

A MARINES BYTES



DAVID STOLLERY

1941 - 2012

(EX WARRANT OFFICER ROYAL MARINES)

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PROLOGUE

Perfection is the goal of the many and the achievement of but a few.

It has been said that everyone has at least one book or one good story in them and that they should be able to write it. If this is the case how is it that so many people use ghost writers or collaborate with others to get the job done?

Oh for any assistance when you're an ordinary person like me; trying to drag words from a brain that probably looks like a pickled walnut if it was studied under a microscope.

Unfortunately, this little Tractor Boy from Ipswich, Suffolk has got to do it all himself so I just hope that I have got the wit, intellect and the intelligence to get the job done rather than someone else's interpretation or letting somebody else put words into my mouth.

My story is about the time before, during and after joining the Royal Marines at the age of 17 and is full of little bytes of my history and how I was affected by the people who touched my life, sometimes in a

good way and sometimes in a bad way. The book is about my recollections of the times I lived in.

In this book I have used the real names of people I have known and loved, and people I have known and not loved and I have also left out names to protect the innocent and to worry the guilty.

My story is about real people in real situations and I have no doubt that some will take umbrage at my comprehension and interpretation of the situations I found myself in and I am certain that some will have the wherewithal to be vindictive or may even have friends in high places who would delight in taking me to task. Perhaps before considering this course of action it would be wise to think about mud sticking and gloves fitting!

The story is also about growing up and becoming an adult, although my wife Ann still doubts this can ever happen as she still considers me to be about twelve, going on whatever age I am. Have I got a good sense of humour, damn right I have, you'd need one if you had lived during my life time.

The story is also about having to mature at a young age because circumstances and life dictated it that way.

Sometimes a young person has to negotiate life's setbacks, with or without adult help, because adults cannot always be relied upon to do the right thing and sometimes they make you do things you don't want to do or shouldn't do.

I also wanted to leave a legacy for my family and those who come after me; you never know there may be some tiny snippets of wisdom contained in this bibliography and some of the contents may be of interest, comfort or may even touch a nerve. On the other hand, words, if written honestly, can also be cruel, although that is not my intention, I just wanted to tell the story like it was and is, warts and all, as I am a candid person. If you ask my close family they will tell you that I have difficulty in telling lies, although I may see details differently as others see them, like any normal person.

It is often said that humans make terrible witnesses; some people who are asked to describe a situation or article for legal reasons for instance might interpret dark blue as black, short as tall, fair hair as brown and as far as dates and timelines go these can vary from minutes to weeks.

Anyway, let's give this writing lark a go and see how we get on. I may be a naive writer, but at least my story will be written from the heart and is an honest account of my life. I hope that the reader will forgive me if I make slight errors in naming objects, especially objects or items that no longer exist and you also have to remember that I am now 71 years of age and there have been a lot of spirits surging through my veins over the years and my memory could trip me up a time or twice.

I was born in 1941, during the Second World War on an Ipswich council estate called Gainsborough Estate. I believe I was born in a house on Mildmay Road, then moved shortly afterwards to a council house in 95 Fletcher Road, still part of the Gainsborough estate, where I remained until I joined the Royal Marines in 1958 at the age of 17. This is my story.

Chapter 1

1941 – 1958 Ipswich, Suffolk

The Stollery Family and Suffolk Upbringing

I have decided to split this chapter into two halves because I wanted the reader to have a brief insight into the history of our family before I got involved in telling the story of my own upbringing as I remember it.

I do not think it is a remarkable family history, but it should be told so that the rest of the story will fall into context. It is our parents' lives together that affect the way we are going to grow up and develop as human beings as they are our first teachers, but we do not necessarily have to live our lives as they did.

I do not believe that we necessarily take after our parents, although some offspring will develop the same traits later in life. Fortunately for me, I cannot speak for my other siblings; I am not a philanderer, womaniser, wife abuser or a neglectful husband so I obviously did not take after my old man.

Although this story is mainly about my experiences, it is important to understand my early life and where

my roots come from, if the story is to make any sense.

The Stollery Family

We believe the Stollery clan originated from the London area and their livelihood was made on or near the river Thames. My parents were Jack Stollery and Winifred Mary Stollery (nee Duff Wills) and the eventual size of our side of the family would consist of four brothers and a sister, John, Mary, David, Alan and Tony, in that order.

Jack Stollery who from now on shall be referred to by me as 'the old man' was a philanderer and womaniser and stole money from his own family and yet strangely, the old man was his mother's favourite. As a result of his womanising, he even infected mother with a sexually transmitted disease, which was passed on to one of us at birth.

The old man's parents lived at number 43 Fletcher Road and the family consisted of two sisters, Nellie Barrat and Molly Last and three brothers, Horace, Mike and George. All of them, apart from Mike who immigrated to Australia, lived and brought up families in Ipswich. Nellie Barrat had two sons, Molly Last had one daughter, Horace Stollery had two daughters, Mike Stollery had one daughter and one son and George Stollery had two daughters. The only person from our side of the family to mix and know about our relatives was our oldest brother

John. As far as we knew and were led to believe, our side of the family were the black sheep because of the old man and therefore were not encouraged to mix, although our mum was close to Mike and his family before they left for Australia.

The old man was bad tempered in drink and verbally and mentally abused mother but I never witnessed him physically abusing her, although I suspect he was. Perhaps my other siblings witnessed more than I did. Mother did tell me that in one of his outburst he viciously threw me across the room when I was a child, fortunately I landed on the sofa.

This was an uneasy marriage, like a smoking volcano, you could feel the tension bubbling up just below the surface just waiting for the eruption. As we all got older our parents did settle into an amicable cease fire, I believe that they were just dead tired after arguing and squabbling all those years. Strangely, to me that is, they were both buried in the same grave.

Mum was born in Ashbocking, Suffolk but was brought up in Felixstowe. She had one sister called Joan who remained in Felixstowe for the rest of her life. Although big boned, mother was a genteel woman and very well-liked and respected, although it took quite a while for her to be accepted by the locals after she had moved to Fletcher Road. I can

honestly report that I never heard her say a bad word about anybody. She suffered terribly with varicose veins in both legs, the real big knotty veins, and I remember how ill she was when phlebitis set in and one of her legs went septic. She couldn't walk and was in extreme pain but still forced herself to get around the house on her backside, trying to look after us all.

Initially her family in Felixstowe, the Duff-Wills, were quite well to do with businesses and boats, but I believe this was squandered or gambled on the stock market and by investing in unproductive brainwaves. If any of the money did survive it certainly did not come mum's way, some of it may have gone to her sister Joan (although Joan was always in denial about having money or property) because Joan became a successful business woman in Felixstowe. In any case mum's parents tried to put her into servitude with relatives in London but she escaped and became a nurse before returning to Suffolk where she settled into another form of servitude, married to the old man, although I suppose she must have been happy at some stage of the marriage.

The oldest two children were born in Wardrop Road, Richmond, North Yorkshire, John Christopher in 1938 and Mary Joan in 1939. The Old Man was in the Army during World War II and for some time, based

at Catterick Camp, hence the two oldest being born in Yorkshire.

The remainder of us children were born and bred in 95 Fletcher Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, David in 1941; Alan Frederick George in 1946 and Anthony Peter (Tony) in 1954 (see photographs). You will note that I am the only child with a single initial. My name means beloved and apparently that's why mother chose it, some of it is to do with what happened at my birth, but I do not know the whole reason for her decision to give me only one Christian name and not have me officially christened in a church.

My oldest brother John joined the armed forces at the tender age of 15 and served in the REME for twelve years and now lives in Yeovil, Somerset. During his career in the Army he was one of the first REME personnel to work on the original hovercraft in Portsmouth. He has two sons from his first marriage and two daughters (one adopted) from his second marriage.

My older sister joined the Territorial Army and served for two years and remained in Ipswich until her death at the age of 70. She had no children.

My younger brother Alan joined the armed forces when he was at the tender age of 15 and he served in the Royal Signals for nine years, he returned to live in Ipswich with his wife Diane and family of 7, strangely enough settling back in a house situated in Fletcher Road not too far from where we were all brought up. Alan adopted 5 (not all of them taking his surname) of the 7 children, the last two children being his and Diane's. Alan also has a daughter in the north of England and another who lives in Germany from two other relationships he had during his lifetime. He has since moved into a bungalow in Morland Road, which runs off Fletcher Road.

My youngest brother Tony stayed in the family home with his sister Mary and she was the last to leave home during our parent's lives after marrying Morris Jackson. Tony suddenly upped sticks and left home after his mother died in 1982. He left with just the clothes on his back, telling nobody and just disappeared. Tony's father advertised for Tony's whereabouts in the local and national newspapers to no avail. Many years later Tony would be discovered living in Cornwall, but more about this later on.

Mother died at the age of 69 and the old man at 77 whilst still residing at 95 Fletcher Road, the family home.



These were taken in the early 1940's (I look to be about a year old) and the top photograph shows Mum, John, me and Mary somewhere in Ipswich. The bottom photograph was obviously taken the same time and shows me, John and Mary (what John was doing with a parcel we do not know)





Top Photo

We do not know where this was taken but it must have been Ipswich in the 1940's and I (in the middle) look to be about 5 which would make John 8 and Mary 6

Bottom Photo

Tony on the left and Alan taken at 95 Fletcher Road in the early 1950's



Suffolk Upbringing

I suppose today's society would describe our upbringing in the lean times of the 40's and 50's as pretty tough and uncompromising. We of course knew no different, it was just the times we were born and brought up in. I did not know that we were poor until I was about 8 or 9 and started to notice what my contemporary's had in terms of clothes, toys, food and contents of homes, which is what we didn't have a lot of in the Jack and Winifred Stollery family. We were definitely the 'no-haves'.

Whilst I was born in 1941, I do not remember much about World War II. The odd memory creeps in now and again, like hiding under our big solid oak dining table in our lounge (an inheritance from Mum's side of the family) or going to the Anderson bomb shelter in our next door neighbour's garden during air raids.

I also remember our next door neighbour Mr Gill with his trouser braces hanging down and him shooting at flying Doodle Bugs with, what I now know to be, a 410 single barrel shotgun (I think he missed!). His wife told us later in life that when he got out of bed to fire at the Doodle Bugs his trouser braces got caught round the bed post and he kept springing back and was cursing the Germans like merry hell. I also remember him dressed as Old

Mother Riley at the street party celebrations after the war ended.

For many, many years afterwards, there existed a very large patch of burnt road surface, directly opposite our house in the middle of Fletcher Road, where a bonfire was set alight after the daylight celebrations of the street party was over.

Our council home had an outside toilet, an open fire grate in the living room and open fires in two of the larger bedrooms; no central heating or running hot water, but we did have gas and electricity. Each of the bedrooms had a pot under the bed to be used as a urinal during the night. Using the outside toilet during the winter was an extremely cold affair and most of the time pieces of old newspapers were used instead of toilet rolls. It was so cold sometimes that the men folk had to break off the frozen urine from the penis to the pan before they could continue to pee!!!

The inhabitants in our three bedroom council house would eventually consist of two parents a sister and four brothers. The boys would sleep in the second largest bedroom and Sister Mary slept in the smallest bedroom.

Hot water for baths was heated in what we called a 'copper' an oven like affair which consisted of a

galvanised bowl set into the top of a stone like oven with a fire grate underneath. The bowl had a wooden lid and the fire grate underneath had a hinged metal door and this contraption was situated in a small bathroom next to the kitchen on the ground floor at the back end of the house. This room contained a bath only, no sink or toilet. You had to ladle water from the bath's cold tap into the bowl then light the fire underneath to heat the water. When it was hot you ladled the water into the bath and began the process all over again until you had sufficient water in the bath to bathe yourself. Sometimes if there wasn't enough fuel, you only had just a couple of inches in the bottom of the bath. We also shared the bathwater if there was a generous amount.

The clothes were also boiled and washed in this copper using a posser, a big fat wooden stick which had turned pure white due to the soap and boiling water when the clothing was being mashed with it to get the dirt out. I suppose you could call it a manual washing machine.

Most days one had a strip wash in the kitchen using hot water from a kettle on the kitchen stove and we would only have a bath at week-ends (if you were lucky and could find the fuel to keep the home fires burning). I know what some of you are thinking, why didn't we boil the water on the gas stove and

pour it into the bath. A. We did not have a big enough container or the wherewithal to purchase one and b. Our gas was paid for through a metre and as often as not we were short of the shilling it required.

Heating could be a problem most of the time as there were insufficient funds to purchase coal and when we did have coal it was a luxury and used frugally. Fortunately we lived quite close to the River Orwell and very often during my childhood, starting when I was about 8 or 9 years old, I could be seen dragging wood home from the wooded areas that ran alongside this river and carried on doing this until I left home. I believe that my other brothers also carried out this operation.

We also used paper and cardboard that we had scrounged. The paper and cardboard was mainly used in the copper and the wood was used to keep our living room fire going, which meant that at least one room in the house was almost warm. In the winter evenings we would crowd round the living room fire so that at least our fronts were warm whilst our backs would remain freezing cold. It was almost like; get your own fuel if you wanted to be warm or clean!

To keep ourselves warm at night we had coats on the bed in addition to the few blankets we owned

and as each new brother came along we doubled up in the two beds of the boy's room. I only remember ever seeing a fire in one of the bedrooms once when one of us brothers was very ill. It could even have been me who was ill, because I did suffer a serious illness when I was about 11 or 12, pneumonia I believe. It got easier for us boys when a brother left home to join the forces, it freed up a space in one of the beds. I don't think bunk beds were thought of then, even if they were, we wouldn't have been able to afford them.

My abiding memory of my childhood was the very hot summers and the freezing cold winters. My childhood memories of junior and infants school is very sparse, but I do recall not being allowed to sing as I had a deep voice even then, so my job was to turn the pages of music when the teacher was playing the piano. My grandma called me the boy with the voice in his boots. I also remember being able to play three different sizes of recorder and being in the junior school orchestra.

The only forms of in-house entertainment were catching fleas and a radio. Three of my favourite radio programmes were, Journey into Space, The Man in Black and Dick Barton. My older brother John, who was very clever with his hands, secretly rigged the radio downstairs with a wire which ran upstairs and was attached to a small speaker in the

boy's room. We were then able to listen to radio programmes when we were supposed to be asleep. I never saw a television in my house until after I had joined the Royal Marines at the age of 17.

Our council house was situated in Fletcher Road (number 95) and was part of the Gainsborough Estate, which was also part of a very large catchment area. Fletcher Road had the distinction of having an extremely large old oak tree in the middle of the road (it must be several hundred years old), which still exists today and is part of a small roundabout at the junction with Lely Road which joins Fletcher Road to Morland Road.

It is purported to be the tree where Margaret Catchpole (an 18th Century maid) used to meet her smuggler lover William Laud. Allegedly it is a true life story, nevertheless, it is an excellent adventure and love story; written by Richard Cobbold in 1845.

Yes it was very tough during those times; money was in short supply and what you earned you worked hard for, whatever your age. We all had hand-me-down clothes or clothes donated by other people and you quickly learnt to look after them. Our diet was generally wholesome food, plenty of vegetables, fish and the cheaper cuts of meat, very rarely any treats. I even remember getting some bones for the non-existent dog and mum boiling

them with potatoes and veg for a hearty stew; how mum managed sometimes I just do not know.

If you look at the photograph of us three oldest children when we were babies, you can see just how bonny and chubby we all were, so at one time we must have had plenty to eat. Despite all of this we all grew up to be sturdy healthy children, apart from me suffering with asthma for a while after my bout of pneumonia. Fortunately I grew out of the asthma quite early on and was able to enjoy life once again.

The shopping for groceries, food and meat was purchased from the local shops at Clapgate Lane and Reynolds Road. Most things could be purchased there as they had a bicycle shop, hardware, haberdashery, bakers, hairdressers, butchers, two fish and chip shops (the best being Hearn's Fish 'n' Chip Shop on Clapgate Lane), vegetables, chemists, dry cleaning, a Co-op and a Public Library, no Supermarket's in our days.

The estate also had its own large Public House called The Duke of Gloucester. The Duke of Gloucester was a great meeting place for all the kids because it also had a big oak tree in the car park and a lot of the parents visiting the pub would bring crisps and soft drinks to their kids waiting outside.

We also had two working men's clubs; the Labour Club, on Landseer Road and the Conservatist Club on Clapgate Lane. Most catchment areas built in Suffolk during these times had similar facilities on their doorsteps. You name it, they had it.

Our area also enjoyed its own swimming pool called Pipers Vale which was an open air pool and where everyone in our area was taught to swim and where we enjoyed school swimming gala's and competitions. The side of the swimming pool, where the spectators sat, was made up of small rounded stones and when you sat on these stones in swimming costumes your hands and legs used to get very dirty.

My abiding memory was that it always seemed to be bloody freezing cold every time we went swimming in this pool. The pool was closed in the winter thank goodness. I cannot remember if anyone taught me to swim, but I do remember being thrown in at the deep end and encouraged to make my own way to the side of the pool. I'm here today so I suppose the system worked.

The swimming pool no longer exists as it was torn down due to the construction of the Orwell Bridge but the name Pipers Vale still lives on as the name of a brand new school, built not too far away from where the original swimming pool stood.

I recall only one birthday treat when I was about nine or ten and was allowed to invite one of my close friends round for tea, Mickey Rogers, who lived at the top of Fletcher Road past the oak tree. We had a few sandwiches, fairy cakes and our lemonade was served in old jam jars, it was a bit embarrassing because Mickey and his family were far better off than we were and Mickey even had his own electric train set.

You can gather from this that the 'Old Man' did not bring home a regular or large income and mum had to manage on very little. The little housekeeping money she did receive was doled out by the 'Old Man' in a miserly fashion. If mum managed to get a little nursing job for a night or two, she was docked that amount from her housekeeping, although the 'Old Man' always seemed to have enough money for a few drinks down the pub at week-ends.

During our childhood mum was sometimes employed as a night nurse to look after the ailing patriarch of a well to do family called Prettyman. They once took her with them when they went off for their family holidays to Scotland. When mum returned she brought back a haunch of venison and we dined on this for several days. Talking to my brothers I don't think we liked it very much because it was a bit too rich for our urban palates, but then again it was meat.

I distinctly remember when I was about 15 the old man arrived home drunk one Sunday afternoon demanding his dinner and mum, not saying a word, walked into the kitchen plated up his dinner which included gravy, walked back into the lounge and calmly poured it all over his head. The amazing thing about it was that the old man did not say a word, got out his handkerchief wiped the gravy off and just as calmly went off to bed. Good for you mum; it was about time you got your own back.

One of the great advantages of growing up in Fletcher Road was living very close to the beautiful lush countryside alongside the River Orwell. The countryside and woodland closest to the entrance from Lely and Morland Road and higher up from the River Orwell was called locally 'The Lairs' which children used as their local playground, adventure park and sports field. Then for further adventures we would travel and play alongside the tidal River Orwell in woodland stretching from the Lairs all the way to Felixstowe. Close by were plenty of farmland and allotments and therefore a great deal of our spare time during our childhood was happily spent in these areas. This was our entertainment as we did not have electronic gadgets, television or expensive toys.

Generally, we played in groups made up from lads who lived in Fletcher road; although we did mix with

our other friends from school who lived elsewhere on the estate. As a general rule the initial rendezvous for all groups was the big oak tree at the top of Fletcher Road. I suppose you could call them gangs, although they did not have gang names, just groups of school friends who played together, usually of a similar age group. For instance I would not be allowed to join my older brothers group of friends because they were three years older than me and considered themselves to be grown up.

Because of the shortage of cash, we made our own entertainment and used our own God given talents i.e. brains and physical prowess, to create our own sporting equipment like bows and arrows, kites, cricket gear, rounder's bats etc. and we also created secret hidey holes called dens and happily kept ourselves amused on the cheap.

Not for us expensive toys for Christmas; our stockings had fruit and nuts and perhaps a chocolate Father Christmas wrapped in foil. If we were very lucky there might be a small toy like a wooden car or a doll for Sister Mary and the compendium of games we owned would last from one Christmas to the next and would be brought out for the festive season then put away again. Despite all of this we still looked forward to Christmas and the seasonal break that went with it, it always seemed like a bit

of magic whatever we may or may not have received as gifts.

I also got led astray once or twice but very fortunately never got caught by the rozzers. One escapade comes to mind when one of my friends, Bertie Girling, encouraged me to walk from Fletcher Road, through Ipswich docks to the other side of the River Orwell then along Wherstead Road which led onto the B1456 and up to Freston Hill to a large house alongside the river that Bertie had stolen from before. We then walked down to the river shore and stealthily crept into the gardens of this house where they had a large garden shed. We entered the shed, which was not locked, and stole two brand new Air Rifles and slunk quietly away along the shore towards Shotley. There was no ammunition for the guns so we did not get to shoot them and we couldn't carry them back home through Ipswich town so we hid them along the shoreline to be retrieved when circumstances were more favourable.

Shortly afterwards, Bertie and his family, most of them deaf and dumb, had to move out of Fletcher Road because they had abused their Council house tenancy by nearly wrecking the place. As I recall it was always filthy when I visited, with human excrement in the most unlikely places. I never saw Bertie or the rifles again. I attempted to locate the

air rifles once but could not, for the life of me, remember the exact spot where we had hidden them.

Sometimes cricket games would be held outside our house, number 95, because there was a lamp post which was used as the wicket. Football, well more of a kick-a-round really, would also be played in the street, plus mischievous games such as knock on your neighbours doors and run or the more dangerous game of jumping over people's hedges into their front gardens when we didn't know what was on the other side of the hedge.

During the winter months when it was snowing and icy, we would make ice slides down the centre of the road which were like skating rinks and very slippery. The drivers of the few vehicles that came down our road used to curse us like hell.

We also went Scrumping for apples and other fruits and generally made a nuisance of ourselves, until of course you were caught, if the neighbours were quick enough, then you would get a good clip round the ear and sent on your way. You also hoped that they wouldn't tell your parents as you would get another good clip. All this clipping, they must have been taught by our local Bobby.

Our local Bobby patrolled the area frequently and everybody knew him, parents and children. His name was PC Roper and we tried very hard not to get on the wrong side of him. If he did catch one of us doing something we shouldn't it would be a good telling off and a clout round the ear. A person had to take the punishment in fear that PC Roper would tell the parents, and then another clip round the ear was forthcoming.

It seemed to me that in those days all boys were good with their hands and they needed to be because there just wasn't the cash around to purchase new things. Some of the boys had the skills to make their own cycles and go karts (a plank and four pram wheels), scrounging parts from all over the place, including items from fly tipping and items from the local dump. We always referred to it as the dump when in fact it was the local council waste disposal unit located on Landseer Road, which we passed every day on our way to school and has now been grassed over and turned into parkland.

The hidden dens we constructed were deep in the woods and these were closely guarded secrets and access was only allowed for a very few privileged members of the group.

Unfortunately we practised our skills of smoking in these dens and this was where we would hide our

tobacco tins and any other items that we did not want our parents to find.

Our dens were as good as we could possibly make them, with doors you could secure and roofs and walls that were waterproof, all items scrounged from the local tip or from items fly tipped. If you did happen to find a den from another gang, it was usual to nick the better items to improve your own den. We also made pottery ornaments and figurines from natural clay deposits found by the River Orwell, which we then baked in the sun to harden. We used these ornaments to adorn our dens.

The local group (gang) I belonged to was made up from the boys who lived in Fletcher Road from homes numbered 91 to the top of the road. One of the boys who lived in Fletcher Road opposite Lely Road was Nobby Clarke a big blowhard know it all. He was a mouthy sod and always bragging and trying to belittle others, until one day, when we were down the Lairs smoking, he really pissed me off with his bragging about what he had and what we didn't have and getting on to one of the smaller boys, so out of pure cussedness I smacked him in the mouth with a bunch of fives. I fully expected him to retaliate but he did nothing, said nothing, and wiped the blood from his mouth and never bothered me or the little ones again. I believe Nobby Clarke immigrated to Australia later on in his life, as did my

Uncle Mike and his family who lived opposite Nobby.

Although we had the Piper's Vale open air swimming pool, it cost money to get in so when funds were low, our swimming was done in the River Orwell, despite raw sewage being pumped into it from the local sewage farm. How we stayed healthy I do not know because some of the lumps we pushed aside when we were swimming in the river must have been turds. Sometimes we would swim across the river to the main channel and climb the shipping buoys and swing on them until the tops touched the water. It was fascinating watching the large ships go by which we could almost touch as they made their way to and from Ipswich Docks.

From where we entered the Lairs at the junction of Lely Road and Morland Road, we could get down to the river at a place called the Sand Pit (which was literally that) and then walk all the way to Felixstowe via Pondhall, Bluebell Woods, Nacton Shores, Mambrook, Levington Creek and Trimley. There was no Orwell Bridge to go under in our days. I suppose the distance would be between 12 and fifteen miles or so.

During the good weather, in the spring, summer and autumn, our small gang would spend most days down the Lairs (when not at school or working),

living off the land. Scrumping for apples, fruits and vegetables from the local allotments and small holdings, finding ducks eggs and catching fish from the river, all of which made tolerable meals on the small open fires we lit. Many a time I would come home late from the Lairs and then I would get a clip round the ear for missing tea. I didn't mind missing tea because I had already eaten!

When in season we would also gather hazel nuts from Bluebell Woods at Pondhall and Scrumping chestnuts from a private estate at Nacton Shores. All these nuts tasted delicious because they were just ripened and the skins underneath the shells were white and easily scraped off with the thumb, unlike the mature nuts you buy from the shops today which have brown skins.

The chestnuts were even more delicious because there was an element of danger from being discovered by the owner when Scrumping in his woods. On several occasions we had to run for our lives because the farmer who owned the land always carried a shotgun. When you entered his woods from the fields there was always a string of dead blackbirds, squirrels and rodents hanging from the barbed wire fence to discourage visitors, human and animal. One never knew if this cantankerous old bastard would shoot if he discovered transgressors on his land.

Any leftovers from the food we scrounged, found or scrumped and had not been eaten during our adventures, I always made sure I took home to supplement mum's larder.

During this childhood alongside the River Orwell we witnessed the making of part of the film called "Yangtse Incident" starring Richard Todd. We discovered a box of large electrically operated fireworks which looked like sticks of dynamite and were used by the film crew to simulate the firing of shore based artillery. We stole the box of 'fireworks' and over the next few weeks we would explode them using a dynamo from a bicycle to detonate the explosives, blowing up all sorts of things. We knew no fear in those days.

During our growing up years everybody in our neighbourhood was very trusting and people left things lying around and most of the time nobody bothered locking their doors; in fact I cannot remember seeing a key for our back door which was left unlocked all of the time. I suspect that if anybody had robbed our house they would have been so sorry for us they probably would have left us something in sympathy. Neighbours would pop in unexpectedly for a gossip or a cup of tea. Mr & Mrs Gill lived one side and Mr & Mrs Unglas the other and the Spillings and Flacks lived across the road. All the children brought up during my era called

adults Mr and Mrs, until we were well into our teens. The only person that we didn't call Mrs was Mrs Gill who lived next door because mum called her Gillie so we all did.

At the age of eleven I got my first job, moved from Moorland Road Junior School to Landseer Road Secondary Modern School (a boy's only School) and I also started to smoke. The girls were sent to Nacton Road Girls School.

If you had a brother at Secondary School it was traditional to join the House that he was in, so I had to join Faraday House (Green), which was renowned for its swimming successes. The other houses were Livingstone (Blue), Scot (Red) and Telford (Yellow).

I always enjoyed going to school because it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer and we also got free school milk, although I wasn't too keen on the spoon full of cod-liver oil and malt we were given daily at junior school. I was never bullied nor was I a bully and I wasn't too keen on those who were and fortunately because of my size never had to fraternise with them. In general they never bullied anyone when my mates and I were around.

I also enjoyed the education and remained in the top stream throughout my schooling, although I wasn't too enamoured with the maths teacher at

Landseer School (Mr Broom I think) who was prone to throwing the wooden blackboard duster, with deadly accuracy, at perceived miscreants.

When my mother had a night nursing job, my sister Mary and I had to prepare our youngest brother Alan for junior school, get ourselves ready and then deliver him to his school before we could go to ours. On one particular morning I annoyed Mary and delayed her so she threw a carving knife at me in anger which stuck in my calf muscle causing a deep wound. Because we didn't want to cause an upset in the family I cobbled together a rag bandage and hobbled to school, managing to avoid doctors and nurses until it healed. I still carry that scar today.

My main job at eleven years of age was spare paper boy, working for our local newsagents, delivering papers at six o'clock in the morning. The spare paper boy job meant that I covered for all the other paperboys and did their rounds when they had a day off and I worked seven days a week, so received a bit more money. I loved it because it meant a different round each day and if anyone had a problem they used to come to me for advice because I was familiar with all the rounds. I loved earning my wages because I could treat myself now and again; it was especially good when I was 12 years of age because rationing ended and I could buy a chocolate biscuit called a wagon wheel, which

in those days was as big as a real wagon wheel, unlike today's tiny example!

Not so long after I started this job, I was accosted by a man very early in the morning. He was standing in some woods and exposed himself and then beckoned for me to approach. I immediately grabbed a fallen branch and started yelling at the top of my voice and threatened him with a smack round the ear. Although he was bigger than me, and I wasn't a small lad, to my surprise he ran off. Strangely, I was not afraid, but afterwards I did carry a cudgel (called a Suffolk stick) in my newspaper bag for defence. I did not report the incident to anybody as I should have done because I didn't recognise the chap and how could I prove it anyway? We were not so aware of paedophiles in those days; they were just dirty old men. I never saw this chap again and carried on with my paper round job until I was fifteen years of age.

When I was thirteen and funds were getting low I managed to get a second job on a Saturday morning after I had completed my paper round. I assisted the vegetable man selling his wares from a mobile grocery shop; a converted electric milk float owned by the Cooperative Society, I only knew the driver by the name of 'Darkie'. Although he wasn't local he was a well-known character in our area. I remember him trying to intimidate and coerce me

into masturbating him in the cab of the vehicle, which I refused to do. I needed the money, but not that much. I was completely detached by the whole thing and 'Darkie' didn't threaten me. In any case 'Darkie' suddenly disappeared from the Grocery Round after he was reported by another boy who worked with him on the mid-week Grocery Round. For a short while after I still continued working on the mobile Grocery round with the new man who took over, but this time there was no intimidation.

I earned a bob or two in various endeavours, such as collecting old clothes and rags and selling them to a Rag and Bone Merchant down town, potato picking, fruit and vegetable picking and I even assisted in the harvest of sugar beet once. All these little jobs, together with my paper rounds, enabled me, from the age of eleven; to purchase my own clothes and I even managed to buy a brand new bicycle, from our local shops, which I paid for on higher purchase.

My older brother John had a job collecting pigs swill from our neighbourhood as nearly everyone saved their peelings and discarded food in small tins by the front door for the local pig man. John would take the food to the pig pen on a local smallholding and boil it all up together in a wood fuelled boiler. When it cooled down he would then feed it to the pigs. In the winter I would sometimes accompany him and

keep warm by the boiler and eat from the food being cooked for the pigs.

My brother Alan, who was five years younger than me, was still at Morland Road junior school when I left Landseer Road Secondary school at fifteen to work full time so I am not sure if he got a part time job when he was eleven.

Not all of the boys of my age from our end of the estate had part time jobs although there were several forms of employment to choose from if they had wanted to or if their parents had allowed them to be employed. I remained in gainful employment until I left school at the age of fifteen, not only because I had to if I wanted any money, clothing or treats, but also because I enjoyed working.

Although I started to smoke at the age of eleven, smoking wasn't done openly and certainly not condoned by our parents, despite the fact that they both smoked. My abiding memory of my mum was a fag end that seemed to be stuck permanently in the corner of her mouth, unless she was eating of course.

We were not always able to obtain commercial cigarettes so all the boys had tobacco tins and picked up dog ends from the gutters, removed the tobacco and then rolled their own. To keep the

tobacco moist you usually had a piece of a cabbage leaf in the tin. We were able to purchase cigarette papers, pretending they were for our fathers.

From time to time, some of the older looking boys were able to purchase ciggies from certain shops when funds were available. The tobacco tins were hidden in secret locations, mainly down the Lairs or in our Den's. In those days the shops sold a cigarette called a Joystick, which was about five cigarettes long and after purchase it would be cut up into individual pieces. The main cigarettes of choice were Woodbines because they could be purchased in paper packs containing just five cigarettes.

The more enterprising members of our group stole cigarettes as well, not too often I hasten to add, just when the rare opportunity arose. When one of the better off mothers wanted a son to purchase a few slices of ham a few of us would accompany him to a small corner shop on another housing estate where the tallest boy would enter the shop alone to make the purchase. The little old man who owned the shop would have to go into the back room to slice the ham leaving the tall boy free to lean across the counter and snaffle a couple of packs of ciggies and quickly throw them to our group who were waiting outside.

I started smoking in front of my parents when I was 15 years of age and working full time. About this time I was showing off whilst filling my new petrol lighter and spilt some lighter fluid over my left hand which I ignited by mistake and got badly burnt. After coming back from the Doctor's I just didn't know what to do with myself as the pain was horrendous so I walked around the Lairs for hours trying to ignore it, without much success I might add. In those days it wasn't advised to stick a burn into cold water.

Now that I had a couple of jobs and was bringing home a bit of cash I was able to finance Saturday morning pictures and a group of us boys used to go on a regular basis. It was quite exciting really and everybody who attended enjoyed it very much and the Cinema was always jam packed. We were transported to another world and the mornings films always ended on a spectacular cliff hanger, which meant that we had to come back the following Saturday so see if our hero or heroine had survived. They always did though, despite the impossible situations they ended up in each week.

I left school at 15 and prior to joining the Royal Marines I had a variety of jobs mainly in Retail. On my Service Certificate (see attachment) it states that I was an Under Porter before I joined up. An Under Porter was an employee who worked in the

Warehouses and stock rooms of Retail Establishments, in my case, the Coop and a shop called The International Stores in Ipswich town centre. When I first started work my mate Ernie Colley used to call for me in the mornings and we would both cycle to our jobs which were in the centre of Ipswich, he worked in an office and I worked in a shop.

I still carried on working for farmers during the potato and fruit picking season at the week-ends. I even tried to become an apprentice Engineer but was scared off by a bully of a man who was a Foreman at Ransoms, Simms and Jeffries so that didn't pan out. I suppose you could say that I was just about ready to escape my Suffolk background as I was becoming bored with the monotony of the types of job I was earning money at.

Sexual experiences were very limited during these years, perhaps mutual masturbation amongst the boys (before the age of 15) then female groping in the back row of the pictures as we got older (after the age of 15). Fumbling and kissing moments behind the trees down the Lairs did take place but more for a dare than anything else. During our teens we always seemed to be in groups (girls and boys) and did not seem to be able to get a girl alone although we tried damn hard to do so.

In general girls were not promiscuous; there was no magic contraceptive pill and flower power, Mods and Rockers and free love was still waiting round the corner. The girls were far more circumspect and kept their knicker elastic tight because their greatest fear was getting pregnant. Unwanted pregnancies were dealt with quite harshly in those days. Most of the girls in our age group, 15 to 17, were not too eager to give sexual favours to anyone, but, if you were very lucky, you might get the odd John Thomas massage.

Perhaps this and the all boy's schools were the reason for boy's being coerced or approached by older men, who knows, it could be just the times we lived in. I bet there are hundreds of stories just waiting to be told, which would give a clearer picture of the sexual goings on during the period that I am writing about, if only people had the courage to write about them.

I never had a steady girlfriend before I joined the Armed Forces, despite having a crush on one or two of my neighbour's daughters.

The girls of our generation seemed to change when the American Air Force arrived in great numbers and again when Elvis Pressley appeared on the music scene. Both of these events were a bone of contention for the young men of our generation as

our girls seemed to lose what little interest they had in us.

The Americans were stationed at Bentwaters, Suffolk and Elvis was on the radio constantly. The Americans seemed to have plenty of money to spend and were very generous to our girls, who had not been treated so lavishly in living memory.

Our local girls would meet the off duty Yanks in the pubs in Ipswich Town Centre and if they clicked would then be invited to the American club at the American Air Base at Bentwaters, to be wined and dined and shagged if possible. The young girls felt very glamorous having an American boyfriend. Unfortunately, a lot of the Americans were not exactly honest about their own marital status and were only after the sex.

Inevitably, some of the girls got pregnant and were left holding the baby as it were, but there were still a few who managed to snare an American husband and went off to live in America. One of these girls who went to America was from Fletcher Road and she was the one that I had a crush on, June Ely. Also during this period we saw a lot of black babies born to white girls, more than we had ever seen before.

Obviously this whole situation didn't go down well with us local boys because we couldn't compete

with the wages the Americans were earning. Fights ensued.

I suppose we should have been used to servicemen because all our lives we had seen men in uniform visiting Ipswich, the difference being they were English, Sailors and came from HMS Ganges. Most of them were too young to bother with as they joined the Navy as boy seaman. The older sailors tended to wear civilians and were not generally noticed.

Fights did still occur, especially down at the Butter Market bus station at the bottom end of town where the naval lads caught their buses back to HMS Ganges. The Butter Market had some of Ipswich's dodgier pubs, like the Blue Coat Boy, The Plough and The Coach and Horses, where prostitutes plied their trade and the sailors frequented from the docks nearby. When my younger brother Alan was older, he used to manage two of these pubs.

Now that I had left school and was in full time employment other pastimes had to be found because I was far too old to attend Saturday morning pictures. I never fancied drinking so did not try to obtain alcohol whilst underage, unlike some of my contemporaries who sought out Pub's that would let in underage drinkers. For me it was the pictures mid-week and the theatre on a Friday

evening and generally hanging out with my mates. Week-ends I liked to go down to the River Orwell and do some exploring, fishing or camping out.

I have never lost my love of the River Orwell and always visit when I am down in Suffolk. It is very cathartic for me and each visit renews my batteries until the next time.

In those days I was not much into sports and couldn't stand football as I never understood what people saw in watching teams of cheating yobs kicking an air filled leather bag from one end of a field to another and to top it all the spectators had to pay for the privilege of standing in the freezing cold to watch this debacle.

