them all to celebrate their Diamond Anniversary last year. He was a very proud family man, and except for active service, Mary was always by his side.

He saw service in Trieste, where he became quite fluent in the Italian language. He then went to Korea with the Kings Own Royal Regiment, then went on to Hong Kong. Mary was on her way to join him, but their daughter Sandra became ill and they were taken off the ship at Singapore, where Vince soon joined them. The family were flown home and sent to York, where they lost their dear daughter to Leukaemia, This was of course a devastating blow to the family.

He was later posted to the Sandhurst Academy to be their Armourer for the next two years. 1959 saw him returning to Hong Kong with the Northumberland Fusiliers for a three year tour of duty. He returned to serve in Germany with the Fusiliers until 1966. He was then promoted and posted to Warminster where he completed his service in February 1967, retiring as a WO1.

He first found work with Vickers Armstrong as an instrument inspector, but found difficulty settling, and a friend from the Northumberland Fusiliers helped him to find a job as a school caretaker in Birmingham which he enjoyed, and stayed until he retired and moved up to Spennymoor. Throughout his service, whenever possible, he would be competition shooting, and motor cycle scrambling, (the dare devil side we saw as boys). After retiring from the army, he took up the sport of pigeon shooting on farm land. He had quite an array of silverware to prove his ability in all three sports.

Unfortunately, I lost touch with Vince after boy service until we met again at an Armourer's reunion in 1997, and we kept in close touch since, meeting most years at AOBs reunions, I am sure we shall all miss his genial smiling face.

Notes from the President

Firstly I must apologise for my absence at the coming reunion. I am truly sorry to be missing this one as it is the first I have not attended in over forty years. It is due to a clashing family occasion. Each year recently, the younger married members of the family have arranged a week away for everybody, usually in a large enough rented accommodation where all members (11 last year 12 this) can pursue their personal pleasures in small parties or together. Arranging a date suitable to all the workers was difficult and the final date, understandably, had to be accepted by us, the retired non-workers. Betty and I most certainly wanted to be there so the voluntary 'duty' of the reunion, I'm sorry to say, had to come second. These holidays spent with the family have always been joyous occasions, the oldest family member this year will be Betty (87) and the youngest our great grandson born in May of this year. We all get on well together; they help us in every way while not neglecting the opportunity of having fun at our expense, but that doesn't bother us; we share in it.

What to report? Sadly age is taking it's toll and I did not feel up to making the trip to the Garden of Remembrance last November. The journey and standing about is a bit much now. Additionally Betty is less mobile now and suffers from occasional bouts of being unwell, and it is essential that I am on call so I would not like to leave her for a long period.

Did any of our readers see the programme on Chelsea Hospital on BBC 4 during April and May? Apart from giving a very good insight of the retirement home for old soldiers it showed footage of the launch of **Clem Hoyle's (Hilsea 1935)** book 'Schoolboy to Soldier 1935 – 1945'. Peter Hills, Chris Dennis and I attended the launch that day but obviously any shots that

included us finished up on the cutting room floor. The Founders Day at the RH is an annual event well worth a visit. I have been to a rehearsal, which is held on the Tuesday before the main event on the following Thursday. The Royal Hospital is located next door to the Army Museum a visit gives you the opportunity to combine the two.

I still drive so Betty and I can still attend meetings of the Legion and the Italy Star Association, both held locally. Recently however we have been farther afield; in the beginning of May, not to leave Betty out, I joined her in attending the Royal Artillery Association National Reunion at Blackpool of which the ATS Ack Ack gunners are part. We were driven there by my son and daughter-in-law, who wanted to see Blackpool anyway. It proved a lovely weekend. Later in the month we attended the Italy Star National Reunion at Chichester. Our branch went by coach. It was another good weekend among friends. Here I was happy to meet fellow '35 enlistee (is there such a word?) Joe Reynolds, and have a natter. Our Service in the Cathedral, and short march through the city streets was on the Sunday of the Bank Holiday weekend so you know the score on that, luckily it was only raining rain not stair-rods.

I have great respect for the individuals that organise the branch and national meetings of the ex-Service associations. I have experience of the work it entails and I have also experienced the benefits of their efforts: the friendships I have formed and the information and personal histories I have heard from others has widened my own knowledge of what went on in my own and other spheres operations. Two associations to which I am a correspondent member only are possibly not so well known. I wonder if among us are some that are interested. I spent four years in the Canal Zone so the Canal Zoners was a natural one to join. The other is BETFOR Association for those who served in Trieste, Italy. The initials stand for British Element Trieste Force, there was an American element as well. We didn't leave there until 1954.