We had several Cinemas' in Ipswich; The Gaumont, The Ritz and The Odeon, I was a frequent visitor to all of them. I didn't often take a girl unless she of course could go Dutch with me as my wages were quite small. If I did manage to take a girl then I would always, without exception, try to grope and fondle her and get her to grope and fondle me. Sometimes I was successful, other times I was not and got a slap for my troubles. I never had the privilege of being taught the art of seduction and try as hard as I might I was not able to find a school to teach me about the sexual game and the intricacies of courtship and how to treat women. I feel as

though I had a misspent youth and missed out on a lot of good stuff!

My most enjoyable evening of the week was my visit, with my mates, to the Hippodrome in St Peter's Street at the bottom end of town. Every Friday evening this variety Theatre would have a cabaret night and each Friday's show would be completely different. The shows were packed with a variety of different live acts, some good, some bad, but in general a splendid evening's entertainment. This theatre no longer exists but before it closed I believe that it changed into the Savoy and for a time was a Bingo and Dance Hall.

Generally my mate Ernie Colley and I would be in the group that went out on a weekend and Ernie and I would always end up at his mum and dad's for potato scallops after our nights out. I don't know how his dad prepared and cooked the scallops but they were delicious, especially after a night out.

I was approaching 16 when Ernie, who was a year older than me, joined the Royal Marines in 1957 and we kept in touch when he phoned home as I still visited his parents on a regular basis. During this time he never mentioned anything bad about his training or having to undertake any particular hardships during the time he was a recruit. He just said that it was a great way of life and that I should

consider joining up as well. He was such a lying toad and I was such a gullible fool, but his lies would eventually lead me into an interesting and long lasting new career.

Although I knew very little about the Royal Marines, I obviously knew something about the Armed Forces as my older brother John had joined the REME at the age of 15. It had never crossed my mind to join the Armed Forces, not even when my best mate Ernie joined in 1957.

In my middle teens I suffered with adolescent asthma and for a couple of years I was unable to participate in many sports, although I had managed to learn to swim. I grew out of the asthma at the age of 13 or 14, played a bit of cricket and football from then on, but never considered myself to be a physically fit person, although I was quite slim, but certainly not fit enough to join the Armed Forces and definitely not fit enough to join the Royal Marines. I was also a smoker.

Being the gullible type, I did not understand the precept “Never Volunteer” nor did I understand how difficult the training would be, nevertheless, my mates comments must have made an impact on me because I decided that I would like to join the

Royal Marines when I was 17 in March 1958. Would I have joined if world conflicts were as prevalent in my day as they are in the 21st Century? I believe my answer would have to be yes.

To be able to join the Armed Forces under the age of 18, I had to have my parents' permission. Whilst my mother gave her permission and signed my joining up papers, the old man wouldn't. My mother said to leave it with her and she would persuade him in time for me to join when I was 17. It had been quite some time since my parents had slept together (in the biblical sense) so there was only one way that mother could persuade him. It was a few years later when I found all this out.

Eventually the papers were signed and I was heading off for the biggest life changing adventure of my young life.

Chapter 2

1958 Esprit de Corps

French words are used because there is no short English equivalent.

Esprit de Corps means a living fighting power, involving every individual man of a regiment or a body of troops.

It is gained by a total belief in the Corps, a loyalty to its past history, a general hanging together in trouble and standing by one another for the good of the Corps.

Further, that whatever success is gained by any one member of the Corps will be rejoiced in and shared by all others. It expresses that real feeling of comradeship which is so great a help to success.

Royal Marines have always felt it and are proud of the Corps.

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This tenet is something I had yet to learn and it would not be easy.

Before I could become part of this family I had to go through purgatory, stoically suffer hardships and withstand physical and mental pain without complaint.

I would have to learn to become a team player but still retain individual skills and I would also have to understand and support any decisions made on my behalf for the good of the Corps and the safety of others.

I would have to depend on others and they would have to depend on me.

Only after I had demonstrated that I could physically and mentally carry out all of this without complaint, pass all of the various trials and tribulations thrown at me and then, and only then, would I be able to prove to my superiors that I was worthy of the honour of becoming a Royal Marine and be accepted into the Corps family.

Chapter 3

1958 Deal, Kent

Much to my surprise, I passed the medical and the Royal Marines entrance examination at HMS Ganges at Shotley in Suffolk. On the 18th March 1958 (six days after my 17th birthday) I was given a rail warrant for London where I took the Oath of Allegiance and Queen's shilling before being shipped off to the Royal Marines Depot at Deal in Kent for my initial training.

It was a daunting experience when you consider that I had never left Suffolk before, the furthest I had ever been away was Felixstowe which was about twelve miles down the coast. I had never been away on holiday so was not used to travelling, all in all it was quite nerve racking.

On arrival at the Depot, Deal this inexperienced scared young man was dumped in a very large dormitory type barrack room which could house about forty inmates, sorry, victims; sorry again, young Royal Marines recruits. Although I had never seen a prison before, the Depot, Deal looked and felt like a prison to me with its high stone walls and steel

studded gates. Everything was so neat, clean and tidy with white painted stones and red bricked buildings. There were efficient looking bodies of uniformed men marching about with arms swinging against a background of military music as the Royal Marines School of Music was also at the Depot Deal. It was very intimidating.

Over the next couple of days the remainder of our squad assembled, until there were thirty three of us. They arrived from all over the British Isles with an exotic mix of work experiences, ex-postmen (most of them Northern Irish), farmers, mechanics, shop workers, labourers, trainee hairdressers, butchers and probably even candle stick makers. They hailed from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and nearly every county in England with ages ranging from 17 to 23.

Our squad number was 687. My service number was RM17069 which later changed to PO17069X.

Although we were given RM numbers in 1958, there were still serving members of the Royal Marines who had Portsmouth X and Chatham X numbers. Instead of the prefix RM before their numbers they had POX or CHX. These prefixes were given to men

from Portsmouth and Chatham and had something to do with a Royal Navy mutiny in the distant past...

In those first lonely days, having never been away from home at all, we were quickly shown what sort of treatment we were going to experience for the known future. It seemed to us that nobody spoke to us, they just shouted at the top of their voices and we were always being ordered to stand to attention. Every time we had to move was preceded by the shouted orders, “**Attention**”, “**Quick March**”. To the barbers for our heads to be shaved, to the doctors for an embarrassing thorough medical examination, including the bend over routine and the finger up the arse, the cough procedure, then they stuck all sorts of needles into us, all carried out in the nude in front of everybody else until finally we were marched off (clothed) to the stores to pick up our first kit issue.

It was “**Quick March**” here, “**Quick March**” there, “**Quick March**” everywhere. “**Left**”, “**Right**”, “**Left**”, “**Right**”, we all felt like bloody robots our heads permanently ringing from the orders being shouted left, right and centre, most of which we did not understand. A most unnerving and daunting first few days and this was only the beginning.

We all quickly realised that we would need to mature pretty damn fast if we were going to cope with all this information being shouted down our lugholes, because it sounded like life or death if you failed to comprehend even one little piece of direction.

I tell you what; they had me bloody scared I can tell you. Here I was just a lonely tractor boy and I was either going to be a Royal Marine trained killer or a dead tractor boy on some foreign parade ground with a size nine parade boot wedged firmly up my arse, according to the instructor, that is! And to think, all of this bossing around and we had only been Royal Marines recruits for a couple of days!

The whole squad was firmly ‘encouraged’ to send a weekly postal order home to our mother’s, which we all did. I never asked mum what she did with this money, I just hope that the old man never got his grubby hands on it!

During the first two weeks of Induction Training our initial kit issue included our first sort of uniform which was a denim suit with black webbing, gaiters, belt and a blue beret with a Royal Marines cap badge (a very proud moment), nevertheless, it was

a very scruffy sort of a uniform and we couldn't wait to get our proper 'posh' uniforms.

We were measured for Khaki and blue uniforms (best blues), the Lovat uniform did not exist then. This was the way it worked, you were given an off the peg uniform, then it was inspected on you and any alterations noted then the uniform would be taken away by the tailor for the alterations to be carried out, then you would be inspected again and this would go on until it eventually fitted.

We were informed that we would be issued with our khaki uniforms first, in time to go on Easter leave, which would start about two weeks after we joined the Corps. Apparently the khaki uniforms were the easiest to alter from the Tailors point of view and he had a considerable number of uniforms to finish in order for all of the 687 squad to go on leave.

We had no civilian clothes, they had been sent home because for the next two weeks we would not be allowed to go out of the barracks. In those days, Royal Marines Recruits were not allowed to go ashore in civilian clothes until they had completed training.

Thankfully, two weeks after we joined the Corps, we were sent on two weeks Easter leave dressed in our smart new Khaki uniforms with Royal Marines flashes on our shoulders. Although we could barely march in step and new practically sod all about the Royal Marines, they still set us free.

During our train journey home on this first Easter leave, a Royal Marines recruit was caught by the Military Police because he had illegally sewn Commando flashes, qualification badges and medal ribbons on his uniform blouse. It was blatantly obvious that he was not entitled to wear this insignia, the stupid prick! I hasten to add, he was not from our squad.

I literally bumped into a uniformed Royal Marines Officer in Ipswich, Suffolk during this two week Easter leave and did not know how to salute him because I had not yet been taught.

Embarrassingly, he gave me a saluting demonstration and lesson on the pavement in the middle of my home town of Ipswich, the prat! This Officer could not understand why we were allowed to be on leave in Khaki uniforms and not blues. He took my name and details and told me he was going

to complain to higher authority when he got back to London. Needless to say, I never forgot this saluting lesson and thankfully never met up with this officer during my career and the incident never came to light again, thank goodness.

The rest of my leave was a bit of a downer after that, although there was a bit of an upturn shortly after. My school mate, Ernie Colley (now 18), who had joined a year earlier and was now a fully-fledged 'Bootneck' (the nickname for a Royal Marine) had also arrived on leave and we went everywhere together he in civvies and me in uniform. I liked wearing my uniform, I suppose because it was like a new toy and it also had its benefits because nobody questioned me when I went into pubs, although I was only 17, and the uniform was also a bit of a babe attraction.

I had never frequented a pub before I was seventeen, so I was not much of a drinker then and had to be coached on what to order. Now that I had a bit of cash to spend I was coerced into having my first drink in our local pub The Duke of Gloucester. The first drink I enjoyed was a bottle beer made by Tolly Cobbold's called cobnut, which was a dark mild and a little bit sweet tasting. I tried a pint of bitter

and thought the taste was much like horse piss, or what I imagined horse piss to taste like, so I stuck with the mild beers. I have never to this day been a great beer drinker, but later in life I graduated to spirits like rum, vodka, sherry or port and have since made up for my shortcomings in beer consumption with these other alcoholic alternatives. I cannot drink neat spirits, I hate with a passion whisky but I do like a pint of lager now and again.

I spent most of this first leave with my mate Ernie and had my first real sexual experience. There was an Easter Funfair on the outskirts of Ipswich which we planned to visit one evening after we had been to a few hostelries in town. I was in uniform and Ernie was in civvies and we arrived about 9pm a little worse for wear. After mooching around the Fair for a while we attracted two girls who seemed to quite like us so we paired off and continued our visit with kissing and fondling on the various rides that would allow us to sit together. One thing led to another and we ended up behind one of the outer stalls where a knee trembler occurred and I had my first sexual intercourse, or what I perceived to be sexual intercourse, as I came almost before I started, if you understand what I mean. We had been instructed

in the use of rubber Johnnies during the first two weeks of induction and always carried the odd one in the vain hope that they would be needed. I hasten to add that I threw more away than I ever used.

The next day we arranged to meet the two girls at the Gaumont Cinema. I turned up in uniform with my mate Ernie ready for our next encounter in the back row of the Cinema but we arrived a little early. Just to make sure they had arrived we peeked round the corner of the street opposite and Ernie pointed out the girl I had been with the night before. Well I've got to say that my girl was not the most attractive girl I had ever seen; in fact she was downright ugly so I hightailed it back down the street and all you could hear was my hobnailed boots disappearing at the double. How I couldn't have noticed what she looked like the previous evening I do not know, perhaps it was dicks in wits out. I believe I had a lucky escape.



All thirty three of us with our first proper uniform having returned from our Easter leave in 1958

687 Squad

Top Row

Belton J. Stokes F. Edwards D.G.E. Clay V. Hart R.

Second Row

Crosby N.E.H. Littlewood P. Finn M. McLean I. Pearce D.M. Emanuel T.T. Wright T.G.

Third Row

Wyllie M. Foster D. McNie L.J.G.M. Hale K. Stollery D. Cooke T.J. Allott D.

Thomas C. Hoyle J.T. Carrigan M.S.

Bottom Row

Ackers D.J. Patterson J.C. Clarke E.A. Eaton A.C. Possell A.M. Lamb L. Johnson R.

Grimes D.J. Stapleton D. McNulty F.E. Haynes G.

On return from our leave we began intensive initial training and soon began to learn very quickly about camaraderie, team work and dependence on the next man and also how to be a stronger person with individual personal skills. These lessons would hold me in good stead for the rest of my life and I shall always be very grateful, despite my hatred of the instructors at that time!

Mixed in with all this training was lessons in Corps history and we would be questioned about the history every time we went on parade. In addition to all of this were some very intensive spit and polish cleaning going on. We had to spit and polish all our black webbing, boots and shoes, polish all our brasses and badges, clean our caps and hats , wash and iron our clothing and press our shirts and uniforms and as if this wasn't enough we still had to clean, polish and shine our own rooms. All of the above cleaning was inspected every day and woe betides if there was a speck of dust anywhere. The most annoying inspection was a full kit muster where all your belongings had to be laid out on your bed neatly rolled and squared off to exact measurements. If it wasn't perfect it would be

tipped onto the floor and you had to start all over again until it was correct.

I remember one instance when we were all on parade in best blues and highly polished parade boots when the instructor ordered about turn, marched us to this high brick wall at the bottom end of the parade ground and made us climb over it. As a result of this our uniforms were filthy and I badly scratched the toe of one of my highly spit and polished parade boots. It took me all week-end to cover over the scratches in an attempt to get my boots back up to the high standard they were once in. On the following Monday morning parade, the instructor, who had ordered us to climb the wall, inspected our squad and stopped in front of me looking down at my boots in a very serious manner. His comment to me was "It's a shame Marine Stollery, if only your boots were up to the standard of the rest of the squad, I believe you could have been upgraded to a more senior position as a squad Diamond" (Section Commander). Well you can imagine what I was feeling when he said that, I could have throttled the little toe rag.

During Initial Training at the Depot RM, Deal, I had achieved Section Commander Status (which was

called being a Diamond and you wore a small red diamond on your right shoulder to denote this). The idea was that you were slightly more senior than your squad mates and could be put in charge if an Instructor was called away, or you could be put in charge if there were minor work parties to be carried out, in other words you were an unpaid skivvy. There were a few Diamonds' in our squad, five I think and I was number five. I've got to admit that it did help later in life as priority was given to all Diamonds of becoming a candidate for promotion on completion of recruit training. I became a candidate one year one month after joining up.

It was amazing how quickly the Squad came together as a team. We were taught the very basics like washing our bodies, shaving, cleaning our kit, including weapons (I don't mean the weapons between our legs you fool! although we were taught to clean them as well), to learning all about our Corps History.

The most difficult bit was being taught parade ground drill, marching in step, marching with a band and some very complicated drill movements. This was generally known as square bashing.

Physical training was also a very big part of Initial Training and all of the training was intensive, strenuous, tough and very thorough. As a bit of relaxation, we also were given educational training as well

We were also taught how to box, or should I say, we were given boxing gloves and told to climb into the ring and knock ten barrels of shit out of a fellow squad mate. No protective headgear for us boys!

Our numerous successes during all of our initial training were definitely down to our dedicated and experienced squad instructors and discipline was the backbone of these successes.

This was also the time when we were taught how to fire our rifles on a shooting range, something I have always enjoyed.

The rifle that stayed with us throughout training was the Lee Enfield 303 (sometimes called the number 4) which was a bolt action weapon with a five round magazine. I became a first class shot and would eventually compete in a shooting competition at Bizley. I competed only once.

The 303 was quite a heavy weapon to carry during training and drills (especially running with it in full kit!), but it was a very accurate and sturdy weapon. When the 303 was used on a daily basis for drills and live firing we used a black rifle sling (which obviously had to be buffed to a high polish) and when the rifle was used for ceremonial drills we had to use a white sling when it had to be spotlessly white, which was done with Blanco.

The 303 was used by expert marksmen in competitions at Bizley for many years after it was discarded by the Armed Forces.

It was quite some time before the Royal Marines got to see or use the SLR (the Belgian FN Self Loading Rifle). When they were finally issued, this semi-automatic rifle would be the main weapon that I would use for the remainder of my time in the Corps.

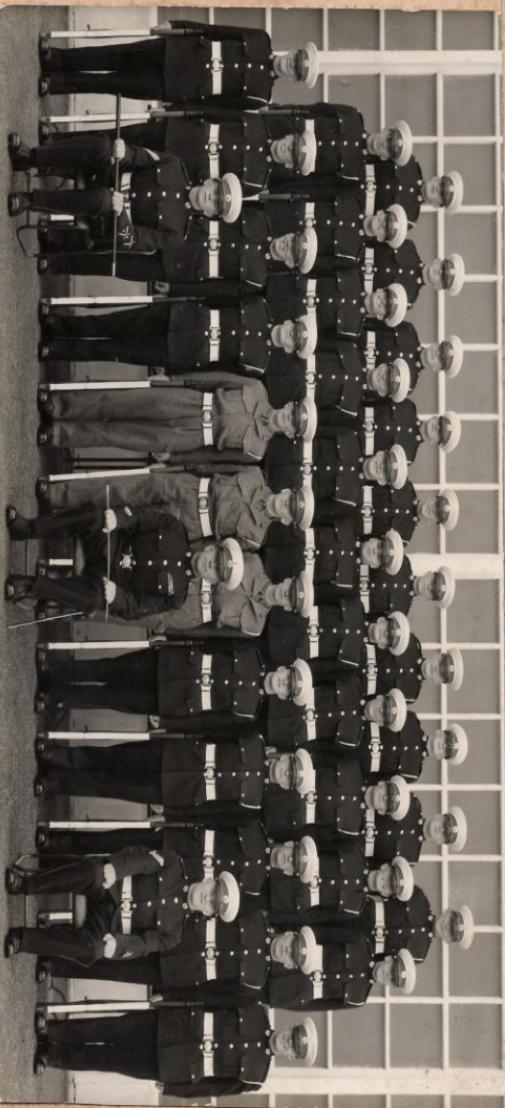
When we finally passed out of The Depot, the squad clubbed together and purchased a brand new bicycle as a leaving present for our main squad instructor, Cpl Sayers, hate had turned into pride.

687 SQUAD

COMMENCED TRAINING 24-3-58

ROYAL MARINES

COMPLETED TRAINING 26-6-58



Cunningham, M. S. Wright, T. G. Cooke, T. J. Stokes, F. Belton, J. Hart, R. Clay, V. Edwards, D. G. Crosby, N. E. H. Littlewood, P.
Thomas, C. Haynes, Finn, M. Awliss, M. Foster, D. Emanuel, T. T. Hoyle, J. T. Hale, K. Pearce, D. M. McNie, L. J. G. M. Allott, D.
R.M.G., L. Johnson, R. Eaton, A. C. Grimes, D. J. Possell, A. M. McLean, I. Akers, D. J. Stollery, D. Patterson, J. C. Clarke, E. A. McNulty, F. E. Stapleton, D.
Cpl. A. J. Soayres Q.M.S. W. J. Thomas Cpl. K. A. Smith (P.T. Instructor) Q.M.S. W. J. Thomas Cpl. K. A. Smith (P.T. Instructor)
(Signal Instructor) (Revolving 1st Drill)

Chapter 4

1958 Lympstone, Devon

On completion of the three months Initial Training at The Depot, Deal, we were posted to ITCRM, Lympstone, Devon (now CTCRM) for our Infantry and Commando training.

The Infantry and Battle training was to include, Infantry skills, Battle skills, military exercises in the field, Weapon training, Live Firing exercises, unarmed combat, bayonet training, Cliff Climbing, Bouldering (jumping from rock to rock in a boulder littered river (Bickleigh Vale)), Gymnastics, Swimming tests, Assault courses, Endurance courses, Tarzan courses, Route marches and Speed marches.

Every squad that passed through this training was kept very busy. Not only were you carrying out infantry training, learning new skills, carrying out military exercises in the field and being taught to use new weapons, you still had to carry out square bashing and physical training in the Gymnasium. We also had to keep our equipment and clothing clean which was very difficult when you consider that most days you were sodden wet through and

covered in mud. Although we had drying rooms our accommodation consisted of wooden huts with a stove in the middle of the room as our only form of heating. One of these wooden huts has been preserved and is situated in Lympstone Camp on the main road leading down from the main gate.

We also had to improve our swimming skills by swimming in uniform with our weapons and learning how to escape from a mock-up of a downed sunken helicopter (the camp had its own swimming pool). We were also taught how to march correctly in a military formation over fields and roads whilst fully dressed in fighting order with weapons (commonly called Route Marches). We also learnt how to get from 'A' to 'B' as a fighting unit very quickly (commonly called Speed Marches) and still be able to fight at the end of it. Each and every one of these skills we were being taught had to be mastered by everyone to the complete satisfaction of the Instructors or else the consequence of failure was being kicked out of the 687 squad, which was called back squadding.

During one of these route marches on Dartmoor, which would entail live firing on completion of the march, we were given a lunch break to consume our

sandwiches in a convenient lay-by in the middle of the moor. The Instructors left the section commanders in charge and buggered off in the safety vehicle for a hot cup of tea, whilst we were left to fend for ourselves and drink cold water from our canteens.

During this lunch break one of our squad mates, who was a very solitary and morose sort of character with a short fuse, a bit of a loner in fact, decided that he had had enough and indicated that he was pissed off with all this arduous training. Without further ado he marched off through the mist and drizzle of Dartmoor towards a destination only known to him. He took with him his loaded rifle containing live rounds of ammunition. We tried to stop him but he threatened us with said rifle. Shortly after he had left the Instructors returned and we informed them of the circumstances and what had occurred. One of the Sergeant Instructors went after our squad mate armed only with a bayonet because he did not want to scare the recruit with any more firepower. As it turned out this was a very wise move because he was able to capture our squad mate without too much of a struggle. I believe the Sergeant was commended for bravery afterwards. Because of the

hectic nature of our training, we lost touch with what happened to our fellow squad mate and assumed that he had left the Corps.

On another occasion, the 687 squad were tasked with an unsupervised timed night march across countryside and roads with a deadline for reaching our destination. The weather, as usual, was dreadful and the terrain we were crossing was even worse. And we were in an isolated part of the moor. We were all cold and wet through and our mood was very sombre when a member of our squad tripped and banged his head pretty badly and then kept slipping in and out of consciousness. The rest of the squad honestly thought our injured mate had concussion, so we decided to find a place where we could hole up and look after him.

We eventually came across a deserted barn, which was full of straw and very cosy. After a long discussion it was decided that a small group would continue the march to get assistance and the rest of us would take care of our injured mate and get our heads down and rest until help arrived. The warmth and cosiness of the barn definitely had great influence in our decision making. The action we took was considered by us to be the correct

initiative, although, in retrospect, being able to skive off from the wind, rain and marching had also entered our minds. A couple of hours later a truck arrived to take the casualty to the sick bay.

The remainder of the squad, especially the Diamonds, were severely chastised by the Chief Instructor for disobeying orders and making the wrong decision. We should have left a small party to look after our injured mate and the remainder of the squad should have completed the exercise, in accordance with original orders, thereby seeking assistance at the end of our journey. We had to complete the march in double quick time after this tongue lashing. Our injured mate recovered and came back to the squad. We of course blamed him for all the trouble he had caused!

I sincerely believe that the two incidents above were the reasons that the 687 squad never had a Kings Badge recipient.

Towards the end of our Infantry Training, as though we didn't have enough to concentrate on already, 687 had to learn and rehearse a gymnastic routine for an open day that was being given for the general public. The routine we were taught was like a

marching drill, with complicated manoeuvre's and intricate movements, but all done at the double (on the run). We had to wear Physical Training gear and the duration of the routine was 30 minutes (it seemed that every drill you carried out at Lympstone was at the bloody double). We looked like a bunch of prancing ponies. Needless to say, our display on the Open Day appeared to be very successful and seemed to be appreciated by the public, let's put it this way, they clapped a lot.

The final part of this military training at Lympstone was the Commando Course which would end with the dreaded thirty mile yomp across the unforgiving and sometimes treacherous Dartmoor. I swear to this day that water runs uphill on Dartmoor!

Our Commando Training took place in the latter part of the year, October/November 1958. It was freezing cold and we always seemed to be wet through. There is nothing worse than trying to function in muddy soaking wet clammy clothing. The clothes cling to your body and seem to weigh a ton and the wind chill makes it even worse.

The assault course, at the bottom end of Lympstone camp was relatively free from mud, unless you got

dunked into the muddy water bath under the rope swing, because the assault course consisted of brick walls, manmade steel obstacles and various climbing frames, all of which were difficult to tackle because the hands were freezing cold. On the other hand the famous (or perhaps infamous) endurance course on Woodbury common was a totally different kettle of fish, it consisted of nothing but muddy holes and muddy fields or mud filled drainpipes, all of which you had to crawl, swim or wade through.

If we were wet and/or muddy when we reached the Tarzan course and generally speaking we always were, it made climbing the rope obstacles much more difficult because the Tarzan course consisted of rope obstacles secured amongst the branches of living trees culminating with a death slide. All this was situated in the small copse at the top end of Lympstone camp. You had to climb the ropes, swing on them, pull yourself up on them, crawl across or slide down on them, but you were not allowed to fall off of them or touch the ground, if you did you had to do it all over again.

One of our squad mates fell off the monkey climb, which were two ropes side by side suspended

between four trees which had to be crossed by crawling on your hands and knees. It took a lot of strength to hold the ropes together during the crossing and our squad mate failed to do this and fell through the middle and landed on all fours, snapping both his wrists. He was back squadded.

The object of the Tarzan Course was to improve your upper body strength, not that you had much strength left when you got to this excruciating muscle sapping course as you had just completed the assault course, at the end of which you had to carry one of your mates in a fireman's lift for a hundred yards, so you were already bloody knackered and soaking wet through, if not by muddy water by sweat.

Everything you did and everywhere you went during the Commando Course was always done at the gallop. We never seemed to stop running or marching. There were speed marches, route marches, marches at night and marches during the day, running to your meals and running to collect your pay (that's almost a poem!). I used to have nightmares about running. Even my nose started to run during this period of training!

Throughout the Commando course there was no let up. When you had completed the endurance course on Woodbury Common you still had to run back to camp and then when you were exhausted and virtually on your knees you had to carry out live firing on the firing range and woe betides if you missed the targets. The most frightening three words ever spoken by an Instructor was, "Do it again".

The culmination of the Commando Course was the 30 mile yomp across Dartmoor over some of the worst terrain and weather conditions we have ever encountered. There were streams to cross, mud flats to plod through, there was hard ground, soft ground, wet ground, uphill, downhill, low brush, and heather and every king of ground cover that you could think of, it seemed never ending. Once you started out it was necessary to keep the man in front in sight at all times and concentrate on his back. Never let him get too far in front and never let anyone overtake you if you could help it. If you were able to overtake someone else then that was an absolute bonus. What a great relief when we eventually reached the tarmac road, the lovely smooth surface was like walking on air and this was

one of the best moments of my career so far when the instructor said to me "Well done Stollery" as I touched the tarmac with my feet. The 30 mile yomp was not quite over yet as there was still a couple of miles to go before the transport was in sight for the journey home.

These were some of the toughest and most arduous times that any of us had ever experienced. During this period team work and dependency on each other was essential for us to survive the rigours and difficulties that tested our fortitude and eventually make us Royal Marines Commando's.

Quite a few of the squad would have gladly packed it in, including me.

Our squad was reduced by four during this period of our Recruit Training. We lost three to back squadding and one to hospitalization followed by discharge. Back squadding meant an individual had to leave a squad he had joined up with and join a junior squad as a result of being unable to complete a certain section of the training because of injury or being physically unfit. Recruits were always afraid of this because it meant they had to carry out the training that they had just completed and do it all

over again until they got it right or were discharged. Once an individual had been back squadded he would remain with that junior squad to complete recruit training.

During our training at ITCRM we did manage to sneak out of camp, once or twice, dressed in borrowed civilian clothes obtained from friendly National Servicemen. We used to sneak out at the bottom end of the camp where the assault course was situated. Who would think of posting guards in that area of the camp, it was bad enough doing the assault course in daylight, so no idiot was likely to be in that area in the dark!

In the Royal Marines when you wish to go out for the evening with your mates, or go to town for a drinking session, it is called a "Run Ashore" Being part of the Navy we obviously use some of their terminology.

There was no railway station at the bottom end of ITCRM camp in those days so we climbed over the fence and walked along the railway line in the direction of Exmouth to catch a train further on.

We went to Exmouth town for these illicit runs ashore and had to keep a wary eye out in case we should bump into any of our instructors. There also

used to be shore patrols so that was another point of danger.

Although in some respects it was exciting, there was always the fear of getting caught, not only for sneaking out of camp but for some of us being under age as well. We of course persevered with our adventures, otherwise how were we going to get any experience in matters of drinking? Sometimes the danger and the effort to get to a pub put a bit of a damper on our enjoyment and in addition to that we couldn't drink too much because of the type of training we were doing. I remember Des Foster getting drunk on Guinness, being sick (horrible black gooey stuff), and us trying to put him to bed with his arm trapped between the bed and wall and every time we pushed the bed closer to the wall he kept moaning and we didn't know why, until the next morning when we discovered his much bruised arm.

The completion of the Commando course was not only a great achievement and a great honour but it was also a great relief and a wonderful feeling of euphoria having come out the other end of this training still alive and intact.

We had a further two weeks of square bashing to learn a drill routine for our passing out parade as the senior squad at Lympstone where we would be presented with our coveted green berets.

You would have thought by now that enough was enough as we had achieved so much and completed an enormous amount of training at Deal and Lympstone. Sadly for us, we could not join the grown up family of the Corps until we had completed the final two parts of our training, Seamanship Training and King's Squad Training at Portsmouth.

Chapter 5

1958 – 1959 Eastney, Portsmouth

After five gruelling months of Infantry and Commando Training, our Green Berets proudly worn, we were off to Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth for the final parts of our recruit training, Seamanship and King's Squad.

We spent our Seamanship training living aboard a naval ship moored in Portsmouth Harbour, HMS Cleopatra or HMS Dido perhaps; anyway, suffice to say, it was a big navy boat. Our Seamanship Training Instructors were Royal Marines.

During this period of seamanship training we were also taught firefighting drills and the actual firefighting techniques that would be carried out on board ships. Strangely we were trained in this firefighting on Whale Island, not on board a ship or even a mock-up of a ship. Yes, we actually got to use hose pipes and tackle real oil fires! I must admit it was good fun and would stand me in good stead when I would actually be in charge of a firefighting unit in the future.

Our time was spent learning all about life on the ocean waves (although the water wasn't very wavy in the navy in the harbour!), tying knots, pulling on ropes, scrubbing out mess decks and living in confined spaces with only a tiny locker in which to store your chattels. The one thing we could not understand was the lack of training in the issue of rum which was the backbone of naval tradition. Another odd thing, we were excluded from receiving a rum ration issue as well.

Even if they had carried out 'rum' training during this period I would not have been eligible to receive an issue of rum because I was still less than 18 years of age at the time and not a great drinker of spirits in any case. My records would have shown that I was TT, which means tea total and was used to denote that a person was under age and not allowed to consume alcohol.

This training also included the joys of learning to row those large cumbersome whaler boats, God, they were bloody heavy! The 687 squad were entered into the annual Portsmouth Harbour whaler race, representing the Royal Marines. It was one of the hardest things we had ever done. The upper body strength required to wield one of those massive oars

was awesome. We came nowhere near winning and the only thing we gained from it was being extremely knackered.

I never liked ships then, during my career or now. Give me per terram anytime!

The second half of our stay at Eastney Barracks and the last piece of recruit training we would ever have to do, was King Squad training and the final Passing out Parade on Eastney Barracks parade ground.

This was a two week period of intensive square bashing where we would learn a new drill routine for our final ever passing out parade. We would also learn where our next posting would be as trained soldiers.

It was a wonderful feeling to have come this far in our journey and to finally pass out as fully fledged second class Marines able to wear with pride our green berets and commando flashes on our uniforms. We were in eager anticipation of joining our first Royal Marines unit at home or abroad.

Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, our squad did not produce a King's Badge man or have a member of the squad receive a Commando medal.

Hooray, at last we were able to officially wear civilian clothes for our runs ashore. The local clothes shops did a roaring trade.

Eastney barracks have now been turned into private apartments and the tenants of these apartments have subsequently purchased the Eastney Parade ground for posterity. The Royal Marines Eastney Officers Mess has also been retained and is now the Royal Marines Museum which can be hired for weddings and other private social functions.

Incidentally Eastney Barracks and the Depot Deal were used by the film makers for the shooting of the Royal Marines film 'Cockleshell Heros'.

On completion of all our training we were informed of our fates regarding our future employment in the Royal Marines.

The Adjutant visited our squad with a selection list of jobs, both technical and general duties. It also included postings both at home and abroad.

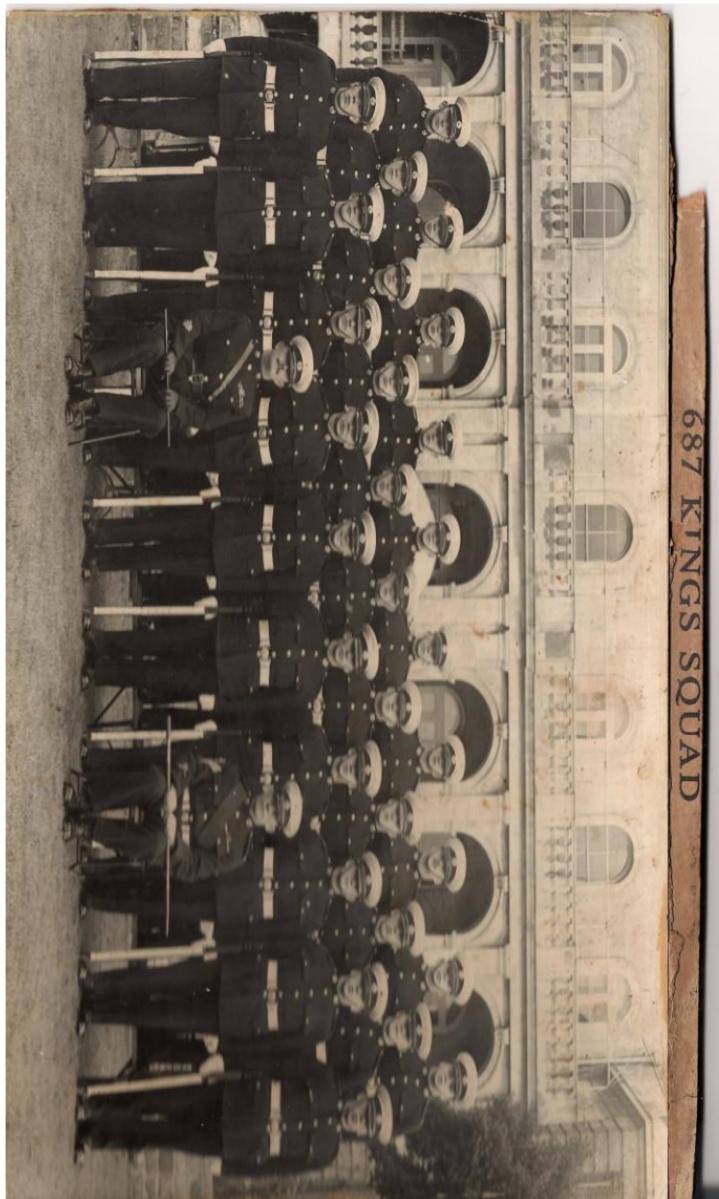
This list matched the exact number of our squad, twenty nine and all these "vacancies" had to be filled.

The list of these jobs and appointments was given to our senior Section Commander for allocation. He and his cronies decided the fate of us all and there were no comebacks. They of course picked the choicest jobs for themselves and the remainder of the squad had to fight over what crumbs were left over. I hasten to add that although I was still a Section Commander I was not one of those cronies who got first choice.

On completion of the allocations for the various vacancies and postings, not to everyone's satisfaction of course, we were dispersed to various units and training courses throughout the Corps.

I was to become a clerk, so I would stay at Eastney and carry out more bloody training. The clerk's course would take five weeks to complete. I can tell you I was not a happy bunny and not looking forward to it one little bit.

687 KING'S SQUAD



Chapter 6

1959 Horses for Courses

Now fully fledged Royal Marines Second Class, we found out that volunteering was pointless because the Royal Marines have a system where they employ faceless and nameless people in Portsmouth who carry out the volunteering for you. They volunteer you for things you didn't want to do or volunteer you to go to places you didn't want to go to.

The postings were carried out by the Drafting Office at Portsmouth and an individual had no say in the matter or had any influence in the decision making. You were sent where you were sent.

Although most Marines would eventually hold a skills qualification and would be posted in accordance with a vacancy for that skill, the job you were posted to was not necessarily something you had experienced before so you had to be trained on the job or had to learn very quickly by experience. If you were very lucky you were given a turnover period of five days with the person who currently held the job. Sometimes your luck was out and you were tossed in at the deep end, this is why Royal

Marines training is so intense and why Royal Marines are so adaptable.

For example, now a fully qualified Royal Marines Commando, my dream was to be a Commando driver and be able to drive one of those 'Champs' that the Desert Rats used in those old black and white war films. The 'Champ' was the forerunner of the Landrover, but with a Rolls Royce engine (there is a photograph of one later on when I was stationed in Malta).

In this ideal dream, I would drive across the desert with my mates, park up my 'Champ' and then crawl across the sand, with a stick of dynamite in my mouth, blow up the enemy fuel dump and then escape to safety.

Instead, I was volunteered to become a clerk and when it dawned on me that I was heading towards Clerk Training my nerves started to kick in.

I suppose that I should have thought things through more carefully because somebody had to look after the administration in the Royal Marines, who else was there but the Royal Marines themselves. In those days, civilians were not employed to carry out clerical work for the armed forces because they

could not be deployed at home and abroad in fighting units. The other positive aspect of becoming a clerk was the promotion prospects, which were far quicker than if I had been part of the General Duties branch of the Corps.

I had always considered myself as being practical and a hands on sort of person, not some pseudo intellectual sitting behind a desk. Although I was in the top stream during my Secondary Modern School education, I still left school at the age of fifteen with no academic qualifications whatsoever. In addition, I had never worked in an office or ever wanted to.

All clerical training was carried out at the Signals and Clerks Training Wing in Eastney Barracks. Each Clerks Course took five weeks.

Signals and Clerks Training Wing would later move to CTCRM and I would eventually become the Warrant Officer of this Wing.

Despite my misgivings about the training aspect of becoming a Clerk, my Recruit Training had taught me to persevere and take whatever may be thrown my way. It was no use moaning about something that I couldn't change and there was no way that I was going to deliberately fail. I have this innate

something in my body which makes me strive to win but I am not suggesting that I am a bad loser! I just don't like losing, that's all.

It was very difficult in those days to know exactly what a person wanted and what was best for a person's future. All of our squad had signed on for 9 years, so there was a long way to go and a long time to serve, so perhaps it was best to just go with the flow and make the best of a bad thing.

We were taught in recruit training that we would always be Royal Marines Trained Soldiers first and foremost and whatever qualifications we attained later on in our careers we would still have to carry out our basic soldiering duties to retain our military skills, such as field training, weapon training, marching drills, keeping fit and guard duties etc.

I am reminded of a poem "Invictus" (Unconquerable). W.E. Henley wrote this poem in 1875, after he had a foot amputated and was recovering, or as he put it "Seeing off my illness". I think this poem, for me, is very apt:

Invictus by W.E Henley – 1875

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul
In the fell clutch of circumstances
I have not winced or cried allowed.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
 I am the captain of my soul
 I am the master of my fate:

During my clerks training course at Eastney, a mate of mine Tony Coppard (his dad was a Royal Marines Captain), borrowed a scooter from a National Serviceman to allow him to travel to London for a week-end. Tony asked me if I would like to go with him and then I could travel on by train to Ipswich and after the week-end we would meet in London for the journey back to barracks. We collected the scooter and discovered that Tony didn't really know how to ride a scooter so I had to be the initial driver

for this adventure. I had only driven an old beat up motorcycle once in my life so had to learn to drive the scooter on our journey from Portsmouth to London and at the same time teach Tony because he would have to drive by himself when we got to London. Neither of us had a driving licence so it was a hectic hairy journey and we were ever wary of being stopped by the police.

We parted company on Waterloo Bridge, London and I proceeded on to Ipswich. On Sunday, after the week-end, I arrived on Waterloo Bridge in plenty of time to meet Tony but somehow missed him.

I then had to go cap in hand to Waterloo Station and ask the military police for a railway warrant because I had no money at all. The MP's were not best pleased and said I would have to pay for the warrant out of my wages when I got back to barracks. It took all night to arrange; the MP's were pissed off and were not going to hurry on my account, so I did not arrive back at Eastney Barracks until mid-morning the following day. I was disciplined, fined and have a notation on my Service Records of one days absence without leave (AWOL). I had to make this day up at the end of my career.

My military knowledge and training was fast becoming a distant memory after five weeks of clerical training in a classroom and now here I was, on completion of my training, a fully qualified Clerk 3rd Class and part of the Technical Branch. I unwisely thought that I would now be spending the rest of my career in an office, but despite being a Clerk I still managed to do some odd things in my career, for instance:

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Being a young marksman in a shooting competition at Bizley

Being part of the Saluting Guns Crew at the old fort at Devil's Point in Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth

Being a Drill and Outward Bound Instructor with the Royal Marines Cadet Corps in Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth

Being Jungle trained in Malaysia

Being Cold Weather Warfare trained in Norway

Being an Escapee in one of the largest Escape and Evasion Exercises in Britain

Being a member of the support team in the Sahara Desert for a Sea of Sand mapping expedition

Being a guinea pig for a neck operation in front of spectators

Being a Cinema projectionist

Being dressed as a woman for charity pantomimes

Fire fighting in Glasgow

Learning and playing most sports and never once failing my BFT.

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It wasn't until after my recruit training that I started to learn to play sports. Prior to joining up I was a sporting incompetent and only had swimming skills as my recreational pastime, until my first posting to Plymouth where I was coerced into learning to play deck hockey.

It was only when I got to Malta before I was lucky enough to meet people who were willing to teach a novice how to play games. Before I returned to England again I would have learnt to play Squash, Badminton, Tennis, Table Tennis, Snooker, Chess, Darts and I even had a little dabble at playing football (didn't like it though!).

My favourites of all the games I learnt to play were Squash and Badminton, both of which I became quite adept at.

Chapter 7

1959 – 1981 Commando Units

Now that I was a clerk and part of the Technical Branch I idiotically thought that I could pick and choose to work in one cushy office after another and forget all about that Commando nonsense. There were a load of places I could serve which did not involve being in a Commando environment, Deal in Kent, Poole in Dorset, Eastney in Portsmouth, The Drafting Office in Portsmouth, Infantry Training Centre in Lympstone, Headquarters in Plymouth, Whitehall in London to name just a few.

These cushy postings were definitely not meant for me because those faceless nameless people in the Portsmouth drafting office had other devious plans for yours truly.

They must have thought I had Commando tattooed on my bloody forehead because apart from sending me on training courses to RMB Eastney and ITCRM, my postings were mostly Commando Units, at home and abroad, as follows:

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Commando Specialist Training Troop, Plymouth,
1959 to 1960.

Headquarters 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines,
Malta and Singapore, 1960 to 1961.

43 Commando Royal Marines, Plymouth, which included three trips to Norway, 1961 to 1966.

45 Commando Royal Marines, Aden, 1966 to 1967.

41 Commando Group Royal Marines, Malta, which evolved into 41 (Salerno) Commando Company Group Royal Marines, 1976 to 1977.

40 Commando Royal Marines, Fire Fighting duties in Glasgow, 1977 to 1978.

Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, Lympstone, Devon, 1977 to 1981.

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I've got to say though, that I thoroughly enjoyed every unit I served in and had some great and wonderful experiences and learnt an awful lot about life at home and abroad. There were hardships and danger of course and sometimes it was tough going, but at the same time, there was also humour and the brighter side of life to ease the darker moments of a military career.

Royal Marines training is so good that it gives a Marine backbone and the will to fight on and

persevere despite difficult and almost impossible situations. What may seem like nonchalance to an outsider is really a steely determination to succeed and a resolve not to be beaten.

To be fair the Drafting Office did send me to two great non Commando units, Headquarters Plymouth Group and the Commandant General's Office in London.

Joining the Royal Marines was the best decision I ever made and although I cursed my mate Ernie Colley during my arduous recruit training, I had a lot to thank him for too.

During my career I never actually served in the same unit as Ernie, although we did meet up once or twice, in Malta and when we found ourselves on the same training course at Eastney.

During his career Ernie became a very fit person and tried to convert from a clerical qualification to become a Physical Training Instructor, I am not sure if he succeeded. He was also a very naughty boy on a couple of occasions and this culminated in him losing his rank of Sergeant after a period of unauthorised absence. Ernie was a strange lad and I could tell you some very weird stories about him, but I won't, he was always a good friend to me and one you could depend on if you found yourself in trouble.

Chapter 8

1959 – 1960 Plymouth, Devon

I was posted to Plymouth in 1959 for my very first job as a Company Clerk with the Commando Specialist Training Troop Royal Marines, Stonehouse Barracks. This troop specialised in training a variety of skills including, heavy weapons experts, Demolition Teams, cliff climbing leaders, sniper training and a few other clandestine skills. In the future, I would be grateful that I was familiar with members of the Heavy Weapons branch, especially when I was serving in Aden.

The Sergeant Major of CSTT was mad keen on deck hockey, so I was 'encouraged' to join the team. Regular games were held on the parade ground at Stonehouse Barracks. Deck hockey is the most vicious game I have ever had the misfortune to play and, in my opinion, without exception, the most ludicrous. I hated the game and when I left this unit I never played it again, even when we were on board Aircraft Carriers, where it was very popular.

In my first barrack room accommodation at Stonehouse Barracks resided two three badge old soldier Marines (that means they had been serving for at least 12 years). Both of them were card sharp scrumpy rats. I lost two weeks' pay to them after they had 'taught' me to play poker. They waited at

my next two pay days until I had paid off my so called debts.

In those days the Royal Marines were paid weekly in cash at a pay parade and had to salute the paying officer for the privilege of earning your wage.

This was a lesson well learnt and as a result I have never gambled again, at cards or anything else. As for scrumpy you can stick it where the sun doesn't shine.

I became a member of the Saluting Guns Crew whilst serving in Royal Marines Barracks Plymouth. The saluting guns were situated in the old fort at Devil's Point, which was at the back of Stonehouse Barracks, where the Motor Transport Department was situated.

There were two small naval guns mounted on this fort and whenever a Royal Navy Ship left Plymouth Harbour on a tour of duty abroad or returned to Plymouth for paying off, the Royal Marines had to fire a salute from these guns and we had to report for duty whenever this was required, weekdays or weekends.

The Saluting Guns Crew had to be dressed in full blues and every time the crew fired the guns the back blast of the blank rounds we fired covered us and our uniforms in all sorts of muck. Then to top

it all not only did we have to clean our uniforms and webbing after the back blasts, we also had to clean the bloody guns! Not a duty we relished as we had to pay for our own cleaning.

During my time at Stonehouse barracks, I made friends with a Marine called Jon Bennett, as I recall a very well-spoken Marine although a bit scatter-brained. He asked me if I would like to go sailing with him as he owned a small sailing dinghy called a Merlin Rocket which was kept in the marina at Fowey in Cornwall. So one week-end off we jolly well went for a bit of life on the ocean waves.

When we got to Fowey, we had to walk through a posh Yacht Club, which was full of be-whiskered old tars and ex-Admirals dressed in boat shoes, flannels and yachting blazers adorned with nautical insignia drinking pink gins. These sea dogs were going to be our spectators and were about to witness our prowess on the water; after all, we were two Royal Marines, part of Britain's Sea Soldiers.

Jon and I rowed a dinghy across the stretch of water opposite the Club and set about getting the Merlin Rocket seaworthy. Naturally I knew everything about sailing, like hell-as-like, so I nonchalantly followed Jon's lead. We set sail and Jon was giving me on the job training and we were doing ok heading out towards the estuary tacking to and fro and me leaning out from the gunnels with my back

inches from the water. Then the Captain of our small crew gave the order to come about, the boat turned sharply, I lost control of the boom; the boom hit the water, the boat keeled over and there were the two of us learning to swim all over again, all being witnessed by experienced sailors! We were rescued, towed to shore and the boat was stowed away.

Two sodden sailors rowed back in the dinghy and had to walk through the main room of the Yacht Club. Oh jolly bad luck, what ho! Care for a pink gin old chaps? Watch the water on the carpet, shame about your clothes; otherwise you could have sat down! You're not submariners by any chance? Those were just some of the comments we had to endure as we passed through the Club.

Jon had forgotten to include me in his accommodation plans, so I had to seek a public toilet to get dry and change my clothes. That evening we met up again and went to a barn dance, my first and last. There was no alcohol but it was good fun and the locals were very friendly, fortunately they had not witnessed our debacle during the afternoon. That night I slept on a park bench because I did not have enough money for accommodation and there was no room at the Inn, if only I could have found a stable! Jon of course was very comfortable, stopping with friends, having forgotten all about

me. The next day I decided against a second round of wet clothing so we left Fowey and for me never to return. My dislike for boats once more proven beyond a doubt.

I was only 18 years of age and on guard duty at the main gate of Stonehouse Barracks when I spotted this gorgeous young girl walking past in a pink gingham dress. She looked absolutely smashing and returned my admiring glances with a full on smile as she passed by. I was a lost soul and if the enemy had attacked at that moment I would have been totally oblivious. It was an instant attraction on my behalf and I was determined to discover who she was. I watched her turn into a road called Admirals Hard, which is situated just passed the main gate of Stonehouse Barracks on the opposite side of the road.

Admirals Hard leads directly down to Cremyll ferry which takes passengers to Cornwall and lands at Mount Edgecumbe. Also down this short road were a grocery shop on the left and a small cafe on the right, frequented by the Royal Marines, including myself. It did not take long to discover who this lovely girl was and where she lived as I had become friendly with her mother as she often worked in the shop and the cafe situated in Admiral's Hard. It was a shock to learn that this lovely girl was still a schoolgirl and only 15.

It took a while to be accepted by the family which consisted of Grandma, Dad, Mum, Brother and my new girlfriend to be of course. It was felt inappropriate for an 18 year old to be courting a girl of 15. But I hung around a lot and got to know the mother very well until I was allowed to be a regular caller at their home and become a boyfriend. I adored this young girl.

It was difficult to convince them that my intentions were honourable and to gain their trust because my girlfriend's dad was a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy and he was not overly fond of Royal Marines. Fortunately I was able to win him and the family over and was accepted as a member of the family to the extent that I was allowed to live in the house in a room of my own.

My courtship was closely supervised during those early days and we were always accompanied when we went out. During those early months of our courtship it seemed as though I had a permanent erection. Our monitored relationship lasted until she was about 16, then we were allowed out by ourselves and could get involved in a lot of heavy petting but we did not consummate our relationship or share a room together until we were married.

I was now a Marine 1st Class and had also been made a candidate for promotion. As a result of good candidate reports on my conduct as a Marine and

my professionalism I was promoted to Lance Corporal and sent to Lympstone to carry out a Junior Command Course (JCC) in preparation for future promotion. It was a difficult 5 week course but I persevered and passed the course and was promptly demoted to Marine and posted abroad.

It had not entered my head that I would be posted abroad as I was well settled in Plymouth and obviously loved the area because of my new attachment, so it had come as quite a shock to receive drafting orders whilst on my JCC course. My next posting was going to be in Headquarters 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines stationed in Malta and I would have to leave my gorgeous girlfriend behind until my return in 18 months' time.

Before I start my Malta story I have to point out that most servicemen who were serving in the Armed Forces during the 60's and 70's missed out on all that flower power, hippy, long hair and free love era because mostly we had to wear uniform, keep our hair short, wear sensible civilian clothes and would be out the country for long periods of time. Obviously during our leave periods we could let our hair down, not that we had much hair to let down because we still looked like what we were, military personnel.

Naturally we were still part of the real world and major events also affected our lives, just like

anybody else, although when we were stationed abroad it sometimes felt as though events were happening to somebody else and not us.

The major events that do stick in my mind were in 1963 when J.F. Kennedy was assassinated, it almost felt as if the world was coming to an end during and after his death, the world was stunned. The other events were the Great Train Robbery in Buckinghamshire and Valentina Tereshkova being the first woman in space, oh, and don't forget, the very first James Bond film Dr No.

In 1966 England won the football World Cup, the awful disaster at Aberfan in South Wales when 116 children and 28 adults lost their lives, John Lennon declaring that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus and who can forget the first episode of Star Trek 'The Man Trap'. Fortunately I was still in England when all these events took place, apart from Aberfan.

Chapter 9

Malta, Sahara, Aden, Singapore 1960 - 1961

1960 Malta

My second posting was far more adventurous because it was my first ever trip abroad and I was posted to Malta. I had never flown on an aeroplane before, so it was with some trepidation that I took my first ever flight. I loved it and still do to this day.

The unit I was posted to was Headquarters 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines (HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM) situated in St Georges Barracks, now a huge holiday complex and hotel. My duties were to be of a general administrative nature as I was still only a junior clerk. I would be working in the main Registry looking after the extensive filing system and general typing duties.

HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM was to be an exciting posting because we would be carrying out exercises and operations in other foreign lands and would finally end up in the Far East.

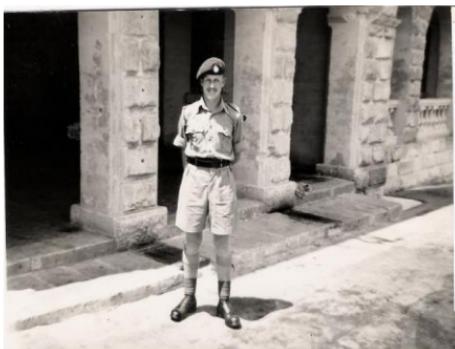
Although I have visited Malta several times in my life since, I was not overly enamoured with Malta the first time I was posted there. In general servicemen will refer to Malta as the island of Hells, Bells and Smells.

Although the Maltese drove on the left their driving skills bore no relationship to the English highway code of driving. The buses and private cars were ancient and ramshackle, much like the buildings that the local people lived in. Malta did have quaintness about it though, with its dusty roads, small alleyways with shops and bars hidden in the most unlikely places.

Our main drinking holes were situated in Paceville, Sliema and Valetta. Valetta and the 'Gut' in particular as any serviceman who has been to Malta will tell you, no run ashore is ever complete unless you have savoured the delights of the dinghy bars and drinking establishments down Strait Street or, as its better known, the infamous 'Gut' in Valetta.

There is a fertile part of Malta out past Mdina and Rabat but in general it is a dusty, rocky island with buildings to match. The weather and swimming facilities in the sea are exceptional though and the people of the island are extremely friendly. Most people will tell you that you either love Malta or hate Malta, there is no in between.

See the attached photographs of my early days in Malta and the infamous 'Champ'.



A young Marine David Stollery
on his first tour abroad in Malta
1960 outside his living
accommodation



Malta 1960 sitting on my dream
Vehicle "The Champ" outside our
living accommodation



Bob Coates and I outside our
Living accommodation ready to
fly to Aden from Malta in 1960

1960 Sahara Desert

In the early stages of my tour in HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM in Malta the British Government was asked to map the sea of sand in the Sahara Desert and 3 Commando Brigade got the job.

The Brigade was shipped out to Derna in Libya with all our baggage, equipment and vehicles. The main bulk of vehicles were the Champs with Rolls Royce engines, a forerunner of the Landrover, which would be used in the desert to map the sea of sand (see attached photographs).

Once we had landed and collected our belongings and vehicles, we travelled to a camp just outside Benghazi to meet up with drivers and vehicles of the Army (RAOC) who would accompany us into the desert. The Army trucks and some of our own trucks would be loaded with enough food, fuel, ammunition and equipment to sustain the Brigade for the six or so weeks we would be in the Sahara. The Army trucks would then return the Benghazi after they had unloaded at our main base camp, which would be situated at an oasis called Oujula in the Sahara desert.

The first convoy to set off from Benghazi were the champs and other support vehicles and would reach our base camp much quicker than the heavily laden

supply convoy which would follow on a little later the same day.

I was ensconced in a Royal Marines truck with one of our own drivers, Bob Coates, in the second convoy of heavy supply trucks (see photo) and we departed in a single column heading towards the base camp. We stayed together in this formation during the first day of travel because the going was good and the tracks we were following had a more solid footing. This routine would change when we reached the softer sand of the desert.

We stopped that evening for our nights slumber and circled the vehicles just like the wagon trains in the western films.

Because it was freezing cold at night in the desert, our Army friends lit a big Benghazi burner (a cut down oil drum punched full of holes and filled with petrol soaked sand) to keep us warm.

Our food consisted of Army ration packs. You could mix the cold tinned food in your mess tins and heat it over the fire, which was what the Royal Marines did, but not the Army. As the evening wore on the fire started to die down. A very young inexperienced Army private grabbed a full jerry can of petrol and poured it onto the dying flames; the can caught fire and shot from his hands resting up underneath one of the ammunition trucks. Fortunately it did not

explode as the jerry can was too full and air could not get passed the fuel pouring out. The flaming can was quickly doused with sand and we had a very lucky escape. The 'F' word directed towards the idiot was used frequently during the incident.

The Royal Marines had erroneously thought that these RAOC chaps were experienced desert travellers, which they were not, and here they were in charge of us. What a load of tossers, they neither undressed to go to bed at night or washed and shaved the next morning.

The Royal Marines all slept outside under the stars in our sleeping bags whilst the army crashed out in their cabs and spaces they made in the back of the trucks.

I have to say that it was spectacular sleeping under the stars and looking up at the night sky; the sky was so clear, the stars were so bright and they seemed close enough to reach out and touch, it was awesome. There appeared to be millions of stars like beautiful shining diamonds against a backcloth of pure black. It is an experience I shall never forget and a sight I shall always remember.

The next day, after our breakfast and ablutions, the convoy set off in a spread out formation so as not to follow in each other's tyre tracks. We had finally

reached softer sand and did not want to get bogged down by following in the tracks of other vehicles.

You could still see all the other trucks to the left and right of your own vehicle and we had radios and compasses, just in case. It was similar to the land races shown in the American Western films, when wagons and horses ridden by cowboys raced to bag a plot of land to settle on, very Gung Hoe!

We were due to stop for lunch at a small cluster of scraggy palm type trees which had the appearance of an oasis but did not seem to have an obvious water supply. When we arrived for our lunch time break, my mate, Bob Coates, driving our truck tried to get close to one of the scraggy palm trees for a bit of shade during our lunch stop and managed to hit one of the palm trees thereby damaging one of the vehicles wings. This would have to be reported when we reached our destination, as the damage was quite evident.

We eventually reached Oujula without further incidents.

When we got to base camp Bob didn't half get some stick from his Sergeant and the other driver's for being the only Royal Marine driver to have a traffic accident whilst driving in the desert, what a plonker.

Whilst our desert patrols were mapping the sea of sand there wasn't much for us to do at our static base camp in Oujula so four of us clerks from the Orderly Room decided to issue a daily newspaper, which we called The Oujula Times. The majority of the news was obtained from the base radio in the early hours of the morning because of the time difference. It was at the time that John F Kennedy was running for the USA Presidency, so we were able to report on his campaign.

We gathered other news and information from every source we could, old copies of Readers Digest, magazines and stories from paperback books. We got news from home including sports results and also interviewed other members of the base camp staff for information they had received by letter. We even made up horseracing news, inventing names of horses, with odds and other race details. We would then pick a winning horse's name out of a hat and announce the winner in the next issue. We even had a page three pin-up and joke corner. We also had up-to-date news on how our sand mapping teams were doing in the desert.

The newspaper was printed on an ancient basic wooden printing machine called an Ellams Flat, where each single sheet had to be inked separately, so the preparation and collation of each issue took quite some time. An officer collected a copy of all

our issues and told us that he was going to send them to the Imperial War Museum in London for posterity. I cannot confirm whether this happened.

The bathing facilities at Oujula were quite unique. We were allowed to have a bath once a week and this took place at the water well. The engineers had stripped a trailer of its wheels and plugged up all the holes. The trailer was filled with water and in groups of half a dozen we used this as our bath to wash and soap ourselves. You then queued up to stand under a biscuit tin punched with holes which was suspended between two palm trees. A Marine standing on a homemade ladder would pour in a half bucket of water to rinse you off. Daily teeth cleaning, washing, shaving and laundry was carried out using one small bowl of water issued to us in the morning when we were also issued our daily water ration in our water bottles. Despite the water shortages, Royal Marines were not allowed to wear beards and had to be clean shaven at all times.

The small mobile units who had mapped the sea of sand returned to camp, after a successful operation, towing an American jeep which had been uncovered during a sandstorm. Apparently it had been lost during the Second World War. It was taken on board HMS Bulwark and the naval engineers completely overhauled it and got it working again. The officers used it for travelling about the main

deck, much to the annoyance of American visiting troops, who tried to claim it back. Not bloody likely!



All loaded up ready for our trip to Benghazi and then on to the Sahara Desert in 1960



In the Sahara Desert miles from anywhere when an Arab turned up trying to flog us some eggs
(there weren't any chickens either, but he looks as though he could be laying some!)

1960 – 1961 Malta

On our return to Malta I had my one and only experience with a prostitute.

HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM was stationed in St Georges Barracks and 40 Commando was stationed in St Andrews Barracks just up the road from us. My school friend Ernie Colley, who encouraged me to join the Corps, was stationed in 40 Commando so I used to team up with him and his mates for our run's ashore.

Valletta was the place to go, in particular, Strait Street (commonly called The Gut) where all the sleazy bars were situated. On this particular night we all got very drunk and for no particular reason they picked me to represent them with a lady of the night. They all put in the money and I had to choose the lady from the particular bar we were in at the time. I made my choice and I was taken gently by the hand to a peculiar room down at the bottom end of Valletta which was set into the very sturdy ramparts. Inside it looked like a cave, with just a bed and toilet facilities. I don't remember much about it but the young lady waved me off with a smile the next morning.

I also learned how to drive a car. A friend from 40 Commando had an old banger in which he taught me the basics of driving. On my time off, I used to

drive it by myself around St Andrews parade ground until I was competent enough to drive on the road. After a few more lessons I went for my Maltese driving test which was supervised by a Maltese Police Sergeant. After driving around for a while and bunging the sergeant a few quid I was the proud owner of a Maltese driving licence and could now share the driving with my mates on our runs ashore.

Unfortunately, the driving licence was not valid in England and I would have to do it all over again when I got back home. Why the hell didn't they make me a driver when I left recruit training then all this learning to drive stuff would have been over and done with!

On one occasion when Ernie invited me to go for a run ashore I informed him that I would be unable to go because somebody had stolen my wages from my locker and I was absolutely broke. He came down to my room in St Georges barracks laid all his money on my bed and shared it out equally so that we could both go out and enjoy ourselves. It was not a loan it was just an unselfish act and one that I would be able to pay back in later years.

1961 Aden

A couple of months after we got back from the Sahara HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM were unexpectedly roused from their beds early one Sunday morning and told to pack all personal belongings into kitbags and report to the parade ground to have photographs taken for temporary passports. We were informed that the unit was on its way to Aden for a desert exercise called 'Roulade' (see previous photograph).

I was part of a small group of the advance party and by noon we were airborne, having boarded the aircraft at Luqa airport, in a Shackleton bomber strapped to the floor with sleeping bags round our legs because the aircraft had no heating and all of the armament had been removed as well. As passengers we did not have oxygen masks so the aircraft had to fly below ten thousand feet. The views were spectacular, once we could move about. I was airsick after falling asleep in the rear gunner's position. I managed to take some wonderful photographs from this position, especially as we flew very low over the Nile when we crossed Egypt. Unfortunately the photos never came out as the camera was broken and all the photos were on one exposure.

During our Aden exercise 'Roulade' the Colonel of HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM contacted his friend who was the Captain of the offshore aircraft carrier HMS Bulwark

and asked him if the ship had any fresh fish he could let us have. About an hour later, we heard a Wessex helicopter heading our way and as it came into sight there was a large shark hanging underneath. Although the Captain was taking the piss, it was cooked and we did eat it, quite tasty really!

I was chastised by the Brigade Major during this exercise because I had lost my service tin mug and was drinking out of a mug I made myself. It was an empty Heinz bean tin with wire from a packing case twisted round it to make a handle. I was chastised because the inside rim of this mug was rusty, but what else was I to do, I certainly wasn't going to miss out on my wets of tea. I never suffered any illnesses from it. The funny thing was that I caught him drinking his ration of hot soup out of a baby's potty.

On completion of the exercise we boarded the Aircraft Carrier where we got the shark from and sailed around the Indian ocean for a couple of weeks. It was during this period that I was taught to play chess, by a fellow Marine. He taught me whilst we were hiding away on top of a bank of lockers during the duty officers inspection on evening rounds, a loathsome naval tradition. The cramped living conditions also cemented my hatred for anything to do with Royal Navy ships.

We found out later that our sudden departure from Malta and our desert training was to prepare us in

case Great Britain became involved in the war between Israel and Egypt.

The families and the remainder of our unit had also vacated Malta and were on board two civilian transport ships, TT Oxfordshire and TT Nevassa, heading towards Singapore, which was to be our next base.

1961 Singapore

As we approached Singapore it was a beautiful sight, lush greenery and modern buildings and the Ark Royal was preceded by a school of dolphins leaping through our wake at the prow of the ship.

When we arrived in Singapore on the Aircraft Carrier, the families of the married ranks had not yet arrived and were still on route by sea in Troop Transporters Oxfordshire and Nevassa.

We were temporarily billeted in an army barracks called Rowcroft Lines whilst we made ready our new barracks at Sembawang and obtained married quarters for the wives and families.

Rowcroft Lines was a beautiful looking barracks with lovely gardens set in lush green verdant countryside. Our accommodation consisted of buildings made of dark stained timber which were very comfortable to live in. It was such a pleasant camp, especially after living in tents in desert surroundings for weeks on end. It was also so very different from what we had become used to in Malta, with its sandstone and sand blown buildings surrounded by sparse rocky landscapes and rocky shorelines.

Unfortunately, I would only be stationed in Singapore for nine months, so I attempted to cram in as much as I could whilst I was in the Far East. For

some unknown reason I always thought that HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM withdrew from Singapore at the end of 1961 but when I read the history books they didn't leave until 1971. I do know that in 1961 Singapore was moving towards becoming part of Malaysia so the nature and politics of Singapore was changing dramatically during this time. I am almost certain that I saw the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kwan Yu, on the TV with tears in his eyes talking either about the British Troops or about the breakdown of talks regarding Malaysia?

Two things I fondly remember about Singapore, firstly, having the luxury of watching Television in a family home. Those of us who had married friends living on the island (my friend was Marine Salmon (Sam)) were lucky enough to be invited to watch TV as we did not have televisions on the camp.

After we had watched a bit of telly at Sam's we would sit outside his married quarters with our legs dangling in the monsoon ditch drinking cans of beer. Often we would eat hot cooked meat purchased from a local trader who would be riding a three wheeled bicycle affair which had a charcoal burner arrangement on the front. Apparently the meat could have been anything, even cat or dog. We never suffered any illnesses so it must have been OK; in any case we thought the food was delicious.

Secondly, my memories are of the beautiful Asian girls with their olive skin, lithe slim young bodies and lustrous black hair; they adorned and worked in the numerous bars in the city centre where the servicemen drank. All of us lads who arrived in Singapore at this time were lustng after these girls something rotten.

I recall the silk like colourful clothes the girls wore, like Cheongsams, with the slit that seemed to go right up to their armpits and the more casual and comfortable Sam Poo, which was a trouser and blouse arrangement. It was very difficult to tell if they were nice girls or girls of the night. If they were girls of the night, a person had to be extremely careful not to offend any of them because they had pimps who would gang together to protect their perceived property and these gangs used knives.

In those days it was very difficult, if not impossible, for a westerner who was in the armed forces to meet and marry a decent Asian girl from Singapore. During my time in Singapore I never experienced a marital union of two people from our different cultures, unlike the many marriages that took place in Malta.

I was aware of several servicemen who thought they were in love with a prostitute and wanted to marry them, but was swiftly persuaded otherwise by their superior officers.

Singapore itself was a wonderful country and the indigenous people very hospitable. The city itself was extremely clean and tidy, with exceptional shopping facilities, displaying wonders in the windows that we had never seen before in England.

The other things I fondly remember about the Far East were the numbers of locals who would be playing Badminton on street corners or on the odd patch of clear ground and how damn good they were. Singapore was where I learned to play Badminton properly, but I couldn't compete with the skills of the locals. The other thing we all learned not to do, never, never play a local at noughts and crosses for money, they were deadly quick and always won.

The food was delightful and we even had superb facilities in Singapore City centre for the armed forces, which was the Britannia Club with bars and a swimming pool. The Britannia Club was run by the NAAFI. There were other servicemen's clubs we could go to but the Britannia was the main one we used when we were out and about in the City.

The area surrounding this building was relatively close to other drinking establishments where ladies of the night plied their trade. Amongst these ladies mingled boys who were called 'He She's' and looked like pretty young woman. These boys took hormones so had proper breasts, no beards, lovely

delicate features and long lustrous hair. Even very close up, it was almost impossible to tell the difference. Many a serviceman had been fooled until of course they got frisky and groped down below and discovered a different undercarriage to the one they were expecting!

After Malta I never got into the practice of sleeping with prostitutes, despite the Eastern girls being beautiful, as I was never fond of used goods, but I almost got caught by what I thought was a 'He She' when having a drink in a bar where they frequented. I was sat at the end of a long bar which jutted out and covered your legs, I was in shorts and sat with a couple of mates who were on my left. A young girl sat down next to me and started to chat me up or me her, one of the three, anyway her hand slid to my bare thigh and started to creep higher until she was expertly stroking my tumescent love pole. Whilst I was reciprocating and stroking her nether regions I discovered something not quite right, it wasn't exactly a penis but it definitely wasn't a vagina either, perhaps it was her money box, or maybe a weapon of some sort, nevertheless I was out of that Bar, hard on as well, like a dose of salts back to the Barracks. I am not saying that this person was a man, but I wasn't about to take any chances that this wasn't the case. My two mates thought that I was bonkers but hilarious at the same

time and naturally the story spread like wildfire when I got back to the barracks.

Close by our camp at Sembawang, was a village called Née-Soon which was also used by members of our unit as it had a convenient bar. Unfortunately, the girls who plied their trade in this bar were not the best looking girls in the world. One of these girls was called No-Nose, because of a deformity she was born with and the joke was that any man who couldn't score in the city and was still desperate enough for a 'shag', would have to be satisfied with No-Nose. I suppose the adage 'you don't have to look at the fireplace to stoke the fire' came into play. The story was that she was a very good lay!

Singapore was a static posting for HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM and we did mostly local exercises, weapon and jungle training to prepare us for any eventuality in the Far East. The firing ranges in Singapore were astonishingly beautiful, with lush green grass mowed smooth, almost like a putting green on a golf course. The whole firing range was surrounded by exotic flowering shrubs. Lying down on the firing points, aiming at our targets, was an absolute pleasure and totally unlike any weapon training we had done before.

Every time we carried out a range course, there was always a local Singaporean in the vicinity with his

two wheeled cart selling hot char and delicacies cooked on a charcoal fire. He must have had a copy of our itinerary, because the ranges were in the countryside and not close to any local villages, yet he was always there.

We also carried out jungle training in Malaya, including live firing exercises, discovering just how difficult it must have been to fight a war in this part of the world. All members of the unit had to live for two weeks in the jungle and carry out extensive jungle training and live firing. We lived in bivouacs (a ground sheet place over a couple of sticks) and were never dry. The drizzle, wet jungle and humidity kept us in a constant state of wetness as we fought and cut our way through the tangled undergrowth. When you removed your socks at night, feet were always wrinkled and white, as though you had been soaking your feet in bath water all day.

We saw bears and snakes and were eaten alive by mosquitoes and leeches and were taught how to find food and water and what exotic jungle fruits were safe to eat.

It always seemed to me that the instructors never appeared to suffer like we did, but I suppose they must have. It was a great relief for all of us when we completed this jungle training, with no

casualties, and returned to the comforts of our camp Sembawang.

Another one of our duties was to lay on demonstrations for the Admiralty on how the unit would operate in the field. I am positive we had to do this just to keep top brass entertained. The camp at Sembawang was very large with extensive grounds, so we were able to lay out our tented field Headquarters called CPs (Command Posts), without leaving the camp (see photograph). These tents were a complete new design, square and usually attached to the side of vehicles and of course they were portable.

Sembawang had previously been an airfield, which I think was called Simbang and it also boasted a nine hole golf course within the perimeter of the camp.

Two of my friends, Fred Black (Cpl RAOC), Taff Williams (RM) and I joined the Youth Hostel Association, bought a cheap second-hand car and spent two weeks leave touring the whole of Malaya. We stopped at some of the Youth Centres in the country eventually reaching as far as the Thai border.

At the first Youth Hostel we stayed at in Port Dickson on the West coast of Malaya, we became friends with the Malayan Youth Hostel Warden and his family (see photograph). He was a Japanese

prisoner during the Second World War and taught us how to eat and cook food harvested from the jungle. During one of the meals he cooked for us I could have sworn that we had eaten meat but the contents were all vegetarian. As we had already been trained in Jungle Warfare these cookery lessons were an added bonus and a welcome addition to our ever growing portfolio of skills.

We were also quite familiar with the jungle and not scared to explore when we stopped at some of the more remote Youth Hostels.

During our second day at Port Dickson a large group of Christians from the Baha'i faith came to stay for one of their religious week-ends (see photographs). They were very nice people and allowed us to attend some of their meetings and also invited us to dine with them.

The three of us had never witnessed how these Asian people prepared live chickens for the pot. A group of ladies sat with their legs dangling over a monsoon ditch (a large drain or culvert) and took live chickens from a basket, bent the chicken's heads back and slit the throat then drained the blood into the ditch. The strange thing was that they were all chatting away without a care in the world, in fact clucking like a load of hens! When the birds were dead they threw them into a tub of hot water and another group of ladies plucked the birds. The

resulting chicken curry with vegetables was delicious.

The lady who led this group was the wife of the man who imported all Mercedes cars into Malaya and apparently was very rich and she was the host of this gathering, so there was plenty of food to go round.

For the next day or so I was in love with one of the young Malay girls attached to this group, unfortunately this love was not returned and at 19 years of age I was gutted. How soon had the memories of my gorgeous girlfriend back in England faded!

We continued our journey up the west coast of Malaya for a short stay in Kuala Lumpur.

During our visit to Kuala Lumpur we went for a drink in one of the hotels from the Moon Group of hotels and bars. The hotels were named Crescent Moon, Half Moon and Full Moon etc. The bars, which were usually situated in the basement of the hotels, also had a group of working girls controlled by a Mama San. These prostitutes were some of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen and they came from a variety of races. We did not have enough money for all of us to sleep with one so did the usual thing of combining our cash and drawing lots. This time, I was not successful but Fred Black was and he didn't even have to pull rank because he won the toss fair

and square. The two of us who were left had to wait in the car until our mate was finished as our combined cash was only enough for Fred to have short timers.

From Kuala Lumpur we headed up country via the Bentong road and picked up the main highway which would eventually take us to the east coast and Kota Bharu.