I hope that this has been of some interest. I am sure that all of you have interesting tales to tell and it doesn't have to be war related. I am sure Chris will find room for any contributions. I think that this is all for now, but before I close I am sure that you will all join me in a vote of thanks to our secretary who holds the Association together and spends so much of his spare time for our benefit. I wish you all well and add the hope that as many of you who can, will make the effort to attend the coming reunion. My thoughts will be turning from the country to London at some time on that day you may be sure.

Eric

For anyone who may be interested in the Canal Zoners or BETFOR Association their website addresses are shown below. Should you require postal contact details please speak to the sec.

www.milhist.net/betfor/

www.canalzoners.com/

2006 Dinner

Presided over by Eric, loyally supported again by Betty, the 2006 Dinner was a great success, demand meant that we had to ask to be relocated to the larger El Alamein Room from the Trafalgar Room. The Guest of Honour, Capt. (Retd) Andy Anderson, Secretary of the REME Association, was warmly welcomed and entertained, unfortunately his better half, Carol was unwell and unable to accompany him. He gave a short, and entertaining speech covering most areas from his career in REME from joining as a Storeman, transferring to the Regimental Duty role and subsequently being commissioned. After retirement he eventually filled his current post where amongst other things he runs the Corps Benevolent Fund. Andy was presented with an Association tie and paperweight to mark his visit.

We were lucky enough to be joined by **'Johnno' Johnson (Arb. 56B)**, who was visiting from South Africa. Johnno is the secretary of the S. African Armourers' Association, who in the post-apartheid era have been seen as not politically correct. You may remember we were able to support them a couple of years ago by partaking in their raffle, we sold £300.00 worth of tickets and **Reg Homard (Blackdown '47)** won the star prize, a gold signet ring, with a 'Hammer & Tongs' pattern. Johnno gave a tie and lapel badge to our raffle on the night and took the opportunity to auction another tie and lapel badge to the assembled company. With much goodwill and not a little alcohol consumption very good prices were achieved for both items. Johnno also spent the evening in the company of **John Houghton** also of **Arborfield 56B**.

Our latest author, **Clem Hoyle (Hilsea 1935)**, resplendent in the Scarlet Frock Coat of the Royal Hospital, spookily happened to have several copies of his book "Schoolboy to Soldier" with him, these didn't last long as he happily signed the copies he sold. A signed copy was also one of the raffle prizes. He was recently seen on the BBC4 programme: **CHELSEA PENSIONERS: ONCE A SOLDIER** (See *Presidents Notes*). Clem informs me that Part 2 is about to be published, this will cover from the end of the war to the present day.



L to R: Dick Manning (Arb 45B), Ian Knight (Car. 61B), Bill Thorne (Car. 65C), Chris Dennis (Car. 65C)

Possibly a first, the current secretary was joined by his three predecessors, **Dick Manning, 1976-82, Ian Knight, 1982-85, Bill Thorne, 1985-94**. All the previous post holders were kind enough not to mention that they wouldn't have done it like that in their day, and the foundations of a mutual self appreciation society were laid on bedrock of alcohol.

Our raffle was as always well supported with £300.00 worth of tickets sold. **Bill Brown (Hilsea 1940)** chose the star prize of a pewter GPMG (Light Role) and several other minor prizes were spread amongst the assembled throng. Our thanks go to the ladies who always manage to sell the available tickets and are not given to taking **'NO'** for an answer! See balance sheet for income and prize costs.

After many years of dwindling numbers it was good to see attendance rise. Long may this trend continue.

SECRETARIES NOTES

The Electronic Newsletter!

Well that went down like a lead balloon! The response from the newsletters sent out electronically was poor. This may be due to a number of reasons, not least the secretary's grasp of technology. However as a prime candidate for a "Darwin Award" I will continue in my endeavours to bring technology to the Association

Association Paraphernalia

As you will see from the reply form the usual range of Association items remains available, to keep the reply form manageable details of the pewter weapons available and prices are shown here. If you want one please fill in the relevant details.