The journey was not uneventful as we got lost a couple of times when the tarmac road just stopped being a road and we were confronted by impenetrable jungle. There were no signs to warn us of this so we had to turn around and head back the way we had come to find an alternative route.

We also ended up in a village for some breakfast and managed to find what looked like a cafe but nobody spoke a word of English. After much miming, flapping and squawking like chickens and a visit to the kitchen we eventually ended up with poached eggs, fresh warm bread and something which did not resemble bacon but was definitely some sort of meat. All of this was done in front of a crowd of delightful laughing children gawping at us through the window. All in all it was a delicious meal, a wonderful visit and the whole village waved us goodbye when we left.

At last we reached Kota Bharu and the furthest Youth Hostel in the country. This Youth Hostel was situated the other side of Kota Bharu and just before the Thai border on the main road. The hostel was just off road and set on the edge of dense jungle. Apparently a light aircraft had crashed about five miles inland from this road and the pilot died trying to reach safety so that just goes to show how dense the jungle was at this point.

We had managed to explore a little of the jungle before a group of students from Kuala Lumpur arrived for a two day visit. We were amazed that these students, all Malayans, had never explored their jungle before so we ended up taking groups of them on exploratory trips to teach them what little we knew from our jungle training and other jungle knowledge we had picked up on the way. The student's teachers were delighted with us and the excursions because it gave them plenty of ammunition for the college curriculum when they got back to KL.

It was a delightful experience meeting these students, especially the outdoor campfires and BBQ's in the evenings. It was very romantic with shared songs and stories from our different cultures. All these students could speak very good English. Once again I fell in love with one of the beautiful

Malay girls. Unfortunately my love was short lived and unrequited.

We continued our return journey to Singapore via the East coast until we reached the town of Kuantan. We cut across country towards Kuala Lumpur and turned off onto the main road which would lead us back to our barracks at Sembawang.

It was a terrific experience and the holiday of a life time. This was all exciting stuff considering that it was my very first visit to foreign countries.

Having spent 18 months living abroad with nine glorious months in Singapore, I was flown home to England and given 3 weeks repatriation leave, prior to my next posting which was to be in Plymouth, Devon with 43 Commando Royal Marines.

Thank goodness I was not posted elsewhere in England as it meant that I could resume occupation of my room and be with my girlfriend once again.



At the beck and call of our Lord and Masters, the Top Brass of the Royal Navy, inspecting our field Headquarters erected in the grounds of our Sembawang Camp in Singapore in 1961. I was just a Marine then.

Yet another parade, this time in full tropical uniform, marching through Singapore during the last few weeks before we left for good in 1961. I am second from the right on the white line.





Top Photo

Malaysia 1961 during our tour of the country on holiday from Singapore and I am being shown how to de-husk a coconut by the Warden of the Youth Hostel and his daughter at Port Dickson

Bottom Photo

On the same holiday but this time at Kota Bharu trying to catch some food for our lunch!





Port Dickson 1961 Taff Williams and I with a member of the Baahi Faith



1961 Me, Fred Black and Taff still at Port Dickson



More of the Baahi Group with Fred and myself

Chapter 10

1961 – 1966 Plymouth, Wales, Cornwall and Norway

1961 Plymouth

Home to England and on to my next posting with 43 Command Royal Marines stationed once again in Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth and back to my lovely girlfriend, the year was 1961.

The first year of my return was reasonably uneventful, getting used to life back in the UK; the hardest part was getting accustomed to the English weather again.

My new job was working in the Orderly Room for the Commanding Officer and Adjutant and being part of Headquarters Company of 43 Commando Royal Marines. The Adjutant at that time was Captain J.C.C. Richards RM who was later to become the Commandant General of the Corps.

During this first year back I decided to be christened at the age of 20 in the Stonehouse Barracks Royal Marines church by a Royal Navy padre. It was necessary if I wanted to be married in a church later on in life.

As I had already successfully passed my Junior NCO's course, it was decided by higher authority that I now had to upgrade my clerical skills and in

February/March 1962 attend an upgrading course for five weeks at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth. Once again I was successful in passing yet another course and was delighted to be promoted Corporal the day after I passed this course. I was becoming quite proud of myself as I was only 21 years of age.

I married my girlfriend on 10th August 1962 when she was 18 years of age and I was 21, she was immature, I was naive. We married in the C of E church at the bottom end of Durnford Street. My best man was Sergeant Sandy Powell (an ex Bugler) and the Plymouth Royal Marines Cadets formed the Guard of Honour (see photograph).

I was to learn later that my girlfriend married me for her independence and not for love, despite the fact that I loved her unconditionally. Although we were not engaged before I went to Singapore I believe that she had been seeing other boys during my 18 months abroad. Even her father was unsure if she really loved me and asked her on our wedding day if she was absolutely positive and still wanted to go through with the wedding. I suppose this sort of uncertainty happens to a lot of girls who marry at a young age.

After our honeymoon in Jersey we moved immediately into a top floor apartment of a private house at the end of Durnford Street, just down from the barracks. During our short stay in this apartment

we had already started to argue about petty things as we had not got used to living together and looking after ourselves.

Not long afterwards we purchased our own house in Plympton which cost us £4,150 (with a mortgage of course). Apparently, this was a lot of money for a house in those days and I was advised by my mates that it was too expensive and that I would never be able to make any money out of the house if I decided to sell it later on. Oh for a crystal ball!

We had our ups and downs during the first few years of our marriage and when I look back in retrospect there seemed to be more downs than ups and our sex life was never brilliant. Perhaps things were going on behind my back even in those days because I was absent from home many times either on courses or on exercises both in the UK and abroad, but life had to go on and I was married and had to persevere and take the rough with the smooth.

Now that I was a Corporal I was allowed to become the Drill and Outward Bound Instructor with the Royal Marines Cadet Corps, Plymouth Group. This was an enjoyable volunteer job because the boy cadets were very keen and enthusiastic and there was no difficulty in filling cadet vacancies when they arose. The Cadet Corps parades, drills and training were held in the evenings and at week-ends. The standard of the cadets was very high and several of

these cadets were successful in joining the Royal Marines later in life, becoming officers and other ranks.

My one folly was taking the cadets on an outward bound course around the local coastline and nearly losing one of the cadets down a ravine. Fortunately I was able to rescue him, although he did suffer with a broken arm.

I was in a bit of a panic wondering how his parents would react once I got him home from hospital, but I needn't have worried because the lad became a bit of a celebrity amongst his fellow cadets with his plaster cast covered in graffiti and signatures. I was also feted by his parents for my care and consideration in looking after their son and staying with him until I was able to return him to them safely, if not soundly.

We also had another cadet who was hit by a cricket ball and lost his leg through infection and blood poisoning. The lad wanted to give up and die after they amputated his limb but he was taken over by the PTI's of 43 Cdo RM and made a full recovery and became a very fine, fit young man.

During 1963, 43 Cdo RM carried out various charity events and collections in the camp collecting enough money to purchase a guide dog for the local

blind association. The dog was named after Commachio Company (see photograph).



This is my first wedding, getting married at the C of E church in Durnford Street just down from Stonehouse Barracks in 1962. The Plymouth Royal Marines Cadet Corps were our guard of honour and Sergeant Sandy Powell, my best man, is in the background with my sister Mary and younger brother Tony.

PRESENTATION OF GUIDE DOG
FOR THE BLIND.



Commachio and admirers in 1962

1962 Wales

43 Commando were involved in many exercises at home and abroad and one in particular comes to mind which involved the French Military in a joint exercise in North Wales.

Our unit was selected to be the defending forces against a joint attacking force of British and French soldiers. The exercise took place in North Wales and 43 Cdo RM had to dig defensive slit trenches and live in them to guard a battalion Headquarter against an attack which would occur within the next 48 hours.

The weather in North Wales for this particular exercise was atrocious, the coldest and wettest that anybody involved had ever experienced in their whole lives, including training in Norway for cold weather warfare. The vicious wind chill factor was the main cause because we were permanently wet and covered in mud and had to live in mud filled trenches. It was very reminiscent of infantry and commando training, the cold, the wet and the mud that is.

After 24 hours our morale was at rock bottom, no attack had taken place, we were tired being stood to (being on guard and alert) and we were also very hungry. Out of the blue, slit trench occupants were called down to the Headquarters at 1600 hours for

a meal consisting of hot drinks and sandwiches laid out on trestle tables. It was like a free for all, everybody grabbing what they could before it was all gone, when all of a sudden a whistle was blown to signal that an attack was imminent. The defenders, with sarnies in hand and hot drinks sloshing all over the place, were running like mad up the hill to the slit trenches to prepare for an imminent attack. There was no way that anybody was going to let go of their food or drink so it must have looked like one of those slapstick comedies you see in the movies.

The attack, it never came, it didn't happen, it was a false alarm! This was becoming a total farce, a right load of bollocks. Then, to rub salt into the deep, slimy, painful wounds that had already been inflicted on us, we were informed that the Brigadier was arriving for a bloody inspection. From there on in the whole fiasco disintegrated into a shambles, the Brigadier arrived, stepped out of his staff car, took one look around and got back into his car and buggered off. The French had decided that it was far too cold and they buggered off back to France so the rest of the attack was cancelled and the Army buggered off to their shit holes. Poor old 43 Cdo RM were left like cold wet spare pricks in a brothel and had to fill in our trenches, pack up, then we buggered off back to Plymouth. Somebody up there was having a laugh!

On my return from Wales I managed to successfully complete a five week Senior Command course at Lympstone and also my final clerical upgrading course at Eastney, all in preparation for further promotion to Sergeant. In addition I managed to fit in some schooling and get a Higher Education Certificate and a GCE 'O' level English language certificate.

1963 Cornwall

Whilst still serving in 43 Cdo RM I was one of several Royal Marines of all ranks chosen to be an escapee in one of the biggest Escape and Evasion exercises held in this country, covering the whole of Cornwall. Other escapees chosen for this exercise were RAF pilots, SBS and we were told, SAS.

I was chosen because of my employment in the Headquarters office of 43 Cdo RM dealing with information of a sensitive, operational and confidential nature. If caught during this exercise, the interrogation was for real.

We wore denim suits with brown canvas shoes but no headgear and before we left the Camp to go on the exercise our clothing was searched as we were not allowed to carry anything of a personal nature including cash. As you will read later, we cheated.

We were issued with one 24 hour ration pack and a small square piece of map showing us the position of the first safe checkpoint where we could obtain further rations and instructions for the next stage of our escape across country.

We were dropped off at midnight from covered trucks somewhere in Cornwall and our adversaries were the combined armed forces and Cornwall police force.

Although we reached the first check point (I met up with two others on the way) we never reported in because we lay up and observed that those who did report were captured by the security forces.

The three of us decided to stick together, avoid all armed forces and police force and head towards the safety zone, the Helston Road. This information had been given to us at our final briefing in case there was an emergency and we had to seek assistance. We had no map to get us there but we had eyes and tongues in our mouth.

During the next 12 hours we avoided the security forces and were lucky enough to meet a friendly farmer and informed him what our situation was, he gave us some food and drink and decided he was on our side and would not report us. His son and wife were visiting and offered to take us in their van to Penzance and let us stop in an apartment above their Fish and Chip shop as we could not give ourselves up too soon for fear of capture and interrogation.

It was just where we wanted to be because our safe zone was not far away on the main road leading to Helston. The price we had to pay for them to keep us safe was to babysit their two children whilst the parents worked and went out for a couple of nights.

All three of us had managed to hide some paper money in the collars of our shirts which enabled us to stay free. We also managed to get out ourselves a couple of times during the day time in borrowed clothes.

The children were great and we got on like a house on fire and the owners of the chip shop were very kind people who fed us and let us doss down on their floor for two days.

After approximately three days on the run we made our way to the safety zone and on the way met a fellow escapee who was a Royal Marines Colour Sergeant. As we were continuing our journey in broad daylight we were unexpectedly stopped by a policeman. We managed to flannel him over and convince him that the exercise had finished, although it didn't end until the next day. He was suspicious but nevertheless we were allowed to proceed on our way.

We also passed a small railway station and met some RAF pilot escapees who had been captured and were now on their way home. They advised us not to get caught as the interrogation was pretty rough and captives were being treated extremely harshly.

The Colour Sergeant with us decided that he wanted to experience interrogation and decided to give

himself up. We were to learn later that he did not do very well under intensive questioning and his career suffered as a consequence.

We remaining three slept out that last night in someone's garden shed thus avoiding capture and early next morning made our way to the safety zone and were eventually picked up by friendly forces. After debriefing, a good meal, a hot shower and a night's sleep in a proper bed we were then sent back to our various units.

1964 – 1966 Norway

43 Cdo RM had become the countries cold weather warfare specialists, training to fight and to test weapons, clothing and equipment in sub-zero weather conditions over terrain similar to Russia. The training was carried out in North Norway.

43 Cdo RM was deployed in Norway 3 years running with mixed weather conditions.

The first year the weather was so bad, that the military plane we were travelling in could not land on the Norwegian mainland and had to carry out an emergency landing on a small island off the coast of Norway called Bodo. There was a Norwegian military base on this island where we were billeted. The first meal we had was prepared by the Norwegians and consisted of a table loaded with raw food i.e. fish of different varieties, tinned meats, tins we couldn't read, crisp breads, a type of honey and various jars of pickles etc. The hot food you took to the table was boiled potatoes and boiled cabbage dished out by two cooks with their bare hands which they sloshed onto our plates, ugh! The next day our food was cooked by our own chefs and the first main meal we had was hot cooked fish and chips and served with proper utensils.

As soon as the weather improved we were transported to the mainland by a Norwegian

minesweeper and all of us had to sit in the gangways for the journey. The waves were horrendous and every passenger had to rush outside to be violently sick. When we had settled down to a reasonable queasiness the Norwegian sailors brought round a hot drink which tasted a bit like Bovril but Bovril plus as if there was something alcoholic in it, in any case it was delicious and stopped us being seasick again. We landed safely on the mainland and were transported to a training camp near Narvik to carry out our first annual winter warfare training session in the mountains.

Whilst in Norway the unit was taught how to Ski, survive and fight in sub-zero conditions. Clothing, equipment, machinery and weapons were tested in freezing weather and everybody was kept extremely busy and very cold. It was discovered very quickly that some of the oils we were using in our machines and weapons froze solid making them inoperable, so the boffins in England had to go back to the drawing board to solve the problem. Some of the clothing and equipment didn't come up to scratch either so they had to be re-invented and re-designed as well.

The most disastrous thing of all was that Norway was a dry country, no booze allowed at all, or if there was, we were unable to get at it. As well as this, the Norwegian girls, who spoke very good English, were encouraged not to fraternise with the British troops

or to speak our language. It was a very sober and frustrating tour of duty.

The following year in Norway was different; we had decent enough weather conditions to allow us to land our military aircraft very near to where the training took place. I think the airfield or local area was called Bardufos.

The British Embassy supplied our camp with all the necessary alcohol, to be consumed by British personnel only, the weather was absolutely perfect for winter warfare training and the local girls were now fraternising with the British troops. In fact some of our lads learnt Norwegian and got married to local girls and moved to Norway to live after they left the service.

The unit got into a spot of bother when some Norwegian soldiers got drunk in our camp and were apprehended by the police whilst staggering back to the Norwegian camp. I'm not sure, but I believe that in those days Norway had a zero tolerance policy towards alcohol abuse.

Unfortunately, I was not allowed to go skiing during this particular Norway exercise as the clerical staff were very busy with the technical details of the trials and I was given an additional duty of keeping the sauna fires burning in readiness for the troops returning on completion of exercises in the field.

What a lovely warm, cosy job, feeding pine logs into a furnace! I actually did get to take a sauna and then to run outside and roll naked in the snow before returning to the sauna. Unfortunately they were no gorgeous young females to beat my naked body with birch branches.

The third year and my final tour in Norway, was particularly memorable because there was no snow in the mountains and the weather was sunny and dry. In fact the weather on Dartmoor in England was ideal for winter warfare training as the snow lay thick and conditions were perfect.

Nevertheless, we stayed in Norway and just carried out military manoeuvres and exercises with our Norwegian hosts. The clerical staff did manage to get out and about this time and took advantage of the weather by taking long walks in the mountains, and for once, we were warm!

It was time for me to move on yet again. With relentless monotony, those drafting persons had my name on the tip of their tongues again and I was being lined up for another tour abroad.

Three months after returning to 43 Commando I received orders to be posted abroad to 45 Commando Royal Marines in Aden. This was classified as a battle zone and also classified as a

single posting (no Royal Marines wives allowed) and I would have to serve a year away from my wife.

Chapter 11 1966 – 1967 Aden

From Plymouth and 43 Cdo RM I was posted to 45 Cdo RM in Aden on a one year deployment, unaccompanied. I flew into Aden on 5th September 1966 in a military aircraft and landed at the main airfield of Khormaksa.

My new job was going to be in Headquarters Company and I was going to be employed in the Orderly Room, working under the Commanding Officer, Second-in-Command (who would be my immediate boss), Adjutant and an Intelligence Officer. This was the main administration body of 45 Cdo RM where operational planning took place and all the other administration duties associated with a fighting unit, including discipline. The Orderly Room clerical staff was run by a Colour Sergeant.

Although we were all clerks in the Orderly Room, we still had our military duties to carry out such as Acclimatisation Courses, Range Courses (to keep us up to date with our weapons training) Guard Duties

and many other military duties as you will see further on.

The main habitable area of Aden was split into Big Aden with the port, airfield and Crater City and Little Aden where some of the military camps were situated. Our Royal Marines camp was situated in little Aden and was built on part of a beach right next door to the BP Oil Refinery and also opposite an Army Camp.

Just because our camp was built on sand this was no deterrent for our comfort. The Royal Marines, being very adaptable, had made their various clubs more relaxing by improving the club facilities as follows:

The Marines (NAAFI Club) had a lounge and bar area plus a large fenced concrete patio for tables and chairs and they had a **caged budgie**.

The Corporals Club had a lounge and bar area plus a large fenced concrete patio with an enormous uckers board painted on it and they had a **caged parrot**.

The Sergeants' Mess had a lounge and bar area and not to be outdone however, had a large fenced concrete patio with a pond running through it covered by a large aviary **filled with birds**.

The Officers Mess had a lounge and bar area but they had to be different and did not have a large

fenced concrete patio but a large fenced lawn. They had **no birds**, certainly none of the feathered variety. The poor locals had to cut the lawn with scissors because there were no lawnmowers in Aden.

The living accommodation for the Marines and Corporals of Headquarters Company and support services was a massive great old hanger which had been divided into several separate rooms for twelve persons per room. The internal walls were only 8 feet tall constructed of light wood panels, which did not reach the roof, which meant that there was this vast void above all the partitioned rooms.

Nearly everybody had a radio and obviously everyone talked so the noise in this huge space was horrendous as the low walls failed to hold back the constant din made by the occupants of the other rooms. The only time one had any privacy was by locking themselves in the Loo.

The other companies of the unit had much smaller brick built accommodation blocks which were far superior and more comfortable than the one Headquarter Company had to exist in. The Officers and SNCO's had their own cabins, so they were alright jack.

Not long after I arrived in Aden, I got an infection in a lump I had at the back of my neck and it swelled

up so badly that it was difficult for me to turn my head and my neck hurt like hell, you could say that I was a pain in the neck! The Doctor decided that the lump would have to be lanced so he gave this job to his assistant who was a Petty Officer. The Petty Officer decided to carry out the operation in the Sick Bay at the beginning of sick parade.

I was stripped to the waist and sat in a chair with the door open; the Petty Officer injected me with a local anaesthetic, which was the most painful part of the operation, he then began to slice into the lump. The blood and pus poured out dripping down the front of my bare torso, much to the disgust of the waiting patients, whose numbers had dwindled considerably (see photograph of a bandaged wounded Bootneck, which my mum thought I was).

There wasn't much to keep us occupied as it was too dangerous to leave our camp to go into Crater City, unless you were armed of course, so we made our own entertainment in the Camp at Little Aden.

Although one of my duties as a Corporal was to go to Crater City because I had to act as an armed escort to our unit Colour Sergeant Engineer when he had to visit engineering shops in Crater City to buy spare parts to repair our equipment and vehicles.

One day when we were on one of these buying expeditions, he left his loaded Stirling sub-machine

gun (SMG) in the open doorway of an engineering shop he had business with which was situated in a crowded street of Crater City. I was doing my duty guarding him from a secure position across the alleyway with my back to the wall armed with my loaded SLR. When I saw him leave his gun I started to shit the proverbial bricks as I swiftly ran across the road to pick up his gun and give it to him and to remind him to keep the bloody thing in his hands at all times, a scary moment I can tell you.

Our main entertainment was drinking in our own clubs on base and watching films in our own cinema. The unit Postman was the cinema operator and he taught me in my spare time how to do the job and how to operate the two projectors in the main Cinema. Afterwards I used to stand in for him in our base camp at Little Aden and in the mountain camp at Habilayn. Later on, when I got promoted to Sergeant, I would also carry out this duty for the Sergeants Mess, which was a bit easier as they only had the one projector.

Cards and chess was another great pastime, which were generally played in our rooms. The main card game was partner or solo whist, not for money I hasten to add, and I was once involved in a card game which lasted all weekend including an all-nighters'. There were other mates queuing up to join in should anyone weaken and drop out. We

had a couple of entrepreneurs who had a hot tea and sandwich round so they kept us supplied with drinks and nosh, for a price of course.

It was just another way of passing the time which could otherwise be boring if all you did was cross off dates on repatriation charts (which everybody had) or read books. There were a few silly things that blokes got up to, to pass away the time, like buying toy pistols in holsters and playing at cowboys by having quick draw competitions.

We also sunbathed and swam in the sea which was right on our doorstep. In an attempt to get an all over tan we would also go for naked walks along a stretch of beach to a place called Bhir Fukum Bay (we called it Bare Fuckem Bay) although I cannot find this name on a map, so it may have been a name we made up ourselves. As we walked along the beach we could see the passenger ships passing by quite close to the shore and of course we would wave and give them the full Monty. They must have gotten a good eyeful if they had binoculars; perhaps it brightened up their dreary lives a bit!

45 Cdo RM in Aden was a singles posting, no wives allowed, although the Army and the RAF, the lucky swine's, were allowed to have their wives and lived in married and private quarters in Big Aden along the Malla Strait, from time to time, a tricky place to live.

Because we had no wives to look after, 45 Cdo RM were the last unit to serve up country on the last operation before the British withdrew. It was not our units turn to go, so we think our Colonel volunteered us. Had we not have gone up country at this time I would have had an opportunity to see my younger brother Alan who had arrived in Aden on business for the Royal Signals. Unfortunately he was not allowed to come up country to see me.

These camps up country were mainly tented camps with a Galley and a few tin shacks and I was lucky enough to be allocated one of the secure tin shacks next to the signals hut, as I had to look after all the secret and confidential files. The Camp also had inhabited sandbagged Sanger pits inside the perimeter and outlying sandbagged piquet's, called Alpha, Bravo and Charlie piquet's, surrounded the camp for protection. Some of them were mortar pits run by the heavy weapons branch.

The main mortar pit inside Habilayn Camp always seemed to have a wet going and was the best place to get a bacon sarnie. Where the hell they got the bacon from nobody knows. Because of my first job in the Corps in Commando Specialist Training Troop, where the heavy weapons personnel were trained, I was familiar with most of them so I was able to cadge a sarnie and a wet of tea from time to time.

The camps were based near to the Yemen border to fight and/or capture any dissidents crossing into Aden; I think the area was called the Radfan. The nearest Camp to the border was Dhala, which was by far the most dangerous camp to be in because it was in the area where most insurgents crossed the border into Aden and where the enemy would take pot shots and fire mortar bombs at the camp on a regular basis.

Although Royal Marines patrolled the area in the vicinity of Habilayn on a regular basis, the SAS were also out there, secretly watching and listening and sending back information to our main camp on any insurgents they spotted.

45 Cdo RM did sustain casualties during the last year of operations up country. One of the most bizarre casualties was an incident when one of our own sentries stepped outside the perimeter fence at Habilayn for a toilet break and when he attempted to climb back in a fellow sentry challenged him, received no answer, and so opened fire and the bullet severed a finger of the mistaken 'enemy'. After the inquiry, the sentry who fired the weapon was disciplined because he was a bad shot. Had it been the enemy, the intruder would have been fit enough to escape or to do serious damage, having only a missing finger to contend with.

Another sad incident involved a young 18 year old Marine who came down to the main camp from an outlying picket post to pick up the mail and some ice. As he was returning to his post, he tripped over by the main gate and his Stirling sub-machine gun hit the ground, cocked itself (which they were prone to do) fired and shot him through his heart. Unfortunately he had recently returned from leave in England where he had just got married.

His young wife must have been devastated because she only got to hear about his death second hand. The young Marine had failed to notify the Royal Marines that he had actually got married when he went home for some leave so the only people who were informed of his death were his parents.

It is also strange how lucky or unlucky some people can be. A Royal Marines Corporal (my mate Tony Coppard) serving aboard a Royal Navy ship which was visiting Aden had received permission to bring a group of seven young sailors up country when our main unit was stationed there in Habilayn.

When the young Matelots' arrived in Habilayn they were escorted by the armed Corporal and an armed Marine on a visit to Charlie Picket, which was the picket furthest away from our main camp. They had almost safely negotiated a ravine as they approached Charlie Picket when the last man, who happened to be the armed Marine from our Camp,

stepped on a mine and blew his left foot off. Had it been one of the naval ratings who had been injured, there would have been hell to play. As it was the Marine was just a casualty of war, poor sod.

One day I happened to be listening in on the Habilayn operational patrol radio network when one of our patrols reported that they had cornered three dissidents in a cave after a running fire fight. The patrol leader, a RM Lieutenant, threw a hand grenade into the cave but it was thrown out again by the enemy and exploded. A fire fight ensued and the enemy fought to the death. Our troops sustained no casualties. All of the action was being described by the patrol signalman in detail over the radio as it actually happened. It was quite thrilling stuff to listen to and I was privileged to be in the right place at the right time.

Eventually the bodies of the three dissidents were brought down to our main camp in Habilayn. Our Naval doctor carried out an examination and then the bodies were sent to the Aden government down country.

We had a small airfield just opposite the main gate of our camp at Habilayn where Beverley aircraft landed to bring us replacements, stores and provisions. We also had a small Sioux helicopter unit stationed there as well. The other means of

transport up country were convoys and Wessex helicopters.

During one of the tours up country I was left behind in Little Aden as part of the rear party. After about a week my boss required my presence at Habilayn toot sweet (as fast as possible) so I flew up in a Wessex helicopter. My only companions were the pilots and crates of oranges for the unit and I was armed with a rifle and one magazine of ammunition. If the helicopter had been brought down by the enemy at least I would have had plenty of fruit to throw at them!

The Beverley was a most ungainly aircraft with a bulbous body. The pilots who flew them admitted that they did not know how these aircraft managed to stay aloft in the first place. It was hair-raising when it landed and took off on the Habilayn small airfield because it had a very short runway and the aircraft had to fly over some very steep and difficult terrain on the way in and on the way out.

Each morning the duty Corporal and the previous night's guard had to walk the line down the Habilayn runway to make sure no land mines had been left by the enemy overnight. No electronic mine sweeping equipment was available, so we were the lambs! One Beverley had already been blown up whilst turning at the end of the runway. Fortunately there were no casualties.

Being a Corporal I was selected to take a section, consisting of myself and five Marines, to the top of a 200 to 300 foot high Jebel (a large sheer rock formation) to set up an observation post and act as a covering force during the final withdrawal operations from Habilayn. We flew up to the top by Sioux helicopters, although the pilots were non too happy as the humidity was not quite as it should be for flying helicopters, not very encouraging for my team who had to be carried to the top of these Jebel's.

From the top of the Jebel you could see for miles around and it was an ideal place to spot any insurgents that might be headed our way. We had a signalman with radio equipment and were heavily armed with light machine guns, rifles and enough equipment and food for 48 hours.

Our position could only be reached by helicopter so it was a big surprise when one of my Marines discovered a cemetery on top of the Jebel. The cemetery still had skeletons but we were not sure if they were friend or foe!

After 24 hours it was decided that we were not needed on top of the Jebel so we were picked up by the Sioux helicopters and flown to the base camp at Habilayn ready for a quick withdrawal before any of the local scallywags or dissidents got wind of what was going on.

We packed our gear and equipment ready for air and convoy vehicle transportation to take us back to Little Aden. I was picked to fly down in the Beverly.

Whilst waiting in the open air by the runway, my mate and I decided to set up our chess board and have a couple of games before the aircraft landed. Fortunately this game was captured on film by our photographer friend and not seen by the enemy (see photograph) but it wasn't just a set up, we were really playing a game of chess.

During the final year that 45 Cdo RM were in Aden, there were several major scandals; these were just some of them.

45 Commando's naval doctor was training to be a Pathologist and I was employed by him part-time to type up his notes. One of the worst jobs I ever had because I couldn't understand a bloody word I was typing, all those medical terms were mind boggling and you know what a doctor's writing is like!

Anyway, this doctor was responsible for the examination of all enemy bodies that were brought to the main camp at Habilayn prior to them being sent down to Crater City in Aden. When the last three bodies were received by the Aden authorities, they accused him of stealing body parts from all three. I do not know how this was all hushed up but all I can say in his defence was that I typed all his

pathology notes and can confirm that he was not guilty, although there were many suspicious objects pickled in jars of alcohol on the shelves around his office!

There was one act of cowardice when a Marine driver refused to drive his truck in a convoy back from Habilayn to little Aden because in the previous convoy a driver had been killed by a land mine. The driver that was killed had his spine squashed when the mine exploded beneath the vehicle and his body was forced into the roof of the cab, he died instantly. The coward, who was removed from the unit very quickly to maintain morale, was sent to a naval hospital to have his mental state determined. I did not find out what happened to him afterwards but he must have been discharged Services No Longer Required or medically unfit.

Another situation involved three Officers Mess batmen who were involved in a ménage a' trois and were caught in flagrante delicto. Two of the Marines used to share the body of another Marine and took turns in this sexual threesome. On the occasion that they were discovered, one of the Marines was carrying out a sexual act when it was not his turn and was caught by the other one, who was very angry. This all occurred in the shared ablutions and the fight that ensued caught the attention of our own military police, who, after a

thorough investigation, discovered the truth behind the fracas.

How do I know all about this, I was the corporal clerk who had to type out all the investigation notes and disciplinary procedures, leading up to their dismissal from the unit!

You have to remember that in those days, homosexuality was a crime and it was necessary to get rid of these people as quickly as possible. All three were quickly disciplined and despatched to the UK, I assume for sentencing and dishonourable discharge.

The story does not quite end there though. All three Marines were escorted home by a young Lieutenant and when the aircraft landed in Bahrain the three Marines went missing and the Lieutenant was frantically looking for them, no doubt, with a vision before his eyes of being courts-martialled for the loss of said Marines. Allegedly, the three Marines were caught at it again behind some buildings in Bahrain when the aircraft was being refuelled. Must have been true love!

This part of the story is only hearsay but even if it is untrue it shouldn't be as it rounds off the whole fiasco into a neat bundle. Not meaning for it to be a pun, but it seems to me that the three Marines were playing 'cock-a-hoop' with the military system!

I was promoted Sergeant about this time and had the luxury of moving into my own cabin and joining the Sergeants Mess. It was a great honour being promoted whilst on active service and I was very proud of my achievement. The change in lifestyle was wonderful, the only disappointment being was that my friends, i.e. fellow Corporals, disowned me because I was now not one of them anymore but one of them!

Soon after joining the Sergeant's Mess I had to run a film for them and the routine was that the film started off in the Corporal's Club and each reel had to be collected from there to be shown in the Mess. When I went to collect the reel I walked into the Corporal's Club without thinking and was immediately kicked out and told to wait outside, it was quite embarrassing but quite correct, I was not entitled to enter unless I was invited. How soon I had been forgotten by my friends!

The last incident I recall was after a helicopter crashed into the rock formation just below our camp in Little Aden. A Troop from 45 Commando was sent to recover the bodies or what was left of them and also to salvage any wreckage. Sometime after this operation was completed, Marines from one of the barrack rooms complained of foul odours coming from one of the room lockers. The locker was owned by a Marine who had been on the

recovery team for the downed helicopter and when the locker was opened, bones with rotten flesh on them were discovered and the bones had come from the helicopter crash. In addition there were also several explosive devices and ammunition illegally kept in this locker. The culprit was apprehended and severely disciplined.

During my career, I have noticed on quite a few occasions the morbid fascination of military personnel with regard to the keeping of peculiar memorabilia and pets. Lizards, spiders, mice and other creepy crawlies, these being some of the 'normal' things I have seen Marines keep.

We still remained in Little Aden closing down several of the now defunct barracks in our area. During this time, the local Arabs were selling packets of pornographic photographs and films which starred the wives of the troops who had left. You could clearly see that the scenes had been pictured in the married quarters and there were even some wives we recognised. Although our own Military Police tried to stop the distribution, many pictures and films still surfaced. A group of corporals from our unit were selected to act as military detectives in civilian clothes, armed with pistols, to try and stop this sort of thing. They were also out and about seeking information on troublemakers and dissidents who were trying to disrupt our

withdrawal activities. My friend Phil Higginson was one these corporals and he would eventually be promoted to Lieutenant and I would end up working for him later on in my career.

When we had demolished our camp and raised it to the ground, our unit carried out a tactical withdrawal from little Aden to the main airfield at Khormaksa. For a short while before flying out of Aden our main accommodation were the married quarters on Malla Strait vacated by the Army families.

45 Cdo RM was the last unit to leave Aden after all the other RAF and Army units and their families had departed for England, although 42 Cdo RM was brought in on HMS Bulwark to protect our withdrawal as we departed by aircraft from Khormaksar.

I was told that the last man to actually leave Aden was a Royal Marine Landing Craft Operator as he untied his boat from the dock and sailed into the moonlight, now isn't that just poetic!

The aircraft that took us home had to land on a small island off the coast of Aden to refuel and then very quickly land at Khormaksa to pick us up because the enemy were attacking the airfield with mortars.

When we eventually flew out of Aden and arrived in London, it had taken 36 hours. My older brother John had been waiting for me at the airport and was getting quite concerned because the authorities would not release any information because of military security. When we finally landed, there he was still waiting for me, bless him.

I was now on my way for a spot of well-earned leave and my next appointment in Plymouth and very much looking forward to my reunion with my wife. I would not have been quite so eager if I had known what was waiting for me at home.

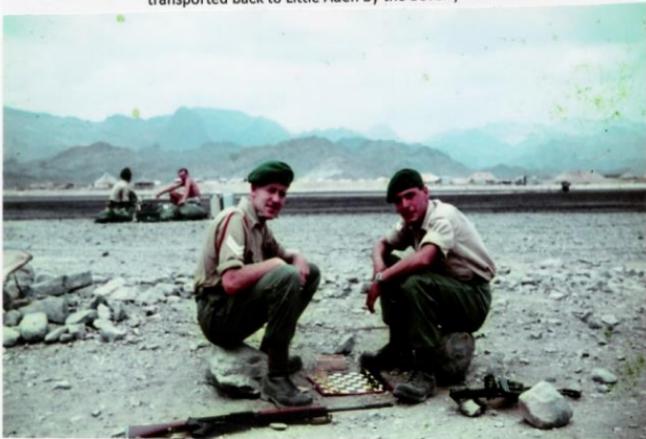


Top Photo

'The wounded Soldier' Aden 1966 down country in our main camp at Little Aden after my show case
lump removal surgery in the Sick Bay

Bottom Photo

Aden 1967 this time up country in Habilayn playing our famous game of chess waiting to be
transported back to Little Aden by the Beverly aircraft





Top Photo

45 Commando Royal Marines, Aden 1967

Top Photo (I'm the bald one) celebrating my promotion to Sergeant and having a 'wet' with my Heavy Weapons colleagues

Bottom Photo

Still in Aden in 1967 'Up Country' in Habileyin (I'm in there somewhere) being entertained by the E.N.S.A. Organisation, who entertain the troops all over the world. This was a very welcome break in difficult times and very courageous of the entertainers.



Chapter 12

1967 – 1970 Hamoaze House, Plymouth

When I returned to England I was posted to Camp Headquarters Plymouth Group and was stationed in Hamoaze House. My job as a Sergeant was working in 'A' Branch which dealt with welfare matters concerning Royal Marines and their families, and all discipline matters regarding Royal Marines Courts Martial in the West Country. This was an extremely interesting and important job which I absolutely loved. It was very sensitive and confidential regarding the welfare aspects and utmost accuracy was required on the Courts Martial elements of the job. At this juncture of my career and as a relatively newly promoted Sergeant, I could have well done without any distractions or difficulties in my private life.

On the welfare side I did receive a package which contained the ashes of an ex Royal Marine who's last wish was to have his ashes scattered in Plymouth Sound.

The welfare SNCO and myself got dressed up in our best bib and tucker and managed to snaffle a Naval Launch so that we could carry out the request, in accordance with the ex-Marines wishes, out on the waters of Plymouth sound. The waves were choppy and the wind was blowing at a fair rate. I made

damn sure that I was facing in the correct direction, as I didn't want an ex Marines remains plastered all over my kisser. The welfare SNCO took the photographs for the ex-Marines relatives and I did the deed, although I had the devil of a time to sink the container which had contained the ashes. I don't think the old Marine wanted to go!

Nothing outstanding or earth shattering happened work wise during my tour of duty in HQ Ply Group RM it was just a plain old daily grind. One of the interesting things about the job was working for the first time with civilian civil servants, of the male and female variety. These civil servants carried out the day to day running of the Headquarters, which left us servicemen to get on with the military aspects of the job. Most of my worries at this time were of a matrimonial nature.

During my tour in Aden my wife had cheated on me with other men and played away from home throughout my year of absence and her cheating continued when I got back home from Aden. I didn't find out about her double dealing for over a year. I obviously knew that something was wrong but would not let myself believe that she was deceiving me with another man.

It appeared that everyone else knew about her affair apart from me, that was how dumb I was. I learnt afterwards that my wife's mum, had threatened her

on several occasions that she was going to tell me unless she owned up to her indiscretions.

During this period our life together was not particularly good, there were arguments about her going out without me to see her work colleagues and our sex life was almost non-existent. Somebody else was obviously getting it and it wasn't me, this was obviously causing a great deal of tension between us because there was one to many people in our marriage!

At this time my wife had got a job with a catalogue Company and had a van which she used to deliver her orders and collect new orders. A couple of times a week she used to go and visit her friends from her previous jobs and used to empty the van in case they got stolen whilst she was out and about visiting, that's what she told me! The van of course was her passion wagon; obviously I didn't find this out until later.

After she lost the job with the catalogue Company she acted dumber and somewhat naively in her clandestine cheating because she was seeing a Marine who was serving in Stonehouse Barracks and she used to meet him whilst driving our distinctive white Vauxhall with red leather upholstery and a red roof. Perhaps she wanted to be found out because she did not have to courage to tell me what was going on?

The affair was finally uncovered when I was informed that our car was seen one evening parked at the back of Stonehouse Barracks. I didn't have use of the car at the time and my wife was supposed to be miles away. I was able to track down the Marine in question through my contacts in the Corps and a little bit of detective work.

After I had tracked down the identity of the Marine having an affair with my wife, I confronted her with the knowledge that his name was Marine Bowyer and she finally confessed to me what everybody close to us already knew. After much heart-breaking discussions I agreed not to confront the Marine in question as it is an offence for a senior rank to thump a junior rank. My wife took full responsibility for her indiscretions and admitted that she was the one at fault.

Despite it being a loveless marriage from Greta's point of view, I was absolutely gutted and even more so when she decided we would divorce; she was my first real love and I still adored her. We had been married less than five years.

As I have already said, I held down a very sensitive and important job whilst serving in Camp Headquarters Plymouth Group Royal Marines and when it all came out I was devastated and took to the drink and was pissed out of my head for a solid week and obviously my work suffered as a result

Apparently, according to my friends, during the evenings of this week, I used to drive my car up and down Union Street turning at the Drake cinema roundabout and then down to the roundabout at the bottom of Durnford Street and back up again for a couple of hours a night at least, then I would visit the Sergeants Mess and drink until closing time, then drive home. Why I did it I do not know, I must have been out of my mind because I do not remember this.

I was extremely lucky on two accounts a. I didn't get caught by the police for drunk driving and b. I had a good boss, Captain Childs, who sympathised with my situation and thought that my career was worth saving, despite the fact that he was very close to taking disciplinary action against me, which would have finished my career completely. I stopped drinking immediately.

My wife and I stayed together for the next few months and even then I still had aspirations that she would not leave me. I even bought a Jack Russel rescue dog called Skippy to see if this would bring us closer together, it did not and she finally left to follow her Marine, who was posted to Deal in Kent, and I was left with no other option but to continue with my job.

After all that had happened to me, towards the end of my deployment in Plymouth I was raped by a

married female member of staff at Hamoaze House. She made a bee-line for me at one of the farewell parties and dragged me away in my car out to the old wartime airfield on the outskirts of Plymouth, parked between two mounds of grass, steamed up the car windows and then she attacked me and used my body for her lustful needs.

Apparently she wanted a baby but couldn't have one because her Postman husband was impotent. Nine months later she returned to work to show off her baby and the word reached me that the child looked just like me, a boy or a girl, I just do not know as I did not go down to see the child. I cannot categorically state that the baby was mine, but over the years I have always waited for a knock on my door and a voice saying, I believe you are my daddy. My own family are completely aware of the possibility, so a visitor of this nature would not be a shock to any of us, but a welcome relief.

New orders arrived for me to say that I was being considered for a posting to London in the Ministry of Defence. Not so long after my wife and I parted, I was interviewed at the Ministry of Defence in London and I was accepted to work in the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines in Whitehall.

Before I left for London, I sold our house for exactly what I paid for it (plus legal and selling fees) and

didn't make a penny profit from the sale. I did not do this to spite my wife because she was already suffering with guilt and wanted nothing from the sale as she had signed over her interest of the house to me. If I was to be honest with myself I think deep down my wife never wanted me to buy the house in the first place and I have to say that it was not a happy house to live in. The mind boggles though at what it would be worth all these years later!

Although Skippy was a pain in the proverbial butt, I decided to keep him and take him with me to London. Here I was once again on my way to another adventure and thankfully trying to leave behind painful memories, but sometimes they come back to bite you in the bum.

Chapter 13

1970 – 1975 Whitehall, London

I was posted to The Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines (DCGRM) in London and worked in Whitehall Ministry of Defence, Main Building for two and a half years and then another two and a half years in Old Admiralty Building by Admiralty Arch. Normally a tour of duty in the Department was for two and a half years only so I was very lucky to have my tour extended because I enjoyed living in London and the work I was doing.

The MOD was a remarkable environment to work in as a serviceman because we worked permanently in civilian clothes and were treated just like any other Civil Servant, starting work at 9-30am and finishing at 6pm. There was also a tradition that at 5-30pm the sherry bottle would come out and most people would have a glass or two before leaving work. The sherry we drunk was a rough South African sherry which could be purchased cheaply in half or gallon jugs.

The G Branch admin office consisted of a Warrant Officer, Colour Sergeant, two Sergeants, PO Wren, two Corporals and a couple of Wren's, all the other admin officers surrounding ours were manned by civilian Civil Servants. Our Officers' worked down

the hall in their own separate offices, Colonel's, Major's and Captain's. During working hours we were treated like Marines being called by our ranks and in turn we spoke to our Officers' by addressing them as Sir. Outside working hours, when we went out partying, which we did quite often, was a completely different picture, nearly everybody called each other by their Christian names, officers and other ranks.

Wren 3rd Officer Barbara Tinner wanted to be called Marm until Wren Ann McCallum (who I would marry) turned to her and suggested that if she didn't like being called Barbara when we were out then she shouldn't have come. She was called Barbara after that. Some of the other officers I remember were Major Peter Hodges, Captain Jumbo Evans, Captain Tim Donkin, Major Richard Preston and Colonel David Slater.

There were the odd exceptions and Colonel D C Alexandra was one of these, I still don't know what the D stands for? No we didn't call the Captain General (the Duke of Edinburgh) Phillip!

All members of the Commandant General's staff lived in their own rented private apartments or homes in and around London, except for the Wrens, who had their own barracks called Furse House in Kensington.

I lived in a grotty, damp basement flat in Hornsey, North London and shared it with my younger brother Alan, who was about to finish his time with the Royal Signals and also worked in the MoD. It had one very large bedroom and a large lounge which was divided into a kitchen which had a bath in it. There was a separate toilet.

My older brother John got us the flat and blocked up the stairs with timber so that the flats above couldn't gain access to our basement. Before we moved in Alan and I had to dig out a solidified block of dog excrement from the space at the bottom of the cooker in the kitchen. We discovered this after we test lit the stove and the excrement heated up and produced the most horrible smell. We also had dig up all the terratso flooring in the lounge because it was soaked with animal urine and we also had to clear out the under stairs cupboard which had the skeletons of two puppies. In this cupboard we also found a swag bag full of silver cutlery and a couple of silver trophy cups and John took them to a foundry and had them melted down into a silver ingot. The ingot was always displayed on our lounge mantle shelf until one party when one of the villain guests said he would get three rings made one for each of us brothers if he could keep the rest of the ingot. We agreed, never got the rings, never got back the ingot and never saw the villain again.

We cleaned the flat from top to bottom, had carpets fitted and Alan and I moved in. Alan built a bar in the corner of the lounge and we had a nicely kitted out bachelor flat, albeit, a damp one.

My older brother John, his wife Rosalie and son Martin lived next door and our respective flats were on a road called Hornsey Rise and just up the road from a large pub called the Favourite, which was used predominately by Irish customers. The whole area was notorious for North London gangs. Some evenings my younger brother and I worked in the Favourite and if there wasn't any blood on the doorstep on a Monday morning, then it hadn't been a good week-end.

As soon as we started to work in the Favourite we were told to keep our own council as we would be living and working amongst the criminal fraternity. An example was given about one of the local crims who was sitting in the Favourite having a drink when a newly released prisoner walked in with a shotgun and shot the sitting crim through the legs and then calmly walking out. We could still see the evidence where the shot had hit the stage. When the police came nobody had seen a thing, including the person who was shot. The reason for the shooting by the ex-prisoner; it was a punishment for shagging the wife of the ex-prisoner whilst he was in still in prison, it just wasn't done!

Alan and I used to come straight from work and Ann Concannon, the Landlady, fed us so that we could get stuck in to our bar work immediately. There was always food in her typical Irish kitchen upstairs, a huge joint of meat with potatoes and vegetables always on the go, so you just helped yourself. All sorts of odd people used to eat there; sometimes it was like Piccadilly Circus.

Peter Concannon, the Landlord, was a wheeler dealer, into anything that might make money. There was a racket he got into regarding tickets from lorry drivers who supplied loads of hard-core for the new roads and motorways. Each time the drivers delivered a load of hard-core to the site they were given a ticket which was worth a sum of money and they could be redeemed at the end of the week from the site office. Well, Peter would change these tickets on a daily basis for a lesser sum because the drivers always seemed to be broke. The best part of it was that they spent the money in Peter's pub! At the end of the week Peter would cash his tickets in for a tidy profit. For quite a while this worked perfectly, until Peter had to miss a couple of week's conversion and when he finally had time to cash them in the site had gone broke and he lost a considerable amount of money.

On another occasion Peter was being swindled by one of the barmen working in the snug where

takeout's were purchased. The barman would give more change than was required to a particular woman who in turn would later give him sexual favours. Peter caught him, beat him up in the pub, threw him down the cellar stairs and made him stay there for 24 hours cleaning up the cellar until it was spotless. He then kicked the barman out.

The Favourite had five entrances to the pub and one evening a drunken Irishman came into the pub through the first entrance and was spotted by Peter who immediately kicked him out. The drunk came in the next door and again was kicked out. This happened three more times until eventually at the last door the drunk turned to Peter and said "Do you own every fucking pub in this town"!

I had to be very careful not to get involved in any dubious goings on because my career in the Royal Marines depended on me having a clean slate. Alan though was not under such restrictions as he had now left the Royal Signals. He did get involved by purchasing a colour TV from one of the gangs, obviously the TV had fallen off the back of a lorry! In case the 'delivery men' were being followed a decoy car without the TV, which was being driven by a well-known villain, would arrive at our flat first to throw the police off the scent. On this occasion he was being followed and police cars swooped in front and behind him when he arrived at our door. The

police knocked on our door and asked us why this person was visiting our flat and we quickly made up a story that he was coming for an evening of cards, the villain was released. The other car, with Alan's TV and money of course, went sailing by never to be seen again. The villain who was cornered by the police was called Moriarty and he was the boss of a local firm (gang). After this charade Alan and I were never bothered by any underhand dealings ever again, in fact I think after this episode the crims looked after our backs.

I had my dog Skippy with me for the whole time I lived in London and some week-ends I would give him a treat by taking him to Alexandra Palace ('Ally Pally') (see photograph) although most times the little bugger didn't deserve it, always escaping, chasing other animals and eating my tea when I wasn't looking.

The strange thing was shortly after I moved to London, my wife, having followed her Marine lover to Deal in Kent, suddenly turned up in London and contacted me. Apparently her boyfriend had absented himself without leave from the Marines and fled to London and she had followed him. She came to visit me in my flat in Crouch End, North London and even then I still had hopes that we would get back together as we were still married

and the decree nisi had yet to come through. I never did get to meet her lover.

She left London not long after and returned to Deal, Kent because Marine Bowyer had given himself up and she wanted to be near him. He must have been given detention or prison for his offence of absence without leave because the relationship with my wife collapsed a few months later.

She came through London once again and visited me. She was a different person this time, more mature and self-assured, she seemed to have grown up and was a totally self-confident woman to the one I had married, we slept together one last time and then we both went our separate ways. I met her once or twice after this when I visited her mother in Plymouth.

She eventually married a Royal Naval Petty Officer, who worked from RNAS Culdrose, Cornwall as an Air Sea Rescue crewman and they had a son together. He was the very same Petty Officer who received the MBE for saving Simon Le Bonn's life when the singer's yacht capsized.

The Petty Officer eventually divorced her and she then moved back to Plympton with her son and bought a house in the same road that we had lived in when we first got married. Her sister-in-law, who

is not her ‘bestest’ friend in the world, also lived in the same road.

After the divorce I remained close friends with her mum and kept in touch with her for the remainder of her life until she died at the age of 92. My ex Father-in-law did not like me calling round when I was in the area and eventually asked me to stop visiting his wife as he said that she got despondent each time I left. I honoured his wishes and kept away until after he died.

My ex Mother-in-law had always looked after me like a son when I lived in her home so I continued to visit her as often as I could, when my duties allowed and dependent on where I was serving at the time. We kept in contact by mail and became even closer in spirit when she lost both her husband and her own son. She even became friends with my second wife, wishing that she was the grandmother of our two boys.

It took many years for my ex Mother-in-law to forgive her daughter for the way she had treated me, despite her daughter getting married again and having a son. I did try to intercede, but to no avail, they eventually buried the hatchet, becoming very close and my ex-wife looked after her mum towards the end of her life.

My ex Mother-in-law died when she was 92 years of age and my wife Ann and I went to her funeral in Plymouth travelling down on Boxing Day 2005. The funeral service was held in the Church where I was first married. Afterwards my ex-wife sold her mother's and her own house and moved with her son to Lincoln. I hope that at last she is happy and settled in her new life.

Whilst serving in the MOD, Main Building I worked in a department called 'G' Branch which dealt with all Royal Marines operations and unit deployments. I also had other responsibilities of a clerical nature, such as keeping the main bible of the Royal Marines, The Royal Marines Instructions, up to date and in good printed order. The Commandant General of the Corps, who held the rank of Lieutenant General, had his offices a couple of floors above us. The highest rank in the Royal Marines was the Captain General and that rank was held by The Duke of Edinburgh.

My younger brother, who was now a civilian, also worked in the Main Building for a while but I was not allowed to visit him because he worked in the cipher department of the MoD, situated in the subterranean depths of the building and had restricted access and my MoD pass did not cover this area.

It was about this time that I decided to wear a toupee as I was fed up with having to do a comb over every day and using hair spray to keep what little hair I had in place. I also had the stupid notion that it would make me look younger and I would be able to attract the opposite sex. I had been going bald since my early twenties. I paid £200 (which was a lot of money then) for a Crown Topper wig and had it fitted in their studio in Regent Street, London. On completion of fitting by an expert barber it looked absolutely great and was difficult to detect on that first day. I went back to my office and everybody agreed that it looked very good and suited me; then the fun started.

After a couple of days the wig had to come off at night and I used to put it on an upturned water jug on the little bar we had in the lounge. The first evening I took it off I was in the bedroom when I heard Skippy making a noise in the lounge so I went to see what was happening and there he was with my wig in his mouth shaking it backwards and forwards, essentially killing it! Fortunately he didn't damage it too much and it looked OK once I had cleaned of all of the saliva.

I wasn't really comfortable wearing it, because it was just not me, I felt trapped and nervous as if everybody was watching me. I was continually

worried that someone would pull it off so always sat with my back to a wall.

One party night in a friend's house, they were doing the Hokey Cokey with an inner and outer ring of people, I was in the outer ring and half way through the dance the outer ring had to duck under the arms of the inner ring and as I went through, the man I was ducking under closed his arm down on my head and the wig got jammed under his arm so one minute I am in the middle with no hair then ducking back again I retrieve the wig and there I am the next moment with hair again.

On another occasion a group of us went to a Disco and I was on the dance floor with a girl and my mate came over and pointed out the ultraviolet light was making the stitches in my wig glow white and it looked as if my scalp was stitched up.

The wig was held in place by double sided sticky tape and if the scalp was sweaty then the tape would lose its grip and the wig would then be askew and look stupid. I quickly tired of the whole thing and stopped wearing it except on the odd occasion for fun. I went back to a comb over.

My mate Steve Goldsmith was a great attraction for the ladies. In those days he was a handsome devil, you could throw a sack over him and he still looked good. I had the gift of the gab he had the looks. As

I knew my way around the MOD Main Building, if Steve fancied a girl I would be able to track her down. I would eventually find them and say something like I think my mate Steve fancies you, would you like me to arrange a meeting and perhaps you have a friend you could bring for me. Some of Steve's girls were spectacular but for some reason he quickly tired of them or them him and they usually ended up crying on my shoulder, well somebody had to look after them!

We used to meet the girls in a superb club come bar in the basement of the MOD, dim lights, comfy armchairs and cheap booze. Those were the days.

After a couple of years in London I nearly left the Corps to become a business partner with Steve Goldsmith. He had decided to buy a business in Majorca and retire early from the Royal Marines.

The business was a drinking establishment called The Bar Mini Golf, which was situated next to (yes you've guessed it!) a mini golf course (crazy golf). The reason for my hesitancy in staying in the Corps was that I had got used to being a civilian and working as a Civil Servant and I had lost touch with my military roots. Thank goodness I decided not to leave and stayed in the Corps otherwise I would never have met my future wife Ann.

After two and a half years I was promoted Colour Sergeant and moved over to Old Admiralty Building, by Admiralty Arch, in a department called 'A' Branch which dealt with all matters pertaining to unit strengths and complements, as the size of the Corps had to be strictly controlled and monitored in accordance with Government budgets.

Although we were extremely busy during working hours, we had every evening and week-ends off and attended some great parties. Some I recall started on a Friday night and you went to work on a Monday morning straight from the party. My girlfriends carried spare knickers and the bare essentials in handbags so that the both of us could be reasonably presentable for work if the requirement arose.

On one memorable party we were invited to we did not have to bring a bottle because the party was being given by our friends who were air stewards and air hostesses. I have never seen such a vast variety of miniature spirits in my life. Memorable times were had by all; we worked hard and we played hard.

During this period I visited Ipswich nearly every weekend and stayed with my best friend and old school mate Barry Hockley and his wife Lynda in their marital home in Charsfield just outside of Ipswich. I used to take Skippy with me, but unfortunately he had to stay in my car over night as

Barry had a big dog himself at the time which did not get on with Skippy. The first night I left Skippy he ripped all the roof lining from my car because he was being pestered and taunted by other animals on the outside. Another bloody expense, thank goodness Skippy didn't attack the upholstery.

I obviously visited my mother during this time and we would have long chats usually about family matters. I asked mum once if she ever regretted not having gone abroad and she replied that she had been abroad many times. Strange I thought, I don't remember my mother ever having enough money to do something like that, she might have managed to visit her sister in Felixstowe a few times, oh, and that trip to Scotland, but that was all.

Then she explained that she had been all over the world through her sons because we all sent postcards or letters from wherever we were posted abroad and we all brought back gifts and stories from the many foreign countries we had visited by choice and by duty. Mum had a vivid imagination because she loved to read so could easily imagine the exotic places her sons had seen and she said she could do all this travelling without ever leaving her armchair.

When we siblings got older we all tried to help with the practical aspects of our parents lives, despite the three oldest brothers living in faraway places. We

would buy household appliances, kitchen equipment (because mum was prone to burning holes in saucepans!), carpets and even a greenhouse. My second wife and I even sent home a food parcel one Christmas which included a full cooked chicken in a tin. I remember building a garden shed and erecting a greenhouse during one of my service leave periods.

One week-end my older brother John and I came home to Ipswich from London arriving on a Saturday morning to decorate the main living room and lay a new carpet we had purchased which had fallen off a lorry. My brother and I set to and completely decorated the front living room working all Saturday night so that in the morning when mum got up it was completely finished, including the carpet laying. A quick wash and breakfast and we returned whence we came.

After we had grown up we did not often get together as a family because we three older brothers had made lives for ourselves elsewhere in the country.

There was one Christmas when we did succeed however and we all made it home for Christmas Eve. We all contacted home prior to our arrival to see what we should bring in terms of festive fare. The old man told us not to bring a chicken as he had two

hens in the garden which had stopped laying eggs and he would prepare them for the two day festivities.

We all eventually arrived home fairly late in the evening, a bit worse for wear having all just met in one of the local drinking establishments. No sooner had we arrived when we discovered that the chookies were still in the garden clucking away. The brothers, in best clobber, chased the damn things round the garden until we captured and killed them. We still hadn't finished as the next day the old man 'chickened out' (sorry about the pun!) as he didn't have the nerve to pluck and gut them. To this day I can still see my older brother standing at the kitchen table wearing a suit and tie slitting the stomachs of the now defunct chickens with a razor blade.

Although I had quite a few girlfriends in London after my divorce, especially when Steve Goldsmith was around, my next great and lasting love was and still is the gorgeous Ann McCallum, who was a Jenny Wren.

Ann McCallum was born in Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire on 6th May 1948 to parents Frank and Lillian and has a brother called Donald. Both Donald and his father served in the Royal Navy. During Donald's career he served on the Royal Yacht Britannia.

Prior to joining the WRNS Ann had been married, divorced and lost a baby, all before the age of 26. The man she married was called Richard Warren Cock. Fancy a parent calling their son Richard, when his surname was Cock (Dick Cock!) and his initials W.C. During the marriage Ann had difficulty because people thought her name was Hancock (Ann Cock!).

The main reason for her joining the WRNS was to get away from West Yorkshire with its unhappy memories and hopefully, after her training, ending up in London because it was easy to get a posting there as not many WRNS wanted to be stationed in London. Thank goodness she did get posted to the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines otherwise we would never have met!

Ann joined DCGRM, 'G' Branch, at the Ministry of Defence Main Building in Whitehall on the 11th March 1974 the day before I was presented with my Long Service and Good Conduct Medal (15 years of undetected crime). It was also the day before my birthday party (34 years of age) which was to be held in the Henry Bedford Head public house just off Trafalgar Square.

It was to be a joint party because a Royal Marines corporal called Steve Witchurch had also received his LS&GC medal on the same day and he had invited Ann to our joint party because they worked in the

same department in Main Buildings, Whitehall. She nearly turned down the invitation because Steve had asked her to come for a run ashore and as she didn't know naval terminology then, she thought that it literally meant going for a run, instead of attending a party.

It was Ann's first day at work in London and she had come straight from Recruit Training and was totally unfamiliar with her surroundings and London in particular, whereas I knew London very well. Ann was escorted over to the pub for the party.

Towards the end of the evening I heard Ann say that she had to get back to her accommodation in Furse House and was leaving. I had not met her up to this point, so introduced myself and asked her to have a drink with me as it was my party as well and told her that I would drop her off at the tube station afterwards as I had my car with me.

We had that drink and I drove her to Charing Cross tube station and unceremoniously ushered her out of the car because I wanted to get back to the party. Little did I know that she was cursing me under her breath because she didn't have a clue where she was or how to get to her WRNS quarters in Furse House, Gloucester Road in Kensington, London.

She obviously succeeded in reaching her destination (I always liked intelligent and resourceful girls) and

she also forgave me because a week later she accepted my invitation to accompany me to a party as my date.

We seemed to click that very first night and the sexual chemistry was there from the start. At the party Ann was sitting on my lap, (which made it very hard for me!) when my ex-girlfriend (an ex-Wren), came over and told me that I had not been circulating enough. A bit of a stupid remark really, because I was obviously circulating with a beautiful girl, she was on my lap, we both had a drink and we were definitely enjoying ourselves and having a great party.

This was the beginning of our relationship together and Ann and I began it by both agreeing that we had no intention of getting married again. From the outset our relationship was a very passionate one, we even made love in broad daylight in my car (steamy up windows of course) in the car park at the back of the Royal Albert Hall, London so obviously the chemistry was quite strong. Communication came easy to us both and we were able to be completely Frank with each other, strange that because she was called Ann and I was called David! Naturally me being a Colour Sergeant and Ann being a Wren, she had to obey my orders and stand to attention before we got into bed! (I of course was

already standing to attention, if you get what I mean!).

During this time Ann managed to escape from London for a short while by accepting a challenge to go to Commando Training Centre Royal Marines with a group of WRNS and carry out some training on the Commando course at Lympstone (see photograph).

Most week-ends I would drive down to Ipswich and stop with my closest friends Barry Hockley (a builder) and his wife Lynda, in fact I had my own bedroom in their house. Barry and I had been friends since our school days. Barry and I lost touch with each other when I joined the Royal Marines and got back together after we had both got married.

I remember Barry coming round to Fletcher Road on one of my visits home and taking me out for a drink to seek my advice. He was now married with two children but had met another girl called Lynda and fallen in love. Barry was the resident builder working on a mushroom farm where Lynda happened to be working as well. I had never met Lynda so my answer was based on our upbringing which dictated that being married was for life, especially if you had children. My advice to Barry was to go back to his wife. I did not know at the time that Barry's first wife Anne was treating him like shit.

Fortunately he did not listen to me, divorced Anne and married Lynda. They have been happily married ever since and have two lovely daughters Clare and Kathleen and also five grandchildren. Lynda always thought that I didn't like her but she was wrong as I took to her straight away when we met, she is a lovely talented lady. She did tell me afterwards that she saw Barry first when he was working at the mushroom farm and told her friends, before she was ever introduced to him, that she was going to marry him.

Barry and Lynda had always vetted my previous girlfriends and thus far had not been able to get on with any of them, so it was with trepidation that I took Ann to see them for her first week-end visit to Ipswich. Thankfully, they liked Ann, although I'm not too sure about Barry, because Ann used to tell Lynda some home truths, especially when Barry was being a chauvinistic pig and was treating Lynda like a doormat. Barry would say some years later that Ann had changed me and turned me into a miserable old sod and that, my friends, could not be further from the truth.

Ann and I still remain close friends with Barry and Lynda and over the years despite the odd spat now and again, nevertheless, we have had some wonderful times and parties, watched each other's children growing up and being part of each other's

lives. Some of the most memorable parties were held in Barry and Lynda's huge bungalow in Penzance Road, Kesgrave, celebrating various birthdays and anniversaries. Their bungalow had a snooker room with bar, a full size snooker table and a swimming pool in the back garden. On the odd occasion I would get drunk and hide away somewhere out of the way and fall asleep, like under the table, behind a sofa or in a spare bedroom. I say this with tongue in cheek, because I did this quite often, well I tire easily!

Over the years Barry, Lynda and their girls, have also visited our homes and when our children flew the nests we have also been on holidays together.

During this period, Ann and I took over a pub called The Three Horseshoes at Charsfield, Suffolk which was our local pub when we were staying at Barry and Lynda's. We both had experience in running pubs, Ann in Yorkshire and I in London. Derek the landlord and his wife wanted to go on holiday so Ann and I volunteered to look after the pub during one of our leave periods from the armed forces.

We didn't charge them anything for our services but did live off the fat of the land as this was a food pub and the larder and fridge was packed with some wonderful food. We had an enjoyable ten days or so and nearly got the milkman and baker sacked because they came to the pub for lunch and stayed

until the early evening with half their delivery round still on the vehicles. The takings during our stay were well over the odds and the locals all voted for us to stay and replace the owners.

The relationship between Ann and I quickly turned into courtship and the love bug had bitten. Our courtship was not to be a piece of cake though as there was a hidden agenda amongst our work colleagues in London and the group that we generally partied with. This group were also particular friends of my ex-girlfriend, who remained on the scene and still considered me to be her boyfriend.

This group continually tried to separate Ann from me at nearly all the parties that we went to, especially when I had had a few drinks too many. Fortunately Ann is a clever girl and saw through those ploys and gave as good as she got, even to the point of asking my ex-girlfriend if she wanted to go outside, they did but only walked round the block and discussed the situation.

My ex was under the misapprehension that I still had feelings for her, despite me telling her otherwise. However hard I had tried to turn our relationship into a courtship, she always fended me off and kept me at arm's length. Our relationship was not an amorous one although I would have liked it to be. Perhaps it was my fault and she couldn't feel that

way towards me despite the fact that I am a touchy feely sort of person. Her kisses were not passionate, more fraternal in nature. No matter how hard I tried during our relationship, I could not seem to get close to her and she was also the sort of person who had to control every aspect of a relationship, even with her friends. Before you ask, no we never slept with each other, although she did offer me her body after Ann and I had married.

I proposed to Ann in a Guards Sergeants Mess next to Old Scotland Yard, where they used to keep the police horses; her answer was not yes but when. We married in the now defunct Caxton Hall London on 14th March 1975 and held our wedding reception in the Lord Nelson Public House, Trafalgar Square which was then run by an ex Royal Marines Corporal (see 'The' wedding photograph).

Our Commandant General (the boss of all Royal Marines) was Sir Ian (Biz) Gourlay who honoured us by postponing his visit to America to attend our reception. He was a lovely man and respected by all.

We spent our first night in The Royal Adelphi Hotel in Villiers Street just up from Charing Cross tube station and this hotel will appear later in my story. We honeymooned in Majorca staying with my great friend ex Sergeant Steve Goldsmith and his wonderful partner Lyn Tierney. Steve was living in

a large rented apartment just across the road from his business The Bar Mini Golf.

My ex-girlfriend even turned up at the Bar Mini Golf during our honeymoon with an ex-girlfriend of Steve's, Ann and Lyn were not best pleased. My ex commented to Ann that Ann and I were not very sun tanned, Ann's retort was "My dear, we are on honeymoon and don't get up until the sun goes down!" (Being a lady she missed out "you f***in twit").

During our honeymoon we met a group of American sailors from the USS Roosevelt who came for a drink in Steve's bar. They were a scuba diving club and took us on a couple of their expeditions round the island and taught us how to dive. They almost ran out of weights for Ann's dive belt because her fine pair of tits made her very buoyant and difficult to sink under the water (see photographs).

Our diving friends also honoured us by inviting us to USS Roosevelt on a non-visiting day for a tour of the whole ship including a slap up meal. During this tour we were astounded to discover that the black sailors separated themselves, by choice, from the white sailors in their living, eating and recreational activities. We were told that despite this everybody worked well together as a team during normal working routines and operations. I supposed they

would have to work closely together, it being an operational warship (see photograph).

We also met two Danish brothers who were commercial sailors on holiday in Majorca and their local drinking hole was Steve's bar. They also attended several after hour's lock-ins when we had to drink in the bar's cellar. The closing times in Majorca were regulated in those days. We discovered that during their work they visited Liverpool on a regular basis and were taught English by members of a rugby club they regularly visited. We learnt this the hard way because the first words they spoke to us were "It's nice to fucking meet you". Their language was peppered with the 'F' word which they thought was natural, so we had to teach them all over again. The younger of the two, who's English was not good in any case, fancied Ann and kept trying to chat her up, until his brother explained to him in Danish that she was on honeymoon (see photograph).

Steve and Lyn are still together after 37 years, with one son but no marriage certificate. I think Lyn is playing hard to get as Steve has asked her to marry him more than once.

After our return to London from honeymoon in March 1975 we went back to live in the damp basement level apartment I shared with my younger brother Alan.

Unfortunately Ann and I had to move out as Alan refused to go after already agreeing that he would leave when we returned from honeymoon. He acted like a complete arsehole, moved into the lounge area and only came home when we went to bed and left before we got up in the morning. Being in the armed forces we couldn't miss going to work, so it was difficult to get hold of Alan to try and sort things out.

As a result of all this upset a bald spot appeared on top of Ann's head and was getting bigger with all the worry. She eventually had injections in her scalp and the hair started to grow back, thank goodness, one bald person in the family was enough!

We were very fortunate to be allocated married quarters at such short notice and were extremely lucky because a Royal Naval Officer had to leave suddenly for an emergency posting abroad. His misfortune was our gain and we moved into his vacated quarters called Wynn Cottage in Chobham, Surrey. For the next eight months we lived in this gorgeous detached home which had three large bedrooms, a massive lounge, huge dining room and a spacious kitchen.

Until we moved to Wynn Cottage, we hadn't realised just how musty and damp all our belongings and cloths were, so we were well shot of the musty

old basement flat in North London and Alan was welcome to it.

The officer must have worked his socks off during his tenancy at Wynn Cottage because the garden was lovely and he had planted every vegetable and salad plant anyone could have wished for.

It was a glorious summer that year; the surrounding countryside was wearing its finest green coat and our detached cottage was nestled close to woodland with lovely country walks. Skippy, my Jack Russel was in his element in our large garden and thoroughly enjoyed his many long walks in the countryside, a far cry from his life in a basement flat in North London (see photograph).

He was also adept at escaping from the garden, I'm sure he must have been a POW in a previous life. I was constantly blocking up his tunnels and escape routes which he kept digging whilst we were at work. He was a feisty little sod, would attack any animal, four legged, two legged, large or small and often got beaten up by the larger animals. The local vet got to know Skippy quite well.

My mum came for a fortnight's visit and stayed with us in Wynn Cottage and it was at this time that Ann and I asked her if she would like to come and live with us permanently, but she refused saying that

she was too set in her ways and had got used to her life with the old man in Ipswich.

She had a wonderful time in Surrey getting out and about to all the places she had known when she was a young nurse in London (Ann and I had to work the first week of her visit). Mum even became a regular at our local pub and would enjoy a port and lemon or two. The locals knew her and called her 'Winnie' but didn't know the two of us and we lived there!

She was also very good at washing up and managed to clean one of our pans to a shining metal finish, it was a non-stick pan prior to her attacking it; she had never seen one before. It must have taken her a very long time to get all that non-stick stuff off.

She was also very embarrassed because she ate all the cheese we had in the fridge for her lunch one day when Ann and I were both at work. She said that it was so delicious and she had eaten a bit too much and would have to buy us some more to replace it. We had to explain to her that was why we kept food in the fridge, it was there to be consumed and we would replace things as they got used. She had never been used to this concept or ever had enough money to stockpile food.

Ann and I had a wonderful time in Wynn Cottage; we had some fantastic parties with our work colleagues and it was double the enjoyment

because we had enough room to accommodate everyone which meant they could drink and had no worries about getting home.

One of the parties was Bonfire Night and I had the day off to get things ready and Ann was bringing our guests home on the train that night. During the train journey home from central London they got bored and consumed a gallon of sherry, which was meant to be for the party, before they arrived at Woking and there were only eight of them! It took two trips to ferry this drunken lot back to the house. Ann and I had constructed a life like Guy Fawkes with some of my old clothes and I had made a large penis which was zipped up in the correct position. The Guy was sat in a chair by the window in the Dining Room so I asked Jane, one of our naive female colleagues, if she wouldn't mind undoing the zip of the trousers to retrieve a firework that I said I had hidden there. It was in front of everybody else and her face was a picture when out popped this large penis. When we burnt the Guy later, the last thing to go up in flames was this, by now, large flaming erect penis.

We especially enjoyed the spacious secluded gardens and the presence of all the family members who were able to visit and stay with us. It was a truly happy time for us and the more so because our first child was conceived there. It must have been

all that open air sex we had, not while the visitors were there of course, surrounded by eight foot high thick hedges and fences.

During two weeks summer holiday I decided that I would stop having a comb over and just got a pair of scissors and cut this big flap of hair straight off and went out in the garden with it in my hand to show Ann. She had to give me a haircut because I had this ridge of hair where I had cut it off. It was summer so my head got really brown before I went back to work. Everybody at work thought I looked years younger and Ann has been cutting my hair ever since and it also saved me a fortune on hair spray.

Towards the end of that year, I was contacted at home by our drafting department, asking me to make a choice regarding my next posting. This had never happened to me before so I was a bit taken aback; nevertheless, the offer on the table was Plymouth or Malta. Mmmm! what should I do, Plymouth, Malta, Malta, Plymouth Mmmm! don't be so bloody silly, of course Ann and I both jumped at the chance and shouted at the top of our voices MALTA.

Before we left London we attended our last annual Ball laid on by the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines. Ann was heavily pregnant and everybody was aware that we were off to Malta. My ex-girlfriend had one last go at me whilst we

were dancing and continued her assault after she had steered me into the bar area away from the dance floor. At this time, Ann was sat with an officer (see photograph) who asked her if she wanted him to rescue me from my ex. Ann told him that she was confident that I would be able to extract myself from said situation.

My ex told me that she thought she was losing me now that I had been posted abroad and offered me her body once again. I could not get it through to her that she had lost me as soon as Ann came on the scene and that we were happily married and about to have our first child. I extracted myself and returned to my wife to enjoy the rest of a wonderful evening. I have never met my ex again, although when Ann and I were on holiday abroad once, my ex did come to the pub we had in Yorkshire.

Our very last celebration was being taken out for a lunch time meal by Ann's boss Colonel David Slater and his lovely wife Josie. Josie Slater was a Barrister and David was training to be a Barrister as well. They had purchased a large house in Suffolk and wanted us both to leave the services a go and work for them and live in a cottage in the grounds. Ann would be a Secretary, cleaner and cook and I would be a driver and general factotum. Although we liked them well enough, Josie especially, not bloody likely,

Ann and I were not about to be at the beck and call 24/7 of a slave driver for low wages.

Anyway they took us to this lovely restaurant in the West End and we had the pick of the menu. David and Josie had a fish dish for starters and when it arrived there was the tiniest piece of lemon so David complained and got a bit more. They both had another fish dish for the main course and this time it included a lemon cut in half on David's plate. He didn't turn a hair and turned to us and said that they would regret it. We had a wonderful lunch and after two hours it was time to leave. David paid the bill, leaving no tip and turned to the waiter and gave him a shilling saying, that's for the lemon.

On the 31st December 1975 Ann and I flew out to Malta for yet another adventure and to take over a job I had never done before. The job was Sub-Accountant of 41 Commando Royal Marines and we were due to be stationed there for two and a half years.

Skippy went to live with Ann's parents in West Yorkshire and eventually ending his days on a Yorkshire Farm, where he was crowned as the best ratter the Farmer had ever known.



This photograph was taken in the early 1970's at Alexandra Palace (before it got burnt down) where
I used to take my dog Skippy for a treat



Wren Ann McCallum decides that she has had enough of being engaged to a Royal Marines Commando so decides to attempt the Commando Course at Lympstone in Devon. This was a relaxing break from the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines in 1974.



The only photograph that exists of my second and final marriage to Ann McCallum in the now defunct Caxton Hall in 1975.

L to R Lillian McCallum, the Old Man, Ann McCallum (bride), David Stollery (Bridegroom)
Winifred Stollery and Frank McCallum

(The official Photographer, a Royal Naval Petty Officer (I told you they hated the Royal Marines), failed to take any photographs because both of his camera's had broken down!)