The list is not the complete range available and if you have your heart set on item that isn't listed please let me know and I'll see if it's available. Please note all prices for these items are exclusive of p&p, which will be charged at cost.

PEWTER WEAPONS AVAILABLE

Prices available to the Association represent a saving of 10 - 20% over normal retail.

No. 4	£36.00
No.1 (SMLE)	£36.00
No4 (T)	£37.50
Bren, on bipod	£37.50
L7 (GPMG) bipod folded	£37.50
L7 (SF) on tripod	£49.00
L1A1 (SLR)	£37.50
Sten Mk 2	£30.00
L2A3 (Sterling SMG)	£30.00
Vickers	£58.00

All of the above are 1:4 scale and come mounted on a wood base.

Mini No4	£13.50
Mini Bren	£13.50

Both approx 7" long mounted diagonally on a wood plaque 7" x 5"

Mini Sten Mk5	£8.50
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3.75" long mounted on wood base 2.5" x 2.75"

Regrettably the rapid rise in the cost of raw material has inevitably led to price increases, these models still, however, represent excellent value for money

If there is a particular weapon that you are interested in that is not listed please contact me (the sec.).

Still Thriving.....

Arthur Maddock (Hilsea 1937) passed me a copy of a letter he had written to the

Soldier magazine in 1996. It may amuse and inform you.

Sir

The PIKE was abolished from the infantry in 1830 (Gen Order No. 491 of 3rd July 1830) The artillery continued, by tradition, to carry it until 1845.

In 1941 I was posted as Armourer to 1st AA Div RAOC Workshop at Kidbrook SE London. One of the first jobs I was confronted with was several bundles of five foot long steel tubes and some boxes of No1 (SMLE) bayonets. In the Tech Office was a letter with the instructions to insert the grip of each bayonet into a tube and weld the crosspiece to the tube end. There was a blueprint explaining the job in great detail. The finished job was called a "BAYONET STANDARD" NOT a pike. The Part No. for this fearsome weapon was, VAOS Section B1. BA6096.

A percentage of all rifles and bayonets held by London AA sited was withdrawn for re-issue to "Teeth Arms" and Bayonet Standards issued in lieu.

In that same Tech File was a large blueprint giving instructions how to manufacture "Knobkerries" using metal salvaged from numerous bomb sites. The common one was made from a length of 1/2" water pipe and pieces of water tank. The pieces of water tank were rough "acetylene" cut about 7" square. The four corners were then bent over to the centre, similar to a Danish pastry. One end of the pipe was then welded at right angle to the plate at the meeting point of the corners. The other end was drilled and a piece of sisal cord threaded through to form a wristband. Another method shown in the print was to utilise gear wheels taken from old gear boxes and differentials.

Blueprints were also issued giving instructions for modifying our AA MG

mountings to take German machine guns taken from crashed enemy aircraft.

On my many visits to the AA sites I did NOT at any time see gunners parade with these strange weapons, but they were in their "Rifle" racks in case of need.

I note a few of your correspondents' laugh at the Home Guard. Perhaps their only knowledge of this Force is the TV series. I was a regular soldier but worked with the HG several times when an Armourer was needed on the range. On all occasions I found the Home Guard to be most efficient and helpful.

We can laugh now at the use of pikes but at the time things were serious and we were very short of weapons.

Then Lo & Behold:

Extract from "The World's Worst Weapons" by Martin J. Dougherty.

INVASION PIKES 1940

"With it's Army in tatters and faced with imminent invasion. Britain in 1940 was a hive of improvisation and invention. All manner of weaponry was pressed in to service to arm the Home Guard. One particularly strange idea was to try to oppose the panzers with 'invasion pikes'. These consisted of a bayonet welded to a short haft. It is open to debate exactly what the users were supposed to do with these weapons, and it is perhaps unsurprising that the few pikes that were put together were dumped in a warehouse and forgotten about. "

Arthur would, of course, have told him the full story!

ARMOURERS AT WORK



Armourers of Base Wksps. Tripoli test fire a Vickers of the Guards Brigade (circa mid 1950s [?])

© Arthur Maddock (Hilsea 1937)

NEXT YEARS REUNION

The reunion for 2008 will be held at the Victory Services Club on:

SATURDAY 6th SEPTEMBER 2008

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

Please return your reply form to the secretary:



e-mail: willow18@tiscali.co.uk

Please note change of e-mail address