Ann and I being presented with wedding gifts from our colleagues in the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines

The Colonel presenting our wedding gifts was Colonel Mansell and the presentation was carried out in the Military Secretary's Department over at Old Admiralty Building, Trafalgar Square.



Top Photo

The United States Naval ranks from USS Roosevelt had their own sports diving team and we were lucky enough to join them during our honeymoon, a great crowd of lads. The Team Leader was Dick, a Chief Petty Officer from Fort Lauderdale (4th from the left) and his main sidekick was Bob another Chief Petty Officer (5th from the left) 1975.

Bottom Photo

Ann and I were lucky enough to be given diving lessons by the boys and go diving with them as well 1975.





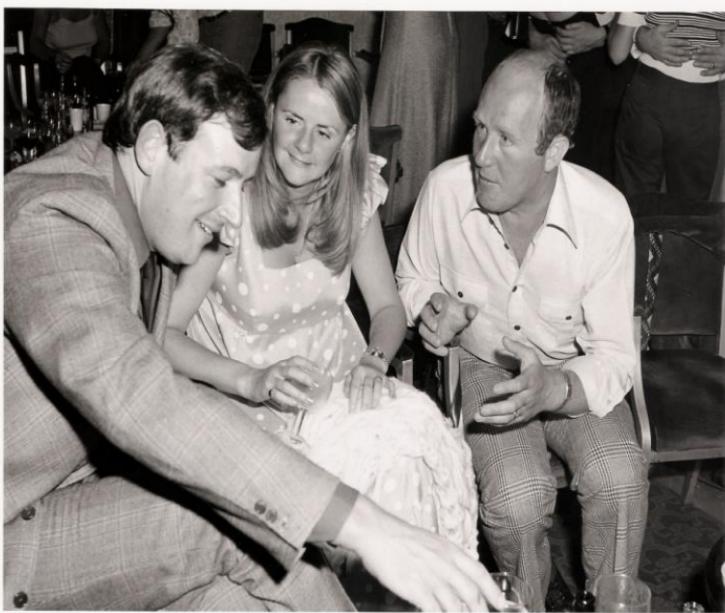
Top Photo

1975 during our private visit to the USS Roosevelt Ann decides to learn how to fly a fighter aircraft

Bottom Photo

1975 in Steve Goldsmith's Bar Mini Golf cellar with the two Danish 'F' brothers and as you can see
Ann is very interested in their conversation!





Ann and I with a work colleague from the Department of the Commandant General Royal Marines at a wonderful Summer Ball just before we left London to go to Malta

This picture also shows me with my 'new' hairstyle and the lovely sun tan Ann and I got during our holiday in Wynn Cottage.

Chapter 14

1976 – 1977 Malta

Ann and I had been travelling and flying for about 48 hours and had not managed to get any sleep at all. The aircraft we flew out to Malta in had been diverted to Cyprus to drop off some troops before continuing the journey. We had to disembark the plane in Cyprus but were not allowed to leave the airport until the plane was ready for take-off, so we were both very tired, more so my wife Ann because she was six months pregnant.

On arrival in Malta we were met by the person I was going to relieve and he informed us that we were expected to attend the New Year's Eve ball in the Sergeants Mess that evening. The Commanding Officer and Second-in-Command had also been invited to the Ball and wanted to meet us because we had both come from the Ministry of Defence.

Fortunately a two bedroom married quarter was ready for us (the interior was a horrible dark blue, ugh!) at St Patricks which was a military housing complex with a view of the sea and just above St Andrews barracks where I would be working. Some kind person had left us a food parcel to get us started although we still needed some fresh milk and bread and a few other odds and ends. We were pointed in the direction of one of the Royal Marines

best known Bars come shop, Jessie's, just outside of St Andrews barracks and this was our first introduction to this establishment, not for a drink, but for milk and bread. Jessie's bar has become part of Malta's history and I believe it still exists today, although I do not think the same family run it, or if they do, they have converted it into a museum.

My Mess Dress and Ann's party clothes were conveniently packed on top of our other clothes in our suitcases, so after a quick shit, shower and shampoo, we were off to the Sergeants Mess Ball.

The Sergeants Mess had invited the Officers from the unit to our Ball so when Ann and I arrived in the Mess we were stalked and deftly manoeuvred into a quiet corner by the Commanding Officer and the Second-in-Command and grilled by them for information regarding the future of our unit 41 Commando Royal Marines. Although we knew this information, well the where but not the when, it was still a secret and Ann and I were not allowed to divulge anything on pain of death. Both of us had signed the Official Secrets Act and had to keep our mouths shut. They continued to ply us with drinks, but to no avail. The drinks were very welcome though!

I was fortunate in receiving a good turnover of about a week from my predecessor, it was necessary

because of the status and importance of the position.

My job in the unit was Sub-Accountant, so I would become familiar with everybody in the unit, including the wives, because the Paying Officer, Lieutenant Mike Kerwin and I, were responsible for paying everybody including the cashing of all personal cheques. We were like a mini bank really; Mike Kerwin paid the Officers and I paid the Other Ranks.

We opened on a daily basis, mornings only, Monday to Friday. In the summer we operated on a long forenoon working routine, from 8am until 1pm, in the winter we worked until 4pm, our duties also including looking after a team of 12 in a Pay Office and Records Department.

The Records Office was overseen by Sergeant Colin Sawden, a friend from my London days. Colin would eventually become an officer and reach the rank of Captain.

On operations and exercises outside of Malta, the Paying Officer would have to deploy and I would be left to run the operation in Malta.

Colin Sawden and I, plus our wives Ann and Barbara, were invited to the Officers Mess to attend the wedding of Mike Kerwin. As usual when Officers

and SNCO's meet for social occasions our competitive spirit comes to the fore, even at weddings. Colin and I were challenged to various drinking games, each of our groups trying to outdo the other. Walking on cans, pokey die and spoof, it's a wonder we were able to walk out of there on our own two feet. Ann, my wife, even got into the fray by standing on her head, unsupported. An Officer had to beat her though and stood on his head and drunk a pint of beer. His legs were leaning against the wall though; I'm afraid Colin and I wouldn't allow that and claimed Ann as the victor.

The social life in Malta was excellent and alcohol was extremely cheap. Each SNCO mess member was entitled to 4 duty free bottles of spirits per month, two of which were donated to the mess bar. At that time in Malta an English pound was worth 98 Maltese cents and in the mess double vodka and coke cost just 10 cents.

The facilities in the summer were great because the Sergeants Mess had its own Lido down in St Georges Bay. Ann and I had also purchased a brand new car, a Mazda station wagon, so we were able to explore the whole of the island at will. We also had family and friends who visited and came to stay for their holidays. Ann was the one that would take them to all the touristy places as I had to work. She got fed

up by the end because she had seen the sights so many times.

My oldest son Phillip James was born in Malta on Saturday 27th March 1968. Ann started to have pains in the early evening and we were advised to proceed to the naval hospital at Mtarfa. As the birth neared Ann was taken into the delivery room and I sat in the ward nearby waiting for the event, when in walked the nurse and grabbed me by the arm and unceremoniously plunked me into a chair beside Ann in the delivery room, so I witnessed the birth of my son later that night. It was a wondrous moment watching the delivery and is the closest I have ever felt towards god. Before I left the hospital Ann told me not to bother to come the next afternoon because she had no doubt that I would be wetting the baby's head in the Mess at lunch time.

The following day I went to the Mess at midday and as I walked through the door everybody knew that the baby must have been born because Ann was not with me. By the time I reached the bar a few drinks were already lined up. Sgt Tony Higgins PTI (Hig the Pig) promised that he would drive me to the hospital later in the day so that I could enjoy wetting my babies head. About 4pm I decided to visit Ann and Phillip so Tony went to collect the car. When I got outside Tony was sat in the passenger seat fast asleep, so I drove myself to the hospital. As soon as

I reached Ann's bedside I sat down, grabbed my son's hand and promptly fell asleep. Ann awakened me an hour later, after a quick kiss and cuddle I left and drove myself back to the Mess. When we arrived, Tony woke up and said, are we ready to go then!

Phillip James Stollery was christened in Malta by the units Naval Padre in the 41 Cdo RM church. Phillip also has a Maltese birth certificate as all births, foreign and domestic, had to be registered at the main police stations and ours was in Rabat. His birth had also to be recorded at the British High Commission within seven days so that he could be registered as a British citizen, had we not done so then it would have been very difficult to take Phillip out of Malta. His god parents were Colour Sergeant Des Foster and his wife Mary and Ann's brother Donald who had flown out with Ann's mum and dad.

The christening was celebrated in the Sergeants' Mess with family and friends from the UK and members of the Mess of course. We wet the baby's head with champagne cocktails made from a very expensive bottle of brandy donated by one of my Mess mates Sergeant Spike Kelly.

Because the weather was so good, my son Phillip spent most of his days without a nappy on and as a result got quite brown. For many years after this he would tan very quickly, without going red, every

time the sun came out. That does not happen nowadays. I also took him swimming in the sea when he was just a few months old.

Very soon after Phillip's birth we were very lucky to get a permanent baby sitter for him, a lovely 16 year old girl whose parents were also stationed on Malta. She often slept over and sometimes was a naughty girl because she had her boyfriend stop over as well, unbeknownst to us, obviously because we were out at the time and never peeked into her room when we returned home, although there were certain clues; like a used condom floating in the toilet bowl and I didn't use them! Let us be honest here, she was over the age of consent and was very much in love. We learnt much later that his usual exit from our premises was jumping over the upstairs balcony. How they didn't get caught we do not know, perhaps we shut our eyes to it, or else we just didn't want to know.

We loved her to bits and wanted to protect her from her father as her boyfriend was a lovely fellow, also deeply in love, who got on exceedingly well with our son Phillip. We certainly didn't want to pry into her affairs because she was extremely happy during this period.

One evening, after we had been to a party, we invited a group of friends back to our place and her father was with them. Her father, who was a very

strict, had wanted to go upstairs to see if his daughter was OK. Thank goodness I dissuaded him because her boyfriend was in her room at the time. Shortly afterwards, her boyfriend leapt over the balcony which was on the first floor and injured his ankle.

Our babysitter's father was always quizzing me about her, making sure that she was actually babysitting and not out and about with any young fella's. Because he was such a strict father, our babysitter sometimes preferred to escape to our house rather than be at home with her family.

Over the years we have stayed in close touch with our babysitter and we always think of her as our surrogate daughter and we love her dearly; she is married with a lovely family of her own, although she did not marry her first love who she met in Malta.

The Sergeant's Mess laid on a shooting competition in the .22 rifle range between the husbands and wives. My wife was probably thinking at the time that she would rather be shooting at me than the target, after 37 years she probably still thinks it! Anyway we both scored 97 out of a hundred. Being a gentleman of course, I dropped a couple of shots so that I didn't show her up.

About half way through our tour in Malta I was summoned back to England for six weeks to complete an Advanced Command Course (ACC) at Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, Lympstone in Devon in preparation for promotion to Warrant Officer.

Ann decided to come to England at the same time to show Phillip to the family and spent the first three weeks touring the country visiting relatives and friends. Ann and Phillip travelled to Ipswich, stopping with my parents, Yorkshire, stopping with Ann's parents and Devon, stopping with Flo Crosse, my first wife's mother. The last 3 weeks of my course she stopped in Lympstone village with Mike Kerwin and his wife, who had returned home from Malta as Mike was now working at CTCRM. Another officer, Lieutenant Devlin, had taken over his duties in Malta and I had trained Colin Sawden to assume my duties whilst I was away.

The ACC was a high powered course to prepare an individual for promotion to Warrant Officer, although we did have Warrant Officers on the course that had been too busy to attend prior to their promotion.

Fortunately, my mate Warrant Officer Barry Davis had also come back with me from Malta. Barry was a heavy smoker and smuggled 1000 duty free cigarettes in his suitcase. When carrying out

upgrading courses in the Corps it is always best if you buddy up with someone to do the course with, so Barry and I teamed up together and what a team we made! Talk about off the cuff; my cuffs were totally knackered by the time the course was over! It was a strenuous and mentally difficult course and we had to learn an awful lot, like tactics in the field, logistics, strategies for all sorts of diverse situations, dissertations and be able to think on your feet and give instant solutions at the drop of a hat. Nevertheless, all of us, without exception thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I was very fortunate to get a glowing report at the end of the course and 7 months later I was promoted to WO2.

My wife and I returned to Malta to carry on where we left off. Although we had not been given any indication of dates, in the back of everyone's mind was the knowledge that in the not too distant future, 41 Commando and the rest of the British troops, would have to leave Malta forever.

Life returned to normal and we were all preparing for the Christmas Festivities, parties and the New Year's Ball. One of the main events to look forward to was the traditional annual football match between the Officers and SNCO's. The match was played on the camp's football pitch and the Officers and SNCO's had erected a beer tent and the day was treated like a gala by the whole unit. Both sides had

kept their preparations secret, so nobody knew what to expect. On the day of the match the Officers turned up in Victorian football kit, complete with false moustaches and the SNCO's turned up in conventional kit. The SNCO's secret weapon was a complete substitute team of SNCO's wives, all dressed as a football team, hidden behind the side lines (see photograph).

The referee for the first half was Sgt Tony Higgins and he stood on a 6ft flimsy wooden structure just off centre of pitch; he blew the whistle to commence the game and his podium was immediately demolished by the opposition and the battle commenced. The game was a combination of rugby, football, wrestling and any other combat sport you could think of. At one time I had the ball and was tackled by two Officers and dragged off the pitch into the beer tent and had a pint of beer poured down my throat. An Officer was slung over a PTI's shoulder and they ended up in the beer tent and so it went on.

Half way through the match the SNCO's decamped to the beer tent and were substituted by the wives and a new referee WO2 Fred Collins and mayhem continued. The wives sole task was to debag as many Officers as possible. After a short while the SNCO's returned to the fray in an attempt to score

goals but the Officers thwarted our endeavours by sending on more of their own substitutes.

The match was a complete shambles, sorry, success; everybody had a great time, plenty of physical exercise, plenty of beer consumed and much laughter all round. What was the score, who knows, who bloody cares?

One of my great delights as a SNCO was to attend Regimental functions in the Sergeants Mess and when we were in Malta we had several Regimental Dinners, but one of them was extraordinarily unusual because a Sergeants Mess mutiny occurred. A strange story, but true nevertheless.

41 Commando were due to go on a major military exercise to Canada and the unit was very busy packing and assembling quite a large advance party.

There was a Mess meeting during this time and one of the votes democratically agreed to delay an official Regimental Dinner until after the Canada trip, otherwise a lot of SNCO's in the advance party would miss out.

The Mess President (the unit Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM)) ruled against this vote and actually stated at this meeting that democracy was through his mouth and he insisted that a Regimental Dinner would be held prior to the Canada trip.

There was a huge outcry and the Mess members unanimously agreed that they would not attend this Regimental Dinner and requested that the minutes of the Mess meeting record the original vote and the unanimous decision not to attend.

Although in normal circumstances this would have been a compulsory attendance dinner and part of our regimental duties, the Mess President did not press the point. Despite everything, the dinner went ahead, without us and organised by the Mess President.

The only Royal Marines SNCO's to attend were those who joined the unit after the meeting and the other guests were SNCO's from the Army, Navy and RAF Regiments stationed in our area.

This was the first and last time as a Mess member that I have ever missed a Regimental Dinner. It hurt.

When the unit got back from the exercise in Canada, we rarely saw the Mess President in the Mess.

Lord Mountbatten of Burma (the Queen's cousin and once the First Lord of the Admiralty) came to Malta as the Queen's representative, to hand the island back to the Maltese. 41 Cdo RM hosted a massive parade of Trooping the Colours and Lord

Mountbatten of Burma took the salute as part of the handing over ceremonies (see photograph).

I was an usher and crowd controller during this parade and witnessed many Maltese civilians in tears at the thought of us leaving. You have to remember that a large number of British personnel married Maltese girls during the occupancy of Malta.

41 Cdo RM Sergeants' Mess were privileged to have Lord Mountbatten of Burma as a guest for a Mess function where we were able to meet and talk to him. I fell out with the President of the Mess as he would not allow me to bring my older brother John to the Mess for this function. My brother had flown to Malta from Saudi Arabia to visit me and despite him being an ex-Sergeant in the REME the RSM refused his presence at this function.

Lord Mountbatten of Burma was a wonderful and very important man for our country and it was an honour to be in his presence. I had the privilege of working in the war room he designed in the Ministry of Defence, Whitehall when I was employed in London.

Lord Mountbatten of Burma was murdered by the IRA in 1979 when they exploded a bomb on his small yacht when he was on a sailing holiday.

We never saw the Mess President after this, although we still respected him as he was an excellent RSM, he wouldn't even answer his door.

Our farewell gift to Maurice and his wife when they left the unit shortly afterwards was discarded in the dirt by the front door of their married quarters.

After the RSM had returned to England a Warrant Officer called Ted Wheeler was put in charge of the Sergeants Mess and held the purse strings for our entertainment. By this time I had been promoted to WO2.

Just before the unit was due to leave Malta, Ted organised a Pizza and social evening for all SNCO's and their wives. He made one basic mistake; he forgot to order the bloody food! Like an idiot he went to the local Pizza restaurant and asked for fifty Pizzas to take away, well they just laughed in his face so he returned to the mess to give us the bad news, no food!

My mate, now WO1 Barry Davis and I collected a car and visited the local chicken and chips take away and managed to obtain the last four portions for us and our wives, Margaret and Ann. We brought them back to the mess and in the confined space they smelt delicious and you could see that everybody else was drooling at the mouth as we

consumed the lot. Barry even ate the bones so that nobody could have a taste.

Just before we left Malta my next posting had come through and the family and I would be living in Exmouth, Devon and I would be serving in Commando Training Centre Royal Marines as the Warrant Officer in charge of the Clerks Training Wing.

We were also very lucky as we won a place on a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship for our car to be sent to England for the princely sum of £14. It was delivered to a garage quite near Brize Norton and would be converted for English road use, number plated, licensed, insured, given a service and delivered to us as we stepped from the aircraft on our return to UK shores.

I still had four years to serve until I reached the pensionable age of 40 so would this be my final posting in the Royal Marines? Who knows? I was positive that fate would take a hand and I wouldn't be in for an easy ride, whoever said that life was fair? Ann and I were really looking forward to a long holiday after our hectic tour in Malta and our changing life style with a young child.

We would be staying with relatives because at this stage in our lives we didn't own our own property

and as yet had not been allocated a married quarter near Lympstone.

Although we did not know it at the time, Ann was pregnant with our second child.



41 Commando Group Sergeants Mess joined the local Maltese Volley Ball league in 1977 and I got to play in a couple of games. It is I, David Stollery, in the striped shirt defending the centre position with Colin Sawden (Captain) on my left



1976 Malta 41 Commando Group Annual Football Match Officers Mess versus Sergeants Mess

Allie Marks (Capt)

Top Row

Val Barton, Ann Quirk, Ann Stollery, Ann Lewis, Lorin Bruce, Hilary Kane, Diane Pulford, Sue Johnson

Bottom Row

Hilary Walker, Marion Wheeler, Anne Wren, Margaret Davies, Viv Marks, Josie Macdonald, Rosemary Menghini, Marianne Collins,
Fred Collins (Referee)

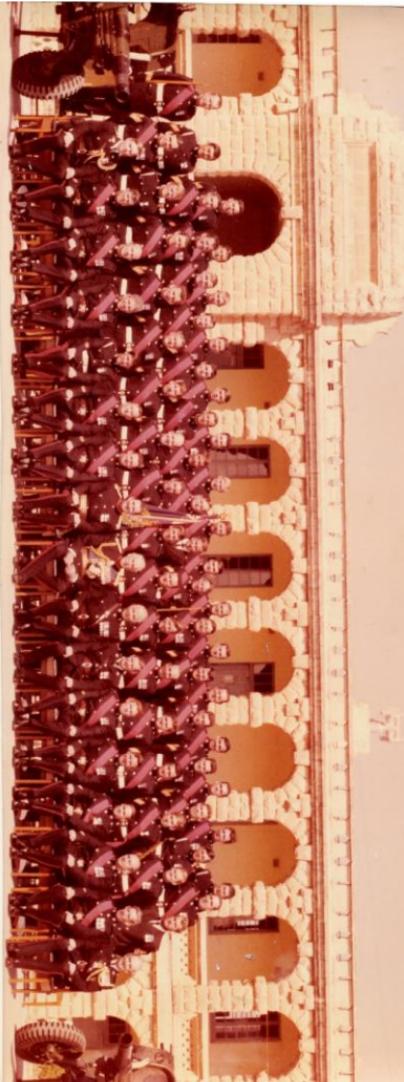


41 Commando Group, Malta 1976

The Pay and Records Staff enjoy a Christmas drink.

Colour Sergeant David Stollery dons his best blues for the Trooping of the Colours attended by Lord Mountbatten of Burma during the handover of Malta in 1977





REAR RANK
 SET J GIBBS Sgt S PERRY Cpl A STOTT Cpl M WALKER Sgt J NECK Sgt N BRUCE SET E YOUNG Sgt M TUGG Sgt R DREYER Sgt R PRESCOTT Sgt J HARVEY
 SET A COPPARD SET J GHANIA SET J GILL SET N MARTIN Sgt W GILLET
 CENTRE RANK
 SET J FRANCIS SET B CHORLEY SET M MULTON SET D MORAN SET P GORMAN SET M WILLIS SET M CAMP SET R STELKE SET A WHITFIELD
 SET D MULAN SET G STODD SET D RYMBROOK SET K JACKSON SET M HENRY Cpl F MACDONALD Cpl J MONTY SET P WILSON Sgt B KNIGHT
 FRONT RANK
 SET J WERN SET O POOLE SET T NEUSTADT Cpl D HENDERSON Sgt D WELCH Sgt R SOMMES Cpl D SWINNERY SET T BOUCHER SET B JOHNSON
 SET D MCALISTER SET R GRIFFITHS SET P KANE SET J GREGORY SET C STUBBINS SET T CUTHERTON SET D GRIMES POM J JAMES BEM
 WO2 WO2 WO2 WO2 WO2 WO2
 Lord Lt Col WO1 Lt Col WO1 Lt Col
 Cpt J C RICHARDS
 Montbatten of Burma W RUFF BEM K WALKING
 C P CAMERON L FULLER C HUNTER R DOOTH T PHILLIP R LEWIS T WHEELER J C C RICHARDS
 WO2 WO2 WO2 WO2 WO2
 B DAVIES R BARTON R STATION K JOHNSON P COLLINS A J DONALD



41 COMMANDO GROUP
 TROOPING THE COLOURS
 WO2 & SNCO's
 26 MARCH 1977 - MARAKA



Chapter 15

1977 – 1981 Lympstone, Fire Fighting, Pantomimes

1977 Lympstone

In mid-August 1977, after a short leave, I was recalled to my unit early as my predecessor had already left the unit and the Clerks Training Wing was being run by a Lieutenant Phil Higginson. We were old friends as we had served together as Corporals in Aden.

I had been summoned early because the workload was a heavy one as the Wing had to instruct level 3, 2 and 1 clerks courses, which all ran simultaneously and also instructed young Officers and Advance Command Courses. We also had to carry out presentations to all new Commanding Officers before they took up their new appointments. It was just too much work for one Officer to handle because there was also the Wings staff to look after plus organisational and administrative duties, Regimental commitments and keeping fit. The list was endless.

My family and I were allocated married quarters in Exmouth and Ann took the brunt of settling us in as I had to go to work immediately we arrived in Exmouth. She was also pregnant with our second child.

I was given no turnover for this appointment and had to learn on the job, thankfully I had a good boss, Lieutenant Phil Higginson, and an experienced and well trained staff of Colour Sergeants, Sergeants and Corporals and we all worked well as a team and were able to meet all our targets from the onset.

During this time a strange thing happened to me when I got the wages of another Warrant Officer. Unbeknownst to me there was another Warrant Officer in the Corps called D M Stollery and he got my wages and I got his. He was a local WO11 and therefore his wages were lower than mine, I soon got that altered. I have never met this Stollery nor am I related to him, but it would have been interesting to meet him just the same.

Coming up to Christmas of 1977 I had only been at Lympstone four months and my wife Ann was heavily pregnant with our second son, so naively I thought that I would be immune to anybody volunteering me for duties other than the one I was currently doing.

How wrong can a person be!

I was summoned to the Adjutants office who informed me that a Royal Marines Warrant Officer, was required from CTCRM to be attached to 40 Commando Royal Marines on an operation called 'Burberry' in Scotland and that I had been selected.

I thought to myself well that can't be so bad, Burberry and Scotland! I'm a fine looking man, modelling a few clothes would suit me fine!

How wrong can a person be!

Because of my wife's pregnancy and already having a young son, she was advised to seek assistance during my absence so she decided to drive to Yorkshire and stay with her family.

She took Phillip and me in the car and dropped me off at the Exeter Service Station on the M5 to await the Military coach which was coming from Plymouth to pick me up. I waved goodbye to my family and Ann told me that Phillip started to cry his eyes out and kept calling for his dad and carried on doing so for most of the journey.

When I entered the coach at the Exeter services on the M5 it was full of Royal Marines Officers and my CO to be, Lieutenant Colonel Julian Thompson. I knew most of them as I had worked for quite a few of them over the years. After a couple of hours the coach stopped at Keele Service Station on the M6 and I spotted Ann in the car park and ran across to speak to her. Well she was not best pleased because she had eventually got Phillip settled and then here I was starting him off once again and he kept on crying until they reached Ann's parents' home; naughty Daddy!

1977 – 1978 Fire Fighting, Glasgow

When I first saw all those Officers on the coach my immediate thought was I am the only Warrant Officer amongst this lot and therefore I must surely be given the job of a Sergeant Major, co-ordinating and sorting out the administration and discipline in a warm cosy office while the Officers would be out in the field commanding the firefighting units.

How wrong can a person be!

In short sharp time there I was a Station Commander in charge of a Fire Station and billeted in a small Territorial Army Camp in the suburbs of South Glasgow during the first national strike of the Fire Brigade. What the bloody hell did I know about running a poxy Fire Fighting Station in a City I didn't know, amongst people who spoke a different language?

The only firefighting training any of us had ever experienced was carried out many years ago during our recruit training and that involved fighting fires on board ships, not fighting fires in houses and buildings etc. The only training given for these firefighting duties was to the Royal Marines drivers who had been taught to drive the Green Goddesses. These vehicles were cumbersome beasts at the best of times, but when they were loaded with water they were very ungainly and unstable. In fact, they

were death traps if not driven with tender loving care, woe betide a lax driver.

The main area of responsibility in Glasgow my firefighting station covered was the Gorbals, although we did go further afield from time to time. At least we were given some sort of assistance in the shape of our own tame policemen permanently attached to our station with their own police cars.

My personal driver was a speed mad Glaswegian Police Patrolmen who thought because of the strike he could break every driving rule in the book.

The downside was he nearly got us both killed whilst speeding through red traffic lights when he crashed into another car. Thank goodness I had my seat belt on although I did crack my knees quite badly on the dashboard and was unable to walk for about five minutes and my police driver thought I had broken my legs. The other car involved in the accident was being driven by a woman with a young child in the back. Thank goodness no serious injuries were sustained. I was informed later that my driver had written off a few police cars during his career.

The upside was that he got us and our green goddesses to all our call-outs in double quick time. He knew the area like the back of his hand.

All the military fire teams were very competitive and wanted to be first at every fire. It also meant that the Station Commander who reached the fire first was in control of that particular situation. The other Station Commanders in our area were mainly Army Officers so I got to lord it over them quite a few times.

I was blessed with a great team. My Second-in-Command was a Chief Petty Officer; my TQMS was a Royal Marine Colour Sergeant and all my crews were highly motivated Royal Marines. Without the full support and professionalism of these men it would have been extremely difficult to carry out my duties.

The enemy in Glasgow were not the fires, although we had some very difficult conflagrations. We could cope with these situations, despite not having any breathing apparatus, firefighting equipment or firefighting training before we arrived. The difficulties were being constantly tired, cold and wet in dreadful weather conditions with inadequate clothing, equipment or accommodation. When you are working 12 hours on and 12 hours off you don't get much rest, especially as we were living in very cramped quarters with no proper facilities to keep our clothes dry.

About a fortnight after we commenced fighting fires we were called to assist another team in the centre

of Glasgow but were unable to wear our combat uniforms because they were still wet from a previous callout. Colonel Thompson was there and came over to me to ask why my men were wearing Denim Suits which were made of polyester. This was not allowed because polyester material melts when on fire and sticks to the skin causing severe injuries. I informed him that all our other clothing was soaking wet as we had no way of drying them and I would not allow my men out in freezing conditions unless they wore dry clothing.

The very next day Colonel Thompson arrived with the Mayor of Glasgow and other officials and dignitaries to inspect the conditions in our Territorial Army Camp to see if any improvements could be made. Within three days we had a Marquee erected with large heaters pumping hot air through them to enable us to dry all our equipment and clothing and then all my team were given free passes to a local gymnasium (with sauna and shower facilities) and also for entry into the local swimming pool.

It was very rare if a twenty four hour period went by without there being a call out for a fire or other incident, so we welcomed with open arms all these extra facilities we were given.

The weather was so cold in Glasgow we thought the locals were starting the fires to keep us visitors warm!

I maintained my own discipline and did not send any malefactors to be disciplined by the Colonel and his staff, although I was honour bound to offer miscreants the alternative if they would not accept my punishment.

My disciplinary system worked better because offenders didn't have punishment details recorded on their records and I didn't lose a member of my team.

The one great fear of the men in my unit was to be taken off a fire fighting team and not be able to go out fighting fires. My punishment, therefore, was to remove transgressors from a team to spend time doing hard labour in the grease pit. The grease pit was the dish and pan washing room next to the galley and nobody would willingly volunteer to work in this greasy environment. It served two purposes, one, the transgressor got punished and two, an important dirty vacancy got filled. After good behaviour a 'prisoner' could earn the right to go back to his team.

Our C.O. was Lieutenant Colonel Julian Thompson, Commanding Officer of 40 Commando Royal Marines and he came to see me one day and asked

if I would take on a Band Sergeant who had disgraced himself in the eyes of an Army Officer from another Fire Fighting Team. The Band Sergeant was being given a second chance although he was still being considered for demotion and the Commanding Officer wanted me to take the Bandy under my wing to see if he was worthy of retaining his rank.

In my experience the man management skills of Army Officers was not of a high standard, unlike Royal Marines Officers who were taught to treat the men under their command like human beings and team members and not just cannon fodder. I do not know what the Sergeant had done because the only information I received was that he was supposedly a useless sod.

I took the Sergeant under my wing with no pre-conceived ideas and fortunately for him and me he turned out to be a good administrator and worked as my assistant and carried out most of the paperwork which enabled me to get on with firefighting. I found him to be loyal and hardworking and in my opinion did not deserve to be demoted. I bet he was a damn good bandsman; he just wasn't very good in the field.

A good number of the fires we fought were lit under suspicious circumstances and at night, quite a few of them taking place in abandoned or deserted

buildings. It would appear that these fires were started deliberately to cause the most disruption possible for our firefighting teams.

I was confidentially informed by a Fire Officer (face and name kept hidden from me) that the seat of these fires were deliberately lit in such a way as to cause the most damage. This ensured that the fires burnt through the wooden framework of these abandoned buildings where the fire would quickly move into the rafters. No residential lives would be at risk but the firefighting teams would have to concentrate a number of teams and a considerable amount of time and effort to extinguish these arson attacks, thus putting the troops under extreme pressure.

It seemed to me that the guilty persons who lit these fires did not take into account the danger to the service personnel or to any vagrants who might be secreted away in these abandoned buildings. The arsonists wanted us to fail, but we did not because we persevered through thick and thin, wet or cold, day or night and never gave in until all the fires we attended had been extinguished.

On other occasions I would be attending a fire and directing my team from the side-lines when a quiet voice behind me would give me advice on how to tackle the fire and where the seat of the fire was most likely to be. This advice was given

clandestinely by Fire Brigade Officers who were not on strike but could not be seen given assistance to the troops. I was always grateful for the advice and heeded any suggestions which would help me to protect my men.

Several of the house fires we attended were chip pan fires and occurred in the early evenings when family members returned home from the pubs, started their chip pans cooking, and then promptly fell asleep. Fortunately we got to most of these types of fire before too much damage was caused, either to properties or persons.

The first commercial fire we were called to and were in charge of was in the centre of Glasgow in a three story Clothing Shop. The shop had steel shutters over the entrance and no rear entry and you could see through the cracks that the ground floor was on fire. The police had tried to contact the owners but they could not be found so we would have to break in ourselves.

I knew exactly what would happen if somebody lifted those shutters, it would cause a back draught, so I ordered everyone back and took a sledgehammer to the padlock, remember I was in charge. As soon as I broke the padlock I warned everybody around that I was going to lift the shutters and it would be dangerous when the back draft took hold. As soon as I lifted the shutter I was

going to be running away from the fire like a fucking bat out of hell.

The shop was in a sort of alleyway and the only place I could run to was straight forward. I lifted the shutters, turned and ran like the clappers just as air was sucked into the shop and a huge flame shot back out and was chasing me as I ran, fortunately the flame was sucked back in again before it had a chance to singe my nether regions. Apparently the onlookers, including the firefighting teams, were quite impressed with my agility and thought this was great entertainment.

Although servicemen can always find humour in the face of adversity they are extremely dedicated to the task in hand and take seriously the danger faced. They always respected the power of fire and its inherent intricacies and never took anything for granted when we were dealing with these potential dangerous and life threatening situations.

Thank goodness that my wife was unaware of what I was getting up to. She was already nervous of what was happening with us fire fighters because the media was full of it, servicemen in considerable danger and getting injured etc. We all tended to forget that our loved ones at home were worried sick, especially as we had inadequate training, equipment and facilities. My wife told me afterwards that a fireman on strike in Huddersfield

pushed a collection box under her nose when she was out shopping and she gave him short shrift with a comment that she had already bloody given, her husband!

Other fires in commercial premises were definitely started deliberately, in preparation for an Insurance Claim. One in particular comes to mind when we were called out to a fire in a wine and spirits warehouse. The owner was located and arrived at his premises to unlock the main doors for our fire team. As was my usual routine I entered the premises first to decide what action was needed. I located the seat of the blaze which was situated in a potentially dangerous area because it was towards the rear of the premises underneath a high wooden platform loaded with boxes of various alcoholic spirits. You could say that it was a potentially explosive situation with all those alcoholic bombs just waiting to explode as they were being roasted by a fire directly beneath them.

The seat of the fire was amongst plastic and wooden crates of soft drinks piled on the floor which would have to be moved to get at the blaze. I went outside to inform my team and the owner of the premises what the situation was and what action was necessary tackle the fire. I asked the owner if it would be alright for my team to have a few bottles of lemonade to quench their thirst. He refused and

demanded to be let inside the building but I denied his request and instructed my team to smash the bottles of lemonade close to the fire because I did not want any of the bottles to explode and endanger my men.

The owner was furious and complained to the policemen on my team who backed me up and said that my decision on how to tackle the fire was final. We then discovered why he wouldn't let us have any drinks; there were no drinks at all on the premises, just empty soft drink bottles and empty cardboard boxes supposedly full of wines and spirits and he did not want us to discover this fact. I am positive that our speedy arrival at the fire stopped a nice little insurance scam and saved the building from total destruction. The incident was reported back to police headquarters, but I was not informed if further action was taken against the owner.

Another suspicious incident involved a farm where a fire had taken hold in a straw filled barn and the barn was quite close to the farm house. The fire was in the centre of the stacked straw and the farmer said that it had started because of spontaneous combustion, a likely bloody story, I could see the £ signs in his eyes, was this another insurance scam? It got even more suspicious when I asked the Farmer for the loan of some garden tools, such as pitchforks, rakes etc. so that the team

could better pull the straw bales away to expose the seat of the fire, the Farmer refused. We tried using hosepipes to extinguish the fire, but the force of the water just drove the fire deeper into the stack. In the end we had to resort to muscle power and breaking through one of the outer walls of the barn. I led the way and demonstrated with the only axe we possessed by smashing it into the wall. When I tried to pull the axe free using force, it popped out; I spun round and fell straight into a pool of muddy water. At least it entertained my lads; they took the piss out of me something rotten, the cheeky sods. It took us six hours to complete this job, removing the wall and getting to the very centre of the fire. But complete it we did, despite the twat of a Farmer.

There was one fire we attended which was in a 20 storey tenement block in the Gorbals and when we got there we were told that the fire was on the 13th floor and the lift was broken. A Corporal and I went to investigate to determine how many hose pipes would be required, if there weren't any fire points on each floor and to find out exactly what the situation was.

We both staggered up to the 13th floor and found tenants milling around on the landing and plenty of smoke in the corridor of the apartments. After a thorough search we soon discovered that the fire was actually at the bottom of the rubbish chute

down on the ground floor. It just so happened that the smoke from the fire was pouring out of the 13th floor chute opening and getting into the apartments, despite their doors being closed. Why the smoke hadn't come out on the lower floors was a mystery.

It was an easy mistake for the tenants to make but a very good way of getting two Marines knackered. When we finally staggered back down to the ground floor my team informed me, with wry smiles on their faces, that they had already extinguished the fire. I did not make that mistake again, because we attended a few more fires in tenement buildings where the fire was in the rubbish room at the bottom of the buildings, deliberately started or otherwise, we shall never know.

Unfortunately, during our watch, we had one civilian fatality due to smoke inhalation and the lack of breathing apparatus. We were called out late one afternoon to a fire in a second floor apartment of a tenement building. When we arrived I could see smoke coming from the apartment and approached the front door with my men. I managed to open the door to the apartment but nobody could enter because the smoke was too dense. I sent my team outside to the back of the building in order for them to tackle the fire through the windows, making sure

that no occupants were on the other side if they had to break through the glass.

The next door neighbour called me over to inform me that a little old lady was in the apartment that was on fire. I quickly assessed the situation in my mind and decided that the risk was worthwhile and that I had to attempt to try and save the occupant. I tried desperately to find her by crawling into the apartment staying as close to the floor as I possibly could in an effort to get under the smoke and be able to look into each room but it was very difficult to see through the dense smoke. I had to search one room at a time before I was forced to back out to the front door, cough my lungs up, and take some more deep breaths of fresh air and then trying again. I was also being assisted by a local uniformed policeman.

I tried several times without success and she was only found after the fire had been doused in her bedroom and we were then able to search the property without hindrance. When we found her she had been overcome by the smoke, fallen and become wedged between the wall of the bathroom and the toilet bowl itself, so it would have been almost impossible to see her from the doorway. The poor dear had knocked over a paraffin heater on her way to the toilet, which had set fire to her

bedroom. Unfortunately she was dead when we brought her out and we couldn't resuscitate her.

I firmly believe to this day that her life could have been saved if we had breathing apparatus allocated to us, which would have meant that we could have searched the apartment thoroughly and quickly as we arrived on the scene and the casualty could have been given oxygen immediately we found her. Although we had kipper teams, they were few and far between and generally not available at short notice.

The husband of the little old lady returned home from the pub and all he was interested in was where the bank book was, despite us informing him that his wife had just died in the fire. During this particular fire we had thrown some of the smouldering belongings out of the window to ensure that they would not re-ignite later and there was this sozzled husband searching amongst them for a sodding bank book and not giving a toss about his poor wife, or was he in shock after losing his wife and home?

Our other fatalities were two dogs and a canary.

The two dogs were killed in a house fire which they caused when they knocked over a paraffin heater in the kitchen. The occupants had already been taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation and this made us feel bad because we hadn't been able to

get there sooner. This house fire also made us feel humble because a cupboard on the upstairs landing had the door burnt off and we could all see the children's Christmas presents hidden away on the top shelf and they had all been partially destroyed.

When we arrived at this house all the windows had been blown out and the house was well alight on the ground floor and had spread to the upper floor but was not quite an inferno. A ladder was erected so that I could assess the extent of the fire on the upper floor and quickly decide what course of action should be taken to prevent the fire gaining a hold in the rafters and spreading to the attached houses.

As I leant through the window I cut my hand quite badly on a piece of window glass still wedged in the window frame but did not notice the cut because my hands were so cold. I returned to ground and directed my fire team and then one of the neighbours noticed my hand bleeding quite badly so ushered me into her house, followed by her other neighbours, to give me first aid and sustenance. Fortunately she was a nurse and said that I would not require any stitches and she dressed my wound. You would have thought that I was a seriously wounded soldier the way all these women were fussing over me with hot beverages and trying to pour whisky down my throat for medicinal purposes. They also made sure that the lads outside

didn't go short of sustenance either. None of us succumbed to the whisky ploy though!

We subdued the fire and prevented it from spreading to the next house or causing any further damage. Another long and eventful night; another thank you to the Glaswegian people for their kindness and assistance and yet another notch in our hosepipe nozzle for fires successfully extinguished.

Once again we returned to our base tired, cold, wet and well satisfied as no serious injuries had been sustained by our dedicated team and we had received news that the family who owned the house were OK as well.

The canary, on the other hand, was definitely our fault. It had escaped from one of the apartments we attended on a false alarm and my team were trying to coax it down from a tree. They failed so we proceeded to drive away in our vehicles just as the bird decided to flutter down from the tree and onto the road and, unfortunately, the Green Goddess ran over it and squashed the poor bugger under its tyres.

One of my Marines was a cartoonist and used to paint little fires on his Green Goddess to symbolise each fire we attended and put out. In addition, he painted a canary, for the one we ran over, a dog, for

the ones that died in the house fire, a Christmas tree, for another house fire we went to and so on. I refused to let him paint a human on the side when we lost the little old lady, but he did paint a religious cross to commemorate the loss.

The members of the Glasgow Police Force, who were attached to our fire station night and day, were responsible for driving me and leading the green goddesses to all our fires. They also supported me regarding any decisions I made during each incident. They backed me up one hundred percent. Without this support our team would not have achieved as much as we did.

I was honoured by these Policemen by being their first call when they went out first footing on New Year's Eve. Unfortunately I could not have a drink as I was duty that night, this saved me the embarrassment of refusing a drink of whisky, because I hated the stuff. I cannot praise our Glaswegian Police colleagues highly enough for their professionalism, efficiency, expertise and dedication.

The Glaswegian civilians were absolutely great also, especially the women; always ready with a cup of tea or something stronger, a biscuit or a bandage, no matter what time of day or night. Another group that must be praised highly were the Women's Institute who never missed a fire in the centre of

Glasgow and were ever present with their van which always contained a hot drink and sandwiches.

It was an honour to be of assistance to these Glaswegian people during those difficult and dangerous times.

1978 – 1981 Lympstone, Devon

After I returned from Scotland to CTCRM, my second son Andrew, David was born in a cottage hospital in Exeter on 4th April 1978. Our midwife was a Colour Sergeant's wife, Mary McAlise. Andrew was not christened in a Royal Marines church instead he was christened in a West Yorkshire church. The godparents on this occasion were Chris and Elaine Hirst, our close friends and Ann's brother Donald once again. Both my sons would grow up to be employed in Information Technology and would have no interest in joining the armed forces.

Whilst carrying out my duties in the Clerks Training Wing I had been thinking for quite some time that the students on senior courses of the CQ branch (Clerk Quartermaster) did not carry out any training regarding operations in the field. All of their course work was carried out at Lympstone in the classroom. If they were successful on these courses they would eventually be promoted to SNCO's and would definitely have to carry out quartermaster duties under operational conditions. Obviously I could not attach them to a Commando unit in the field so I had to devise an exercise that would cover these outdoor activities.

After getting permission to plan something that had never been attempted before, I co-opted a member of my staff, CQ Colour Sergeant Terry Cuthbertson,

to work with me and we began our planning. We designed the exercise so that it could be carried out in mobile command posts which could be set up at Dunkeswell Airfield. This airfield was military property way out in the Devon countryside and used for Royal Marines parachute training and the Royal Marines freefall display team. It was ideal for our purposes as it had offices which could be used as Command Headquarters and surrounding fields for the student Command Posts.

Terry and I designed this field course as a radio exercise where Exercise Control (Lt Higginson and me) would take on the role of Commando units on operations demanding the necessary weapons, ammunitions, fuel, equipment, food, clothing and anything else the Commando units might require to carry out such operations, we even had a request option for communal wine for the Padre.

The Command posts would act as the Quartermaster unit in the field whose responsibility was to source the requirements and theoretically get them to the Commando units by certain times. We also built in plenty of deadlines and emergencies to keep the students on their toes. The exercise would be carried out over a period of 72 hours so nobody would get much sleep, including the Wing Officer, Phil Higginson and myself as we would be operating the exercise Command Headquarters

with a radio apiece. The exercise was designed to operate with one to three student Command Posts, dependent on the number of students on a course.

Each Command Post would have a radio and an Instructor to supervise, monitor and mark the student's endeavours. Students would take turns on the radio, which meant that the student on the radio was in charge for that period of time and the remaining students would be in a support role to carry out the necessary paperwork and investigative procedures. They had to work as a team and back up the person in charge and would be marked on their conduct and endeavours throughout the course of the exercise. These marks would be incorporated into the overall results of the CQ Course.

The first time we tried out the exercise it was a complete success, although very tiring. Terry and I designed it as a Wednesday to Friday exercise, which included the drawing of all stores, travelling time and setting up the exercise in the field, dismantling and returning to base. At the end of the exercise students and staff had the week-end to recover before they continued with their normal course work on a Monday morning.

The Commanding Officer of CTCRM came to inspect the next exercise and gave his seal of approval as he was satisfied with the way it was being handled and

convinced that the contents of the exercise would be beneficial for the students and for the Royal Marines as a whole. The exercise was accepted as part of the curriculum for all future senior CQ courses. Naturally, I was very proud to have achieved something that had never been tried before (see photographs).

We did have one hiccup on one of these exercises when Phil Higginson fell ill just as we were leaving Lympstone so I had to run the two radios of the Headquarters element of the exercise by myself. I managed 18 solid hours of radio work before I could not keep my eyes open any longer and had to order a cease fire until after I had got some kip. Fortunately, Phil returned when I woke up and we both completed the exercise.

During my time at CTCRM, those volunteer 'persons' were still at it, this time in the guise of Taff Rolls, the RSM of CTCRM. He wanted me to investigate the possibility of having a mosaic of our Globe and Laurel Badge built into the floor of CTCRM Sergeants' Mess foyer.

I found a designer and a company who were capable of carrying out this work. I gave a presentation to the mess and obtained approval for the funds and was given the go ahead to proceed. The design was by a civilian draughtsman we employed at CTCRM and the work was carried out by an Italian company

with a base in London and they were expert in making and laying terrazzo flooring (see photograph).

When it was installed I was informed that it should last 50 years. If the ancient Roman mosaic's that have been found are anything to go by, then it should last considerably longer. I cannot remember how much the mosaic cost, but it was quite expensive. I am very glad to say that it survives to this day and I was proud to be invited back 30 years later in 2011 to actually stand on it, with the then RSM Don Hayes (see photograph).

Another mosaic similar to ours existed in the old Sergeants' Mess at Eastney Barracks. This Mess is now part of private apartments and I have been told that the mosaic may still exist, having been moved to another unit, perhaps Poole in Dorset.

The Mess at CTCRM (1977 to 1981) was administered by a Warrant Officer on a fifth who was the Mess Manager and he had an assistant who was a Sergeant. The bar staff were all Marines, the catering staff were Royal Marine cooks and the waiters at meal times were civilians.

All Sergeants' Messes were run by the President of the Mess (the RSM) and democratically by the Mess members and elected Committees and financed through the public purse and members

subscriptions and profits from the bar. The various Committees were normally headed by Warrant Officers and for a short time I was the President of the Entertainments Committee whilst serving at CTCRM.

The Sergeants Mess at CTCRM was an extremely busy Mess, not only on the entertainments side, but on the accommodation side as well. There were many courses run at CTCRM which required SNCO's to attend from all over the world. Advance Command courses, Special Duties Officers courses, RSM courses, to name but a few.

After Ann had gone to live in Yorkshire and I was living in the Mess there wasn't much entertainment so once a month we used to hold a Wednesday evening soiree with the Gingerbread Club because one of our SNCO's was a single parent. Unfortunately this didn't last long and was stopped by the RSM because a SNCO killed himself in a car accident after leaving one of these evenings to go home. The RSM blamed the inliers who organised it instead of the SNCO who was killed as he had been drinking heavily elsewhere before he came back to the Mess for further booze and was not fit to drive.

At about the same place as the driver got killed Des Foster, a driver and I also had a car accident. Des and I had attended a top table lunch one Friday and were unable to drive home to Exmouth so a sober

friend volunteered to take us home at about 4pm. As we headed towards Exmouth on the Exeter Road (A376) we had to turn into Rivermead Avenue to get to our destination. Cars were stationary waiting to come out of this Avenue and our driver hit one of these cars on the driver's side. The car we hit was over the middle line and was being driven by a Police Sergeant who worked at the Police College. This Sergeant went berserk and demanded we wait exactly where we were until a police car arrived and threatened our driver with prosecution for dangerous driving. Nobody was hurt, although the Police Sergeant's wife was moaning like hell and had to be helped from the car, and the damage was to our driver's wing and the front and back door of the policemen's car. The road condition was wet and it was raining. A police car arrived and the Police Sergeant demanded that they breathalyse our driver so I insisted that they breathalyse the Police Sergeant as well.

After a few days Des and I were called into the Adjutant's Office and were told that he had received a letter from the Police Sergeant complaining that we had verbally abused and swore at his wife. We never spoke to the women as she was taken into a nearby house for a cup of tea directly after getting out of her car. I am not sure whether the Adjutant believed us but no further action was taken against us.

A few weeks later our driver was summoned to court accused of dangerous driving and Des and I were called as witnesses. As we arrived the Police Sergeant was standing in the foyer with a group of his police pals, smirking all over his face. When I was called in as a witness the Prosecutor was just below me when I was in the witness box and I could see his desk and a drawing of the accident scene. He started to ask me questions about the drawing and I pointed out to the court that the drawing was incorrect because the Police Sergeant's car had been drawn in the wrong place, a pavement had been drawn where one didn't exist and that there was no chalk lines drawn on the road because it was raining at the time. The Prosecutor quickly moved away from this subject and asked me a question which had no bearing on the case. The final result of the case was that our driver was cleared of dangerous driving, fined £5 and the verdict was that both sides were at fault. The Police Sergeant's face was a picture to behold, the pompous vindictive twerp.

Many functions were held throughout the year in CTCRM Sergeants' Mess, Regimental Dinners, Corps Birthday, monthly Dinner Dances, Regimental Ladies nights, Summer Balls and Winter Balls, all held in or around the Mess (see photograph of one such Regimental Dinner).

One of the most spectacular Summer Balls was held in a Marquee on the Lawn in front of the Mess. Two hundred people attended in one sitting and were served a cold meal from soup to sweet. The Mess hired exotic birds in cages from a local Zoo and these were positioned around the Marquee walls in cages, interspersed with beautiful flower arrangements on pedestals. The Royal Marines band provided the music. The meal was later followed by a champagne breakfast at 4-30am (see photograph of Ann and I arriving).

A great deal of our entertainment and Cabarets during our social functions were provided by Mess members themselves and/or the Royal Marines Band. We had so many talented people in the Mess in those days and they were always ready to perform in a Cabaret, pantomime or ad hoc show for the local pensioners who visited every year.

During one of our evening Dinner and Cabaret nights, a Mess Member brought in a recruit who had only just joined the Corps and whose job in civilian life had been a comedian. His opening joke was "This Royal Marines lark is absolutely marvellous, I only joined the Corps 7 days ago and I'm already in the Sergeants Mess". The rest of his act was pretty good too. I often wondered if he stopped in the Corps.

Although on special occasions we did hire in professional entertainers from outside. We even tried to book Shirley Bassey to entertain us but unfortunately, although she was willing, it was far too expensive.

1980 – 1981 Sergeants' Mess Pantomimes

Sometimes opportunities arise to do something for society, other than by Military actions. It was in line with and similar to the hearts and minds that are carried out during military operations abroad.

In my day CTCRM Sergeants' Mess were lucky enough to be able to put on an annual pantomime for charity in a freely donated theatre in Exeter, called the Barnfield Theatre. The Corps-de-Ballet was compulsory of course.

All the rehearsals were carried out in the unit theatre in the evenings and the unit supported us with transport, nourishment and members of the Royal Marines Band for our orchestra.

These pantomimes became extremely popular with the local population and tickets for every performance were at a premium. The pantomimes ran each evening for one week with a matinee for the children on the Saturday afternoon and the Saturday night was exclusively for CTCRM Officers and SNCO's. All the pantomime cast were SNCO's and the costumes were made by their wives. Our Royal Marines band provided the music.

I appeared in two pantomimes in successive years, 'Humpty Jack' in 1980 and 'Oliver Twit' in 1981. In fact in 1981 the final Saturday night's show of 'Oliver

Twit' was my very last night in the Royal Marines before I retired. How's that for dedication.

My wife was concerned at me acting in these pantomimes because each year I played a female role and she had to keep providing me with dresses, Bra's and make-up.

On my very first children's matinee, the curtains opened at the start of the show and I was the sole person on stage dressed as the Dame with heavy make-up when a lonely little voice piped up from the audience shouting "That's my Daddy"! Needless to say I had a lump in my throat and I nearly forgot my lines.

Many tricks were played by the Cast during these Pantomimes. In Humpty Jack I had to pretend to milk the cow so I hid a squirty bottle full of rancid mouldy milk in the milking pail and during the Officers and SNCO's evening I squirted the lot over Humpty Jack including his face. The audience were in fits and poor old Humpty didn't know where to turn. He got me back though in the next Pantomime by moving a heavy table in my way when I had to swing across the stage as Zartan (a play on words for Tarzan). I cracked my shins and had to limp for the rest of the performance. These were some of the most enjoyable times of my career; to work with such talented and dedicated people was an honour.

The shows were put on over a number of years and all the proceeds were given to charity, which amounted to a lot of money in the end (see photographs).

Incidentally, I eventually got my Services Permit to drive a Military Landrover (not a champ unfortunately) as someone had to take the cast, props and food to the theatre each performance.

During this time I still carried out my duties as the Warrant Officer of Clerks Training Wing and kept passing my BFT each quarter with the help of my old squad mate Des Foster.

Both of us went running three times a week on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday lunch time. In my mind there was no way that I could lead my staff and students if I wasn't fit enough to carry out the task.

I did promise myself though that when I left the Corps I would never run again, I bloody well hated running! I have to say that I have kept this promise to myself, and my midriff has grown exponentially as a result.

My time in the Corps was coming to an end and my retirement fast approaching. My wife and children were now settled in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire after we had purchased a terraced house on

Manchester Road some eighteen months before I was due to leave the Royal Marines.

The drafting Office did phone me up at Lympstone and ask if I would stay on for a further six months because they could not get me a relief until then and they wanted an answer from me the same day. I explained that my wife was in Yorkshire with our two young sons and I needed to discuss it with her that evening.

When I phoned my wife her answer was that if I did sign on for six months I might as well stop at Lympstone for good because she couldn't stand being alone without me for very much longer. Six months would not be long enough for us to obtain a married quarter at Lympstone for her and the boys. If I could get 3 or 4 years extra then she would definitely come back down to Devon.

The next day I reported back to the Drafting Office and explained that I had served faithfully for 23 years with an exemplary record and the least they could do was to give me an extra 3 or 4 years' service, which I would gladly accept.

Unfortunately, due to manning levels, their answer was no; sadly and with reluctance I would have to leave the Corps on my due date.

Chapter 16

1981 - Advice for Retirees

Before I continue with the story of my life after I left the Royal Marines I would like to pass on a few tips that may be useful to any serving member of the Corps who is about to retire.

Remember that the skills and experiences learnt whilst in the Corps are valuable, portable and very useful in civilian life.

Make sure that you prepare yourselves before you leave the Corps. Take every course available to you, be it technical, educational or resettlement.

Transfer your military jargon into civilian speak. For instance, your Command Courses are better understood as Management Training, so if you are a Senior NCO you are in effect Senior Management. The same can be done with qualifications such as a clerk, who now becomes an administrator. A signaller becomes a communications expert and so on.

For goodness sake do not put down trained killer or assassin, I've tried that and it does not work!

Your dress sense and appearance should match the particular job you are being interviewed for; cleanliness from head to foot goes without saying.

You have to be adaptable when you leave the services because civilians can feel threatened by discipline, confidence and experience, of which you have a great deal of and they do not.

Make sure that your Curriculum Vitae's are only one page long.

There are wimps out there so do not shout and bark orders, like what you did whilst serving in the Corps!

There is life after the Corps and it can be very rewarding, but you have to have patience.

We will always have recessions but there are still jobs available for those who want them, providing that a person is willing to aim lower rather than higher.

It must be remembered that you are starting at the bottom of the ladder as a civilian, especially if you have just served a considerable number of years in the Armed Forces.

The world is your oyster and perseverance will eventually pay off, as it did for me on several occasions.

Remember one important point, Royal Marines are Commando trained, civilians are not.

Chapter 17

1981 A Farewell to Arms

When I joined the Corps in 1958 I was 5'9" tall, had a 36" chest, wavy brown hair, blue eyes, fresh complexion and one tattoo.

When I left the Corps in 1981, I was 5' 11" tall, my chest was 40", my hair had waved goodbye, my eyes were bloodshot, my complexion was ruddy and I still have only one tattoo (see the attached documents).

I had a tremendous career and I have many very special memories of my time as a Royal Marine. I achieved almost everything I set out to accomplish. My one failure was not becoming a WO1, although I was recommended to be one.

My survival during difficult and taxing times was made easier by the stoical sense of humour and comradeship that is part and parcel of the Corps.

Apart from some moments during training, I loved almost every minute of my life in the Royal Marines and would have gladly served on had the opportunity arose.

The two things I most detested during my career were guard duties and running. Although I carried them out with due diligence, I loathed them with a passion and thought they wasted part of my life. The

best thing that ever happened was my promotion to Warrant Officer when I ceased having to do guard duties ever again, although I still was required to run if I was to continue my role as a leader of men in the Royal Marines.

I made many acquaintances during my career and still keep in touch with the closest of these.

My wife would have been very happy to stay and live in the Exmouth area, although she did not tell me until years after. For myself, I did not want to be a hanger-on around the Mess that I loved and I certainly did not want to be an annoying old codger to the current members who followed on from my era. All Royal Marines SNCO's retiring from the Corps receives a Life Honorary Membership, which covers all Royal Marines Sergeants Messes wherever they might be and you are more than welcome to visit.

Many times during my career as a SNCO I have stood at the bar in the Mess and listened to old retired soldiers say "When I was in the Corps we did it like this" or "We had it rougher than you". Well, youngsters of any era just do not want to hear crap like that. We had our time, it is now rightfully theirs.

Whilst holding all my ranks in the Royal Marines I have served both at home and abroad. All of the promotional courses, Junior Command Course,

Senior Command Course and Advance Command Course, had to be taken and passed to achieve advancement to a higher rank and were carried out at Commando Training Centre Royal Marines in Lympstone, Devon (previously called Infantry Training Centre Royal Marines). These courses had to be backed up with trade qualification courses, grades 3, 2 and 1 and these also had to be passed before promotion to a higher rank. All of my trade courses were carried out at Royal Marines Barracks, Eastney. I have the greatest of pleasure in saying that I passed all my courses first time and I enjoyed the learning process.

Once I started to climb the promotions ladder, I was determined to continue upwards until I reached the top. I always wanted to be a Sergeant Major (QMS) because I was always impressed by the efficiency and bearing of the ones I had known and worked under. Unfortunately we went the Army route and QMS's became Warrant Officers.

Although I enjoyed and had some great times in both the NAAFI and the Corporals Club, it bore no resemblance to life in the Sergeants' Mess. Once I had achieved this status, there was no way I was going to leave.

I enjoyed every rank I held and gained great experience from each one. Without exception, the best rank I ever held was Warrant Officer and the

best course I ever completed was The Advanced Command Course.

Once you had become a SNCO, Mess life was an integral part of Regimental duties and the place where social and diplomatic skills were learnt and I had become an expert in both.

When SNCO's retire from the Royal Marines it was traditional for them to have a top table lunch in the Mess and the SNCO could choose 20 friends to attend. Obviously the retiree would be the guest of honour and would be clapped in as he entered the dining room to sit down on the top table with the Mess President and his closest friends. Eating, drinking, laughter and speeches would then follow. Naturally I had a top table lunch to celebrate my career of 23 years. There was also a gift given on behalf of the Mess and I chose a few plaques from the Commando units I had served in.

I was also delighted and honoured to receive a gift from the Signals and Clerks Training Wing, a ships decanter and six cut glasses, which I have to this day and this gift was presented to me by Colonel P.A.C. Howgill (see photograph).

Now it was time for me to leave the Corps, another 23 years of my life had passed me by, what's next on the agenda I ask myself, what new adventures lay round the corner.



1978 at Commando Training Centre Royal Marines after I had been presented with a Commandant General's commendation in recognition of my Fire Fighting Duties in Glasgow as a result of the National Fireman's strike during 1977/1978. Standing beside me is another SNCO who received his Long Service and Good Conduct medal on the same day. I wonder who this other old soldier is, does anyone know?



Lieutenant Phil Higginson and myself being put through our paces early one morning by one of the duty students during our field exercises at Dunkeswell in 1978 and me on the radio during the same exercise





Top Photo

This was a wonderful Summer Ball in 1979 which was held in a Marquee outside of the Sergeants Mess in Lympstone, Devon.

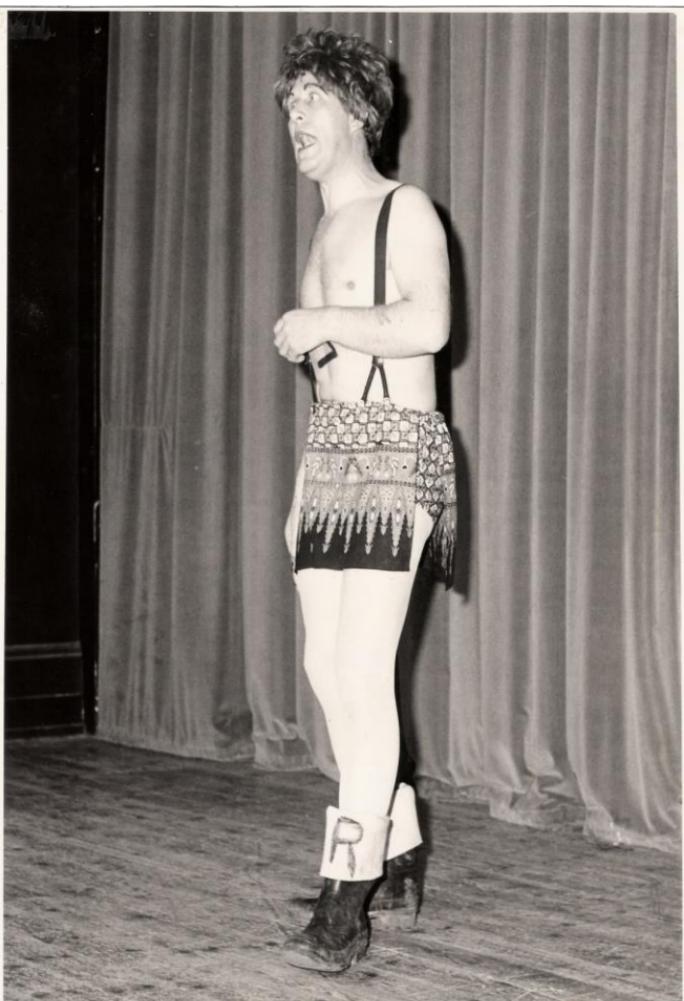
Bottom Photo

My last Regimental Dinner in 1980 at the Sergeants Mess in Lympstone, with my two squad mates Colour Sergeant Mick Wiley (left), Colour Sergeant Des Foster (middle) and myself.





A Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, Sergeants Mess production
David Stollery as 'The Dame' in the 1980 pantomime 'Humpty Jack' loosely based on the theme of
Jack and the Beanstalk
Barnfield Theatre Exeter



A Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, Sergeants Mess production
David Stollery as 'Zartan' and then 'The Fairy Godmother' in the 1981 pantomime 'Oliver Twit'
loosely based on the theme of Oliver Twit
Barnfield Theatre Exeter

1980
GLOBE & LAVRE

Sergeants' Mess



A general view of the Sergeants Mess at Lympstone.



The Drum Case and Royal Coat of Arms in the lounge.



The Mosaic in the floor of the foyer.



One of the five crystal chandeliers.



The patio and new outdoor furniture which was originally organised by Lt Keith Johnson before he was promoted.



'All the President's Men'. A Mess meeting, presided over by WO1 W. P. Snowden with members whose votes are essential.



WO2 David Stollery presents a gift of appreciation to Mr S. Mitchener who designed the mosaic and Drum Case featured above.

**CTCRM
Lympstone**



Lieutenant Colonel P.A.C. Howgill presenting me with a farewell gift from the staff of Signals and Clerks Training Wing at Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, Lympstone, Devon in February

1981

Chapter 18

1981 Life after the Corps

Eighteen months prior to leaving the Royal Marines, my wife and I had purchased a house in Linthwaite, West Yorkshire so that we had our own home to go to when I finally retired from the Corps.

During these eighteen months I commuted by train from Lympstone every fortnight, just for the week-end. My wife used to meet me with the children on a Friday evening at Sheffield railway station.

She wasn't fond of this period in our married life because she did not like living alone and it also took her a fortnight to get the children back to normal after my week-end visits; they were aged four and two at the time and the youngest was prone to wetting the bed on the first Monday after I had returned to barracks.

When I finally retired from the Royal Marines I had no plans for my future. I was determined though that I would not go back into uniform i.e. the Police Force, the Fire Service or the Prison Service, so I threw myself onto the mercy of the local Job Centre.

The Job Centre in Huddersfield did not have a clue what to do with me because of my background over the last 23 years and advised me to go back to

Ipswich, from whence I came, as there were poor prospects in West Yorkshire.

My next question was to ask them if they had any jobs to suit my background like Mercenary, Assassin or even Secret Agent perhaps! They were not amused and held their hands up in defeat so I immediately took charge, borrowed a desk and got myself onto the Executive Register (a register for Management jobs) and then started to look around for myself, as the Job Centre was less than useless.

A friend of mine, Chris Hirst, fixed me up with a temporary job while I was 'resting' and applying for permanent jobs. He had a small wire cutting factory which cut all sorts of lengths for the wire brush industry. His factory also made calendar wire hangers.

The job required me to work all night at a cutting machine and reach a weight target each shift with no excuses if the machine broke down. The cutting machine would break down frequently, day and night, when the ten leads of wire being fed into the machine would tangle and cause the machine to stop. This would happen because the wire was purchased in bundles and a lot of the bundles had not been packed correctly at source so were prone to tangle as they were being fed into the cutting machine. The rule was get the wire untangled, get the machine back on line and get on with it.

Much blasphemy would take place during these machine breakdowns and to vent ones anger an extremely large and heavy screwdriver was made available to all operators for the sole purpose of throwing at a wooden door with the hope that it would stick in blade first; it never did so we were thwarted on both counts; a tangled machine and a non-stick screwdriver! The act of viciously throwing the screwdriver and swearing at the top of one's voice was a great stress reliever though.

Unfortunately the job required me to work the night shift all by myself from 8pm to 6am, I hated it because it reminded me of guard duties in the forces which, as you know, I detested, but the job kept me busy and also kept the wolf from the door. I will always be grateful for what Chris did for me and later in my life I would have cause to thank him again for pointing me in the right direction to another job opportunity. Sometimes it's not what you know but who you know.

At last, after six months of purgatory (the night duty that is) and many job applications but very few interviews, I was eventually successful in getting a management job with Local Government as the Huddersfield Town Hall Manager.

Chapter 19

1981 – 1982 Kirklees Council, Huddersfield

I asked my new boss why they had selected me above the other candidates who were all local Government Employees. He replied that out of all the candidates I was the only one who came fully prepared for my interview, had an excellent one page C.V. and I was correctly and smartly dressed. I also carried with me good references and I came across as a confident experienced individual. Thank goodness for Royal Marines training and the resettlement course I carried out in London before leaving the Corps.

The job entailed the management of Health and Safety, building maintenance, security and the organisation and preparation for all events held in the Town Hall such as concerts, fairs, auctions, displays, meetings for the various society's and any other functions that would make money for the Town Hall. I only had a small staff and one of them had to act as the doorman during the opening times of the building, day or night.

The other members of staff were also used to erect various sizes of stages for the concerts and musical evenings. If a member of staff was away sick or on holiday it was a devil of a job to erect a stage because it required team work and could be dangerous if not carried out correctly. Each section

of the stage required a three man team two to lift and steady the section and a third to clip it together, a bit like a meccano set. The staff had to be fit and concentrate completely if accidents were to be avoided; I tried it so I know what it was like.

Something I wasn't told before I commenced my role as Town Hall Manager and came as a complete shock, was that from time to time I would be required to wear a uniform with peaked cap and would have to accompany the Mayor on Mayoral functions. Not only would these Mayoral functions take place during the daytime they would also occur at evenings and week-ends.

I would have to carry out these duties whenever the Mayor's Mace Bearer was absent or on holiday and I would even have to organise and supervise church parades because of my military background.

So this was why they employed me the crafty buggers, they had their own tame Parade Marshall who had experience of wearing uniforms. I didn't like it one little bit, but as unemployment was rife at the time, I thought that I had better stick it out for the time being and, once again, thank goodness for Royal Marines training.

I found this job completely and utterly different to what I was trained for and familiar with. The local government staff had no self-discipline and the

organisation of the department, work-loads and systems were non-existent. It appeared that everyone moaned about the inadequacies of the systems but nobody had the gumption to do anything about it, this included the more senior managers. The other problem areas were working with the Unions, woe betide stepping on their toes with inappropriate actions.

It was very frustrating to start with because you had to convince those below you and those above you that it was necessary to have proper documented and laid down routines and procedures if you were to comply with Health and Safety, efficiency requirements and to be able to meet deadlines for the many functions that were standard throughout the year.

It may have been difficult and it may have taken some time but I eventually got everyone reading from the same hymn sheet, whether they liked it or not.

There was one protracted incident when a member of my team was unable to carry out his duties because of excessive drinking and I mean drinking on a grand scale, before, during and after work. My staff and I found the evidence in many empty whisky bottles found in the most extraordinary places but we never seemed to catch him at it. The evidence was also on his breath, but unfortunately just one

dram can cause odious whiffs from someone's mouth. My only alternative was to follow the disciplinary code which is practised in civilian quarters.

The individual in question broke many rules, he would turn up late or not turn up at all, he would go missing during the day and couldn't be found and on some occasions he was unfit to carry out his duties. But, the most serious of his misdemeanours was being a danger to his fellow team members when they were erecting the various Stages for the entertainment programmes. In one incident, when he was involved with the construction of a Stage, he nearly caused serious injury to a member of staff when he dropped a section he was supporting. If the member of staff in danger hadn't been alert, agile and a quick thinker, he would have been seriously injured.

I strictly followed the discipline code over a couple of months, keeping a complete written record of all the miscreants indiscipline and rigidly stuck to the rules, with verbal, written and final warnings, making sure that I had witnesses where necessary. Everything had to be airtight as I could not afford to make any mistakes if I was to protect my crew and get rid of this useless employee.

I gathered all my evidence together and was required to present it to an HR Tribunal with a senior

Union Representative present before the individual could be disciplined. As I presented all the details there were nods of approval all around as each piece of evidence was produced and it looked as though the case was going to be approved for the final dismissal of the individual in question.

Unfortunately I made one fatal error; I accused the individual of being an alcoholic. The Union Representative jumped on this with a swiftness that even surprised me and said that the case would have to be thrown out. His reasoning was that I was not a qualified Doctor and therefore all the evidence was based on an unknown fact, as the individual should have been given the opportunity of being examined by a Doctor to prove whether or not he was an alcoholic or just sick. I don't know about him but I was bloody sick of the whole matter by this time.

The case was kicked out and I was furious and frustrated because it left me with a drunken toss pot who was a worse than useless member still on my team of efficient workers. I could have joyfully throttled those on the tribunal, wimps all. For the remainder of my time in the job I still maintained records of the toss pot and I found out later they eventually got rid of him on medical grounds.

For me this was the beginning of the end, being employed by Local Government was not working

out. Unfortunately teaching self-discipline to local government staff is unachievable. They couldn't make a decision or be decisive even if their lives depended on it.

It took me almost nine months of hard work to complete the documentation and to incorporate all of the systems and routines which were necessary for the smooth running of a busy town hall and of course to get approval for all these changes from senior management. Despite the difficulties with indiscipline as described above it was an enjoyable period of my life because it kept me very busy and focused.

After I had introduced all these new systems and they were up and running successfully this left me with very little to do apart from supervision, running the stores department and a bit of paperwork so serious boredom started to set in.

I informed my boss that I was bored out of my skull and volunteered for extra work but my boss told me not to rock the boat and just make myself look busy. He said that now I was a member of local government I could just sit back in a comfortable job and wait for my Local Government pension. He was another wimp biding his time until pensionable age arrived.

This was definitely not my style; I needed to be occupied otherwise the days would drag on and seem like forever. I had no alternative but to get off my lazy arse and start looking around for something more interesting. As they say "The time had come for all good men" etc., etc., etc.

My wife could see how unhappy I was so we talked it over and decided that we would investigate the possibility of becoming self-employed running a business of our own using the gratuity I received for my time in the Armed Forces.

Over the next few weeks we looked at shops, post offices and pubs. We settled on pubs because it meant that we could take on Ann's brother Donald as a member of the family business as all three of us had experience in running pubs.

After 9 months with Local Government, I handed in my notice and began looking into the pub trade with serious intent.

During the eighties Ann and I carried on visiting Ipswich, stopping at Barry and Lynda's and we also used to stop with our other friends who lived in Surrey. They were called Lolly and Dean, now called Olivier and Dean Dibsdall, I believe Dean was a ship's engineer and they both knew each other from Ireland. They used to be part of our London crowd

and fell in love during that period and got married and now have two children Ross and Kyla.

After they had been to a couple of our parties in Wynn cottage in Surrey they fell in love with Surrey and purchased an old small two bedroom semi-detached married quarter, which was being sold off by the Ministry of Defence, in Normandy, near Guildford not far from Pirbright barracks. Dean was very lucky and managed to purchase surrounding land and was able to extensively extend this property to make it into a very large house with several bedrooms, including an upstairs sauna. He also built an above ground swimming pool in his now very large garden.

On one of our family visits Dean had two other families from Ireland stopping whilst they were on their way home from France, the adults sleeping in their camper vans and all the children sleeping in the house. One evening, after the children had gone to bed, the adults had a few drinks, changed into costumes and all went into the sauna for a session. After a while we all went into the garden for a swim to cool us down and then back to the sauna. When it was time to go for a swim again, someone said that we might as well leave our costumes in the sauna to dry and go for a swim in the nude, to save dripping all over the carpets when we came back, so that's just what we did. On our naked way back to

the sauna, we happened to look up and there were all the children wide awake staring at us from the bedroom windows. Next day all the adults were chastised by the children, with words like, Mummy and Daddy how could you etc.!

Chapter 20

1982 – 1984 A Pub Life Beckons, Elland

I always fancied the idea of being my own boss as I had had enough of obeying other people's orders and being at their beck and call. Being a pub landlord seemed to be an easy solution for my aspirations.

My wife and I both had a lot of experience in working behind bars; in addition, we also had on board our team, my wife's brother, who also had a lot of bar work experience.

Although my wife was not keen on becoming a landlady she supported me in my endeavours and so off we went to the nearest Webster's Brewery and to look over some prospective hostelries. Having viewed quite a few we finally settled on a pub called The Royal Oak in Elland, West Yorkshire. As I continue to write my story in 2012 The Royal Oak is currently being gutted and turned into purely living accommodation in the form of a very large house which has been extended beyond recognition (It could even be apartments, it's big enough).

I did not know it then, but this life I had chosen for my family would test our marriage to the very limits.

Being completely naive in business matters we were conned by Webster's Brewery regarding the

expectations of this particular pub. They expected great things from us because they believed that we would attract customers as we were an ex Royal Marine and an ex Wren and were taking over the business from a landlord who had let the place deteriorate. As a result of their expectations, they set our turnover of barrels quite high and also our basic rent. The number of barrels of beer a pub sold each week determined the wealth of that particular pub and the price it would cost for a landlord to rent the property from the Brewery.

This was one business where you were not entitled to look at the books, so we did not know just how low the present turnover of barrels was. We later discovered from the Draymen just how low they really were i.e. one or less barrels a week, which was pretty damn low. Unfortunately it was too late by this time as we had already signed the lease and there we were expertly caught in a trap (screwed!) having sold our house and forked out a lot of money for the tenancy.

The terms of our tenancy, which was legal then, was called a turn-over rent? The more income you earned, the more rent you paid, so you could never get ahead of the game. In addition we were tied to the Brewery for all of our alcohol and drinks requirements. The Brewery could charge Landlords what they wanted for their alcohol, yet they charged

a much lower rate to working men's clubs and private clubs. Later on, too late for us though, this type of rent and the tied aspect of a tenancy would be deemed illegal.

Running a pub is a way of life and it is twenty four seven, made doubly difficult for us because we had two very young children and had never experienced running a business which was solely in our name and depended on our endeavours as a family.

For a quite a while there was a big learning curve, during which time we neglected our children, who were six and four years old when we moved into the pub and they were becoming wild and unhappy. Within a few months of us taking over the pub our oldest son announced that he was fed up with this pubbing lark and could we please leave.

By now we had got the pub on a sound footing and the clientele were increasing day by day. The mid-week games nights were up and running, the Friday night raffle was a success and our week-end football team was well supported.

Our Saturday night's live entertainment had become quite an attraction and people came from as far away as Huddersfield to enjoy the evening. It became a tradition of the at the end of the night for me to comment over the microphone how well or how bad the turn had been that evening and then I

would have to play a song called "I'm a Wanker" by 'Iva Biggun' and our customers would not leave until the final song of the evening was played "You'll Never Walk Alone".

May 1982 was a sad time for my family and I because my Mum died in Ipswich of a heart attack. I managed to travel down by myself to see her on the Monday when she was in hospital and spend the afternoon and evening with her making sure that I had brought all the photographs of the grandchildren for her to see. I travelled back to Yorkshire on Tuesday, Mum telephoned on Wednesday, which was amazing because she had never telephoned before and she made sure that she spoke to everyone, the kids included. Apparently, she spoke to every one of her children that Wednesday. She died of a heart attack the next day.

One day, during our tenancy of the pub, our youngest son Andrew, who was five at the time, went missing with a group of lads in a dangerous swampy area called the wibbly wobbly (solidified foam on top of a large pond) and whilst we were searching for him a witness came forward and said that Andrew had been seen, without his so called friends, talking to a man who was in a car. We were frantic and looked all over for him until eventually he turned up safe and well, strolling in the front door

as though nothing had happened. We could have throttled the little so and so but were just so happy to see him that all we could do was hug him. The reason he was discovered missing was a missed family dental appointment, otherwise things could have been much worse if he had been left to his own devices for a longer period of time. We counted ourselves very lucky and took more care afterwards.

In general customers of Pubs think that what goes into the till belongs to the Landlord and Landlady because Pubs deal in cash, therefore there is always someone trying to sell things to them, not just travelling salesmen but customers as well.

One quiet evening one of the locals came to me and asked if my family and I liked pork and I replied that we did. He told me that he knew a farmer who was able to supply whole sides of pork at very reasonable rates and was I interested in half a pig. After he told me the price I said that I was definitely interested and would like to buy half a pig. I was informed that the pig would be delivered on a certain night and given a specific time when it would be delivered to my kitchen door at which time I would pay cash in the exact amount.

One Thursday evening at exactly 2100 hours there came a knock at the back door, I opened it and in came flying half a pig which landed on the kitchen floor, I paid the money and the deal was done. I

immediately set to and jointed the carcass using a saw, Stanley knife and any other sharp implements I could find. They were the weirdest looking joints of meat you have ever seen and the mess it made on the plastic sheeting that I had laid on the floor looked as though I had murdered someone, blood, bones and flesh everywhere. I carried on the butchering until the whole lot was safely tucked away in the freezer, well I couldn't leave it hanging around to go bad, now could I!

Within two days there was a report in the local newspaper that a local Abattoir had been robbed and fifty sides of pork had been stolen, oh my goodness, I was petrified, what should I do, I certainly couldn't feed my customers hot pork sandwiches, now could I? For a long time afterwards I was very nervous every time I heard a police siren or saw a policeman near our pub. I'm afraid the family had to endure pork for quite some time! That was the last time that I purchased anything from a customer.

However, we did make a success of the Pub, at least in terms of attracting customers, but sadly not financially. Our pub had dart teams, pool teams, domino teams and our own football team. Ann, Donald and I were all members of one or more of the various teams, but not football. The entertainment on a week-end was both professional

and home grown and we also had wedding receptions, parties and bonfire nights and we ran our own popular lottery game.

The football team were a great set of lads and they all used to come into the pub with their wives on a Friday or Saturday. On Sunday's, when they played their matches, the whole family used to join them in the pub after the game and we supplied them with hot soup and sandwiches, depending on the season. They ran their own raffles to obtain funds, paid for the conversion of our large garage into changing rooms with a communal bath and generally attracted customers and income into the pub.

One season they won the league and everybody in the team had to go into the bath fully clothed, Ann and myself included, which rounded off a great party. During these events one person of the team was generally picked on and that usually was a guy called Tony Wormald. After the season win he was stripped naked in the pub and his clothes were thrown onto the ceiling fan. Poor old Tony fled the pub and Ann had to save his modesty with a towel, so she took a bar towel! Shame on you Ann!

Tony had a passion for girl's breasts and would travel many a mile just to see a stripper. I used to beat him at Pool so often that he had to be put on the Pub inventory because at one time he owed me over 100 pints of beer. As a result of this he

challenged me to a game of Squash; he was about ten years younger than me and this was his idea of recouping some of his losses. We played 11 games at one go and he lost them all. I put up a notice in the pub to say that if anybody wanted to be a winner, play Tony Wormald. Tony was the butt of many a joke poor sod.

We had Christmas celebrations, New Year eve fancy dress parties (the staff always wore fancy dress on these occasions) (see photograph), and competitions with other pubs and organisations and of course the inevitable coach trips. We had female strippers for the boys when the girls went on a coach trip and male strippers for the girls when the boys went. We even had a sweet shop for the local children as there were no nearby shops. You name it we would give it a try.

Financially we were too soft in terms of pricing, when the Brewery put up the prices of drinks we had to follow suit but we should have increased our prices by an equal amount to cover our costs but we didn't. We should not have had the cheapest pub prices in the area; we should have matched our rivals. Our profit margins were very tight and although we were paying our creditors and the wages for extra staff when we were busy, we were not making any money for ourselves and were digging into the last of our savings for personal use.

During this time Ann even did some temping jobs to earn a little extra money.

Life in the pub was not just about great drinking sessions and fun, fun, fun we had our difficult moments as well because drink and common sense do not go hand in hand.

In our area there was a local home for residents with mental problems and one day the Manager asked if he could bring some of these residents to our pub early doors on a Friday evening so that they could interact with the locals. During their visit to our pub they would be supervised by a trained member of their staff. The residents of this home were old enough to drink. We said that we would give it a go and for a couple of weeks it worked out quite well whilst they were supervised by one of their minders. Then out of the blue one Friday they arrived at the pub unsupervised, then the trouble started.

It was like looking after a bunch of noisy, disruptive rowdy kids but who were actually full grown adults, they were sitting on the Juke Box banging their feet against the glass, running around like headless chickens, staying later than they normally would and annoying the customers and the bar staff, causing confusion and irritation throughout the pub. It was extremely difficult trying to calm mentally disturbed persons who had had a couple of drinks. One big lad had a fit and turned the very heavy Pool Table

completely over, which was no mean feat and before I could react two of my regulars bundled him outside to be picked up by a member of staff of the home. Some of our customers worked at this home and certainly did not want to be bothered in their leisure time by the inmates, plus it was affecting our business, for the worse I might add.

I could not let this continue so I phoned the Manager of the home and told him to come and collect them and that I would not entertain them in our pub ever again, supervised or not. The Manager of the home was unaware that his staff had let these problematic individuals loose and had allowed them to come to our pub unsupervised. It meant his staff could have a sneaky break whilst we were left with the problem of trying to control them, especially difficult with a few drinks inside them. Although he pleaded with me I could not let it continue and reluctantly had to cease the experiment. I did hear later that other pubs had refused to take them in as well.

During our life after the Pub, Ann and I met some of the residents of this home quite often, because the Government policy had changed and these residents now had to reside in ordinary houses and live in the community. Fortunately they always remembered us with a fondness.

The only person we banned from the pub was a customer who beat up the driver of a taxi, which we

had ordered, and the customer skipped off without paying his fare. We were not about to get a bad reputation over arseholes like that, so he was banned from our pub for the duration of our tenancy. I did bar someone else as you will read later on.

One night early doors when the pub was empty and Ann was on duty, three of our locals, two of which were big healthy lads and the other one being smaller with a big attitude, waddled in drunk as lords, staggered round the pub, eventually ending up at the bar demanding a drink. Ann told them the obvious, that they were drunk and that we did not serve people who had got drunk elsewhere and then came to our pub to cause trouble.

She refused to serve them telling them to leave, but they were welcome to return when they were sober. They said to her that if they wanted a drink they could get one and what could she do to stop them. She replied that she knew all three of them by name and the police would have no difficulty in finding them afterwards and she stuck to her guns.

I then arrived in the bar and they approached me to get them a drink which I refused and backed up my wife Ann. After a bit of mumbling, F-in and blinding, they left. The next day they all returned apologising profusely.

On another occasion Ann was in the bar on a Saturday night and a big bearded man wearing a scruffy overcoat entered the pub and asked if he could play the piano. Ann said she would rather he didn't as a live entertainer was performing in the pub that night; the weirdy beardy said he would play until the entertainer arrived. The pianist asked the customers if they had any requests and they replied, yes, play somewhere else.

Apparently he had been given permission to play the piano in our pub before, by Ann's brother Don, when Ann and I were on a family holiday abroad. Anyway, when the entertainer arrived the pianist would not stop so Ann closed the piano lid (she should have slammed the lid on his hands!). He then came to the bar for a free drink for his piano playing, which Ann refused, so, disgruntled, he coughed up a load of pennies and then he waddled off to the toilet.

I entered the bar at this time and heard this loud racket from the toilets, went in and there was the weirdy beardy trying to wreck my towel dispenser. He asked me who I was, I told him I was the landlord, he refused to believe me and took a swipe at me, I grabbed him warmly by the throat, slammed him back against the wall, threatened to rip his throat out, ordered him out of the pub to never darken my doorstep again, he swiftly left our pub without his

drink. Whilst all this was going on my locals tried to get into the toilet to help me out, but Ann said that I would call if I needed assistance.

The piano player went directly to my mate's pub, David Carter at The Grove Inn Rastrick, and told David that he had been assaulted by a mad landlord working at The Royal Oak, who had threatened to kill him. He was never seen in our area again.

Early in 1984 I was invited to the barracks of 45 Commando Royal Marines in Arbroath, Scotland for a top table celebration being given to my friend Warrant Officer John Iddon who was retiring from the Corps. I drove up in my car and mistakenly took the wrong road and drove over the Humber Bridge, which was completely in the wrong direction and had to drive back over the bridge to continue my journey. The lads in the Mess were getting concerned because if it was a drinking session I was invited to it was normal for me to be well on time! They had phoned Ann to see where I was but unfortunately we did not have mobile phones in those days so I couldn't stay in touch, in any case I would have told Ann that I had never driven over the Humber bridge before, therefore I was doing a bit of sightseeing on my way up to Arbroath! I eventually arrived in the Sergeants Mess at about 1100 pm Friday evening, fortunately, well in time for a nightcap or two.

The following day around lunch time after a swift game of golf I was suddenly taken ill with severe chest pains and sweating, no I hadn't had a drink, so stop think it. As a result of this I was rushed into a small hospital in Arbroath and was treated as a heart attack victim. An hour later I was transferred to a main hospital somewhere in the middle of Scotland and given the once over and declared fit, I never did find out the name of that hospital. I was told that it was a severe gastric attack but I had to remain overnight. My friend John Iddon informed my wife who was worried sick and about to come to Scotland when I managed to get news back to my family that I was OK and would be returning home the next day. I was collected from the hospital by a Royal Marines driver and managed to get back to the Arbroath Sergeants Mess to say my goodbyes but alas I had missed John's farewell dinner and had to leave almost straight away and return home to the pub.

There were quite a few incidents during the time that we ran the pub, but nothing that couldn't be handled by us or our very loyal customers. In law the Pub is classed as a Landlord/Landlady's home and you can refuse entry to anyone and you are not duty bound to serve them.

The rules of drinking on the other hand are completely covered by the law so one had to be on their toes all the time, especially against drunks and

underage drinkers. If you run a business of this kind you have to be able have to stand your ground and not be intimidated. Any sign of weakness and you could be in all sorts of bother.

Of course we had our nutters and people who wanted to disrupt the proceedings but in general during our tenancy The Royal Oak had a good reputation for being a well-run, clean happy pub with a great atmosphere where people came to be entertained, enjoy a good drink and not to be threatened and the staff were a pretty good lot as well. Trouble makers were not welcome and neither were Discos (we hated them with a passion and still do troublemakers and Discos).

By this time our marriage was under considerable strain and my wife Ann was on the verge of leaving me. All of us were bone tired, with never a moment when we were not under some sort of pressure or other. For myself I was so engrossed in bookkeeping and continually worrying about how we were going to survive financially that I forgot I was a husband, father or brother-in-law. We had never argued or worried about money before. What we both earned went into a joint bank account and Ann used to spend it, I rarely carried money and still don't today. Now all of a sudden all our income was going into a business account and no money was going into our personal account.

Instead of sharing the strain I perceived myself to be under, I was dominant and overbearing and everyone was scared of me as to what I might do. I even pointed out to my wife that it was my name over the door therefore I was the employer and everybody worked for me and the responsibility was all mine. In reality, of course, it was a family run business and we should have all been working towards the same goal.

All of us had forgotten what we were always good at, the art of communication amongst ourselves and how well we used to work together. There were no discussions, there were no questions and we were all slipping deeper into our separate worlds, animosity and anarchy.

My wife had had enough and the only person she could confide in was a male friend of the family who was also a customer. She used to meet him secretly in the daytime for coffee and became quite fond of him. He was a regular and I will not name him in this book but I became suspicious of him and his intentions towards my wife so I phoned him up and told him that he was not welcome in my pub anymore.

Ann had to get away for a break to save her sanity and to think things through, so she left me, but only for a long week-end, disappearing to an unknown destination. Although I thought that I had lost her

completely, she did return and when I picked her up from the railway station I asked her, with tears in my eyes, if she was back for good and she replied yes. Our two sons were in the back of the car and it was obvious to them that something not quite right between Mum and Dad. Ann and I both decided there and then that we would give up this 'pubbing lark' because our marriage was more important.

The only thing I had ever wanted in my life when I was a younger man was to get married and have children. I was never bothered about money, except I liked to earn it and even today I rarely carry any because it burns a hole in my pocket. I was never a ladies' man, although I love the company of women and have always remained faithful to my wives in deed and thoughts. It would have been no good even if I had strayed because I have difficulty in telling lies. Even my two boys know if I am trying to lead them on. So it is easy to understand the emotional state I was in having nearly lost the woman I loved. My family is my life and it gets even better as the numbers increase with daughter's-in-law and grandchildren.

When I informed the Brewery that we wanted to give up our tenancy because our marriage was at risk, their solution was to set my wife up with another pub! We got out as quickly as we could and left the Royal Oak in September 1984.

We were broke; our savings were all gone; we had no home or any jobs. My service pension was a life saver.

Because of our children we managed to get a council house, the brother-in-law got a council flat and then my Ann got a temping job. My brother-in-law Don went on to run several more pubs with a female friend and eventually settled down to a permanent job working in local government in Building Services, he is now retired and lives in Keighley.

At about this time a tax bill had arrived for a couple of hundred quid but the accountant who was acting for us advised us not to pay and hang on whilst negotiations went ahead. We ended up being accused by the tax man of double dealing because he said my books were too neat and there must be another set of working books. The Tax Man also said that Pub Landlords were known for taking at least £100 out of the till weekly and stashing it away. I was absolutely gobsmacked by all of this and entirely powerless to do anything about these accusations and was astounded at the power that Tax Men wield. Despite my protestations, our tax bill had increased tenfold. My accountant sat there with me and didn't say a word in my defence and yet he ended up on the winning side as well because we had to pay his fee also, despite his bad advice and

bad service and there was nothing I could do about that either.

We were informed by the tax authorities in no uncertain terms that we had to pay the amount in full or take the consequences of accruing heavy interest rates, so we had to get a hefty loan to pay off the debt. Initially we were refused a loan from the bank to pay off a tax bill but we could borrow money for a large purchase like a car, so our tax bill was now a car!!!!

We survived and managed to keep most of our problems away from our two boys. How we managed to buy them an Amstrad Computer for their first Christmas, I shall never know. It was the best thing we ever did because it put them both on the road to earning an extremely good living in the IT world.

The one great boon that came out of this was our marriage was growing stronger day by day and we were becoming a loving family once more, despite out financial problems.

Now that we had left the pub we began visiting Ipswich again to stay with Barry and Lynda Hockley and also to visit our family. We were gradually getting back to the way we were, a happy loving family unit.

Chapter 21

The Stollery Siblings continued.....

I have to break my story here and continue with the Stollery clan's fortunes and misfortunes.

After my mother died in 1982 our youngest brother Tony continued to live at 95 Fletcher Road with his father until one day, out of the blue, he just upped and left the ancestral pile in the clothes he stood up in and disappeared to destinations unknown. He would be in his late 20's.

A few weeks after he left Ipswich he was arrested in the London area suspected of murder as his unkempt looks, shoulder length hair and beard, matched the description of a wanted felon. The police contacted his brother Alan in Ipswich for verification of Tony's identity and to authenticate Tony's story, which Alan did. The police did ask Alan to send some money so that Tony could return by train to Ipswich. Alan refused and told the police that Tony had made his way to London by his own means and could do the same if he wanted to come back. Tony was released without charge and disappeared once again.

Many years later Tony was discovered in a hospital in Cornwall suffering from pneumonia and brought back to Ipswich to recuperate by a friend of his who was also from Ipswich. After Tony had recovered he joined a group of tree huggers and for a while he actually lived in one of the tree's this group were trying to save.

During his time back in Ipswich he did not contact or try to contact the family but his older brother Alan had discovered where he was living. By a bit of detective work, information received and waiting in his car for two or three days Alan sighted Tony at a place called Levington Creek, just outside Ipswich. They spoke briefly but Tony was not interested in being part of the Stollery family in Ipswich.

Tony left Ipswich a short while later to disappear once again. When his sister Mary died, Alan managed to get a message to Tony, through the assistance of the Police Force, to let him know that she had died. Tony phoned and spoke to all his brothers, after the cremation, when we were having the wake at Alan and Di's house. Although he received an open invitation to all of our homes, he prefers to live a solitary life somewhere in Cornwall

and he has no wish to be re-instated into the family clan.

Over the years it has become obvious that all of the Stollery siblings, including mother, probably suffered with depression to some degree or other (or the Black Dog as Sir Winston Churchill described it!). Our sister Mary, of course, suffered the worse. This depression in the Stollery family will again be significant later on in my story.

My own Black Dog took the form of extreme morbid low self-esteem, which were deep dark periods but they only occurred during moments of alcohol inebriation. I suppose this is why for many years I suffered with Migraines. Fortunately those feelings have now passed me by, as have the Migraines, and all that happens now is that when 'under the weather' I go to sleep.

During her life sister Mary suffered terribly with depression and our family believe that this was not helped by the strong medication and electric shock treatment she was given during the periods she spent in hospital. The treatment and strong drugs resulted in a right arm that had a life of its own. The local kids used to make fun of her, although I don't

think she was aware of the ridicule most of the time. Her younger brother Alan, told her to always keep her right hand in her pocket, this would help in keeping her arm still and save any embarrassment.

She was great when she had her lucid periods but a lot of the time she lived within herself, when it was very difficult for anyone to get through to her, it was as though she lived in a dream world all of her own. When you looked at her and were trying to communicate, you could see quite clearly by her face and eyes that her mind and thought processes were miles away and she was unaware of her present surroundings. Her condition was not helped by the loss of her husband Maurice Jackson and spending too much time alone in a small apartment by herself, which she couldn't wait to get out of.

After a long wait she was eventually given sheltered accommodation in a home called Radon House on Clapgate Lane. It was a very comfortable one bedroom apartment with a lounge, kitchen and bathroom and it was in the area Mary loved and where she wanted to spend the rest of her life.

For six years, prior to an operation on her brain to remove a tumour, she was extremely lucid and happy in this sheltered accommodation because she had company, security and the doctors had finally managed to get her medication sorted out and her arm was not quite so active. Mary mixed well with the residents and assisted those who were not able to get about under their own steam. I believe this residential home gave a new zest to her life during these times. Mary used her money wisely and refurbished her apartment; she stopped smoking, bought new clothes and generally made a very comfortable life for herself.

After having difficulty with her sight Mary was diagnosed with a brain tumour, had an operation to remove it, and was made blind as a result of the operation and then died of pneumonia, all within two years. Ann and I managed to visit Mary a couple of times in Addenbrooks hospital, Cambridge after Mary's operation and that was when we were told that she was completely blind. It was devastating news after all the problems that Mary has had to suffer over the years of her life. I made sure that Social Services were aware of Mary's circumstances and what she would face when she

got out of hospital, after finding out that they hadn't even visited her after the operation or were aware of her mental frailty.

The hospital didn't help much as Mary was left to fend for herself most of the time, made more difficult by her blindness. It was difficult for Mary to comprehend some of the instructions that were given to her because of her previous mental illnesses and it was difficult for her to understand the new techniques that she would have to master now that she was blind. She had difficulty in feeding herself so often the food would be taken away before she had finished her meal and she would go hungry. One nurse did teach her the clock method of what was on her plate, 1 o'clock peas, 2 o'clock carrots etc. Unfortunately this nurse was not always on duty, therefore Mary used to gulp her food down as quickly as possible so that it would not be taken away from her. When she died, food particles were found in her lungs. She was extremely fortunate though because Alan and Di visited Mary in hospital often; driving all the way from Ipswich, to make sure that she was being looked after correctly.

The care she was given by the authorities, after she went blind, was abysmal and did not help matters

along. With a bit more encouragement, assistance and understanding from the sensory impairment care team then things might have been different. It was a crying shame that Mary could not accept or cope with her blindness.

After she returned home Alan and Di were dedicated in taking care of Mary, looking after her finances, shopping, washing her clothes, getting her medication and making sure Mary wanted for nothing. I believe in my heart that without their love and support, Mary would have given in long before.

During these two years Ann and I visited Ipswich as often as finances would allow, because we had to stop in hotels, to try and give Alan and Di a bit of relief.

After Mary died of pneumonia Alan and his wife Di moved into a comfortable bungalow just round the corner from Fletcher Road.

My older brother John still resides in Yeovil and now lives by himself in the same council apartment that he moved to when he left Ipswich.



Top Photo

I took this photograph outside of our front window in 95 Fletcher Road but I do not know the date, it was probably in the late 1950's and its Mary, Mum, Alan, Tony and John.

Bottom Photo

The new Stollery's from the David Stollery side of the family, Grandma, Andrew and Phillip





This photograph was taken in the back garden of 95 Fletcher Road about the same time as the family photograph I took at the top of the previous page.

Chapter 22

1985 – 1992 Chamber of Commerce, Huddersfield

It took my wife and I a long time to recover from our experiences as Publicans so we took things steady on a day to day basis but didn't just stay together for the sake of the boys, we really wanted to make our marriage work as we had been very happy prior to the 'pubbing lark'.

Fortunately, we settled into a very comfortable and happy life together and started to enjoy ourselves as a family again. I suppose we had lost love for a while or forgotten what love was all about and then found love all over again and I believe that this made us stronger individuals.

After leaving the Pub I spent ten months on the dole seeking new horizons whilst being a house husband in between. We were living in a council house in West View, Stainland and I got quite frustrated during this period because all my applications for jobs were falling on deaf ears and I wasn't getting any replies or interviews. I must admit, I resorted to the sherry bottle during my lunch time, even hiding the bottle away from the wife; thank goodness this addiction didn't last long.

Ann was still temping and I continued to take the boys to Old Earth School in Elland each day, which

was a long way from Stainland. We were reluctant to disrupt the boy's education and move them to a school closer to Stainland, because Old Earth was a very good school with high education standards and some very dedicated teachers and also the boys were very happy there.

In June 1985, after nine months in Stainland, we were lucky enough to be given another council house in Springfield Road, Elland, which was just round the corner from the boy's school.

As usual the Job Centre was no help; all they were ever concerned about was a signature once a fortnight. Never once was I offered a potential job or pointed in the right direction nor did I ever receive any dole money because of my Service pension.

I did my usual and wrote many letters and sent off many applications until at last I was successful in obtaining a management position with our local West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce.

The West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce (WYCC), situated in Huddersfield, had just incorporated a new Training Company within its overall control and was looking for a full time Admin and Finance Manager and apparently I fitted the bill and joined

the Company in August 1985. I was very lucky in getting the job because the Chief Executive of the WYCC, who interviewed me, hated ex-servicemen. It was something to do with his University days and being forced into joining the Officer Cadet Corps.

Initially the WYCC Headquarters was situated opposite the Technical College at the bottom end of Halifax Road, Huddersfield until it purchased the Examiner building at Aspley, Wakefield Road, Huddersfield, where we moved to shortly after I joined the Company. I was made responsible for organising the move.

The Training Company was founded, obviously to make money from the Government, which it did in buckets full, but also to assist the unemployed back into the work ethic by training them in basic skills like office and building skills, basic literacy and communication skills and then actually getting them to look and apply for jobs. They trainees were also treated like employees whilst they worked on projects for the community. Slave labour really, because they only got a ten quid a week for their hard work and they did work hard, especially when working on a building or land clearing project.

I was being employed, on full time employee status, as the Admin and Finance Manager of the Core Administrative Team that would run this Community Programme Scheme and the Manager

of the team as a whole was Bill Crabtree who started on the same day as me and turned out to be an excellent boss and a good friend.

I was very fortunate because the Company had its own computer training centre and this was my first introduction to the computing world and I took to it like a duck to water and became computer literate. Spreadsheets were a boon and I was able to conduct all of the Community Programme's financial dealings using this format. Computers are still an integral part of my family's life.

This was a very lucrative scheme for the Company and during the life of the scheme the Chamber of Commerce were able to purchase outright several buildings in the West Yorkshire region and convert them into Training Centres. It was not; however, very lucrative for the unemployed project workers, they only received £10 per week, plus their dole money of course and when they were working on projects it was like having a full time job, with all that entails.

I was not privy to the statistics of how many trainees actually got full time jobs as a result of being on this training scheme but at one time our Company had over two hundred trainees on its books.

Now that I was in full time employment in September 1985 Ann was able to go into hospital for

major surgery on her spine. She had been suffering badly for several years with back problems and it was discovered that her spine near her lower back had grown extra tissue which affected the nerves, often causing her to be immobile and always in terrible pain.

The operation was called a laminectomy and could only be performed once because of the danger to the spinal cord. Ann said that when she woke up from the operation it was heaven because after several years of being in dire pain she was now pain free. It took six months for her to recover from the operation.

On completion of her six months convalescence Ann took up employment again and obtained a part-time job in February 1986 at the Brighouse Health Centre as a secretary to the Health Visitor.

At about this time and quite unexpectedly, I received a cheque for two thousand pounds for a matured insurance policy. Sometime after I joined the Royal Marines, when we became salaried, I had taken out a small endowment policy and the monthly payments came straight out of my bank account and I had completely lost track that this policy existed.

Ann and I immediately looked around for a house to purchase and found one quite close to Springfield

Road. Within two months we had purchased a three bedroom town house, number 19 Alexandra Crescent, Elland and moved in, the whole family was delighted, our two boys especially.

In October 1986 Ann left the Health Centre and obtained a full time job at a Textile Company called Samuel Lumb's which was situated very close to our home in Elland, West Yorkshire, which was close enough so she could walk to work. Ann was the secretary to the Managing Director. Our finances were also improving and we were gradually getting ourselves out of debt, rather than adding to the debt.

Work at the Chamber of Commerce was going very well and I had made friends with the Government Agency responsible for the Community Programme Scheme which helped the Chamber of Commerce enormously, especially when claim times came around. Sometimes my dealings with the Government got a bit sticky because quite a few of the senior members of the local Chamber of Commerce Training Company took advantage of the Community Programme Scheme and allegedly profited financially by having projects carried out on their own private homes or, as in one case, having a retirement home for the aged built. The one stipulation was that they had to provide the materials! Bill Crabtree and I did not wish to have

any work done on our own properties in case any fingers were pointed in our direction.

Whilst it may have been 'legal' to have this work done on their private properties and it did come under the purview of the scheme, there was a considerable amount of additional private work being carried as well. This additional work was definitely of personal financially benefit to those who received it and not strictly within the spirit of the Government Scheme. Allegedly, the worst offender was the Chief Executive.

Obviously any records have long since been destroyed and any proof with it. After I left the Company, the only person with an intimate knowledge of what actually continued to be done on the private homes of senior staff, apart from the perpetrators, has now left the country and resides in Australia.

1988 was not a good year for the family; Ann had a Hysterectomy and was off work for three months, although she was pressured to go back to work early, which she refused to even contemplate.

In 1988 Ann's father Frank died at the age of 65, which was a great shock for the family and many other people, as Frank was widely known, respected and loved.

In 1988 Ann's uncle Jack died and she was his favourite niece (I also believe that she was his only niece!).

In 1988 my old man died at the age of 75 and my family were going to ostracise me if I did not turn up for the funeral. Nobody asked me if I was going to attend they just assumed I wouldn't, because I had no particular feelings for him. I turned up for the funeral for the family's sake and my older brother then took over our family council house at 19 Fletcher Road having left Yeovil under a cloud.

In 1989 Ann decided to part company with Sam Lumb's as she was not being treated fairly with regard to wage increases. She obtained a six month maternity leave job in Local Government working for the Property Services Department of Kirklees Council in Huddersfield and six months later she was taken on full time. Although Ann thoroughly enjoyed being a secretary, she was encouraged by her boss to take a Certificate in Management Studies (CMS) at the Huddersfield University and she successfully completed this in 1991/1992.

By this time I had left administration and the inner circle of Senior Management at Aspley and moved to new offices in the Training Centre at St Thomas Road Huddersfield and become the Property Services Manager, responsible for the maintenance

and running of all Training Centres and buildings owned by the Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to being Property Services Manager I was also a Company Secretary and was one of the Company Officers responsible for signing Company cheques. In my capacity as Administrative Manager I had to visit all Company premises and this did not change when I became Property Services Manager, so I was still able to keep in contact with everybody I had known before.

Ann decided that she would surprise me with a 50th birthday treat away from our children, who would be looked after by her mum and dad. She had a difficult time arranging the surprise because she wanted to take me to the hotel that we stopped in on our first night of marriage and she had forgotten the name or where it was. She eventually contacted the police in London and they tracked it down for her, telling her that she was just a romantic fool.

We arrived at the hotel on a Saturday which was my actual birthday at about noon and I was forced by Ann to stay in the room, although I wanted to explore London because it was a glorious sunny day. Whilst we were waiting messages and telegrams from all our friends kept arriving at the hotel wishing me a happy birthday. We received a telephone message from the front desk requesting our presence in the foyer. We both put our coats on

and went down and who should be standing there but our friends Olivia and Dean. It was a lovely reunion because we hadn't seen them for quite some time, this was the surprise that Ann was keeping from me and the reason I was not allowed to leave the room.

Off we all went for an afternoon of wine tasting in all the favourite bars we used to visit when we lived there. All the anxieties had built up in Ann and now they were suddenly released and she enjoyed herself too much and became intoxicated quite badly. Thanking our friends for a wonderful afternoon we got Ann back to the hotel in the early evening at which time she told me that we had two tickets for the musical Miss Saigon in a West End theatre. By this time Ann was on her knees praying by the porcelain bowl in the bathroom, doing the one thing she hates most, being as sick as a dog. I got ready, put Ann to bed and went to the show by myself, leaving her ticket in the foyer of the theatre in case she felt better later. On the way back to the hotel I just had enough money to purchase a take away and just enough time to consume it before I arrived back at our room as I did not want to make Ann any sicker than she was. As it happens Ann was fast asleep when I got back.

For quite some time afterwards we kept this incident a secret and I prepped Ann with the details

of the musical so she could make believe that she had actually been to the performance. We were caught out later after one of our friends who had seen the musical questioned Ann one night and found out the truth.

Back at the Chamber work carried on just the same but dark clouds were looming on the horizon. For quite some time it had become a custom, on a Friday evening after working hours, for me to hold a soiree in my office at Aspley and this continued when I moved to St Thomas Road. I was popular because I was familiar with everyone in the Company and its machinations so two or three of the prominent members of staff used to turn up for a drink. We would enjoy a sherry or coffee and talk about many things, not just about the Company, but sorting out the world as one does in these tete-a-tetes. It was just a way of relaxing and winding down after a week of hard work.

It would appear that my Friday evening soiree's had come to the attention of the more senior members of staff and suspicions were raised that I was undermining the loyalty of some employees and turning them against senior management, a suspicion which was completely unfounded.

If I was that disloyal I would have been voicing my disapproval long ago regarding the financial shenanigans that were being carried out under the

guise of Company productivity and good working practices. The finger of suspicion was now pointed at me instead of at them.

This all came to a head at a Christmas party, which would be my last one with the Company. The Chief Executive of the Company stood up to address the staff with what we thought was going to be a morale boosting Christmas speech full of praise for the deserving and details of the future plans for the Company.

We all waited expectantly, decked out in party hats with drinks in hand. He opened his mouth and from it spewed forth the most ridiculous tirade the like of which nobody had ever had the misfortune to witness before. He railed against the staff about how he felt slighted because we were not supporting his leadership, how we failed to back him in his decision making and accused us all of being generally disloyal to him behind his back in thoughts and deeds.

He then told the staff present that he demanded loyalty from everyone and that if this loyalty was not forthcoming then staff would be asked to leave. I have never seen a more manipulative, selfish or greedy man who craved, but did not receive, the affections of his staff. An egotist, in the true sense of the word and I'm afraid a very insecure and

paranoid person. The poor thing, he must have felt unloved!

He immediately left the party, which was being held in one of our Training Centres, but phoned me up a short while later to tell me to finish the party in 30 minutes time, dismiss the staff and make sure that any mess was cleared away and the room was put back into good order; not a very pleasant way to start the festive season, what a wanker!

I suppose the writing was on the wall for me and this was the beginning of the end. Shortly after this episode, the company decided to dispense with my services but had a unique method of getting rid of me although their undermining skills were not very subtle.

My department were completing a major project developing our newly purchased Wakefield Training Centre. The building used to be the old Wakefield Job Centre. The project was only half completed when the Chief Executive decided in his wisdom that he would hold an opening ceremony with a VIP from the Government in London to do the honours.

Because of outside contracts and time constraints work had to continue on the building and the Chief Executive agreed that there should be no disruption to the work schedule. Despite my misgivings and warnings to the Chief Executive about the possibility

of damage to completed work surfaces, he, nevertheless, decided to go ahead with the official opening of the completed half of the Training Centre.

Despite my best efforts, damage and staining on new carpets and work services did occur as a result of the continuing building programme and this damage could not be avoided or rectified before the big day. The Chief Executive blamed me, although he would not tell me to my face so he sent one of his minions to do the dirty deed for him. After seven years of loyal service this was my reward, I had fallen out of favour and was about to be given the shitty end of the stick, starting on the opening day of our newest Centre.

On the opening day of the half-finished Wakefield Training Centre, each member of staff had to wear named colour coded badges to show visitors their standing in the Company; I was given a workers badge instead of a manager's badge and was told that a mistake had been made! It was embarrassing for me because several eminent people commented on it as they knew my position in the Company. I quickly disposed of the badge into the nearest Mr Crapper out tray!

The following week I was called into my manager's office and given the ultimatum of redundancy or accepting a junior appointment, which meant being

subservient to my former staff, and I would also have to take a considerable drop in salary. When I announced the Company's decision to my fellow workers they were absolutely gobsmacked because they thought I was a permanent fixture, being a senior Manager and a Company Secretary with the authority to sign cheques and they could not comprehend why I was being treated in this manner. They were now becoming nervous about their own futures.

I consulted my wife and two sons and thankfully, they agreed with my decision to take redundancy. I believe the response from my two boys' (they were now 16 and 14) was for the Chamber of Commerce to stick the job where the sun doesn't shine.

I went back to work on the Monday and requested redundancy and then worked my two weeks' notice to make absolutely sure that any outstanding work was right up to date and there was a perfect set of turnover notes. Nobody was going to point a finger at me behind my back; you never know I might want a favour sometime in the future, Ha! Ha! Ha! At least redundancy meant that I received some financial reward for my endeavours over the past seven years.

I departed the Company with the normal two fingered salute, after I had a farewell party on my last Friday evening. Everybody could see how

delighted I was because I had a new job to go to on the Monday morning. The Chief Executive didn't escape, yes he did turn up to say goodbye, because my wife had a few choice words explaining how very lucky he was that I was such a loyal person and had not spilled the beans regarding the nefarious goings on in the running of the West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce.

The bottom line was that I was very happy to leave as the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce was now a dictatorship and the atmosphere in the Company had deteriorated to such a level that it was becoming uncomfortable to come into work each day. Many of my colleagues at my 'Leaving Do' expressed the same misgivings and told me how lucky I was to be escaping.

Chapter 23

1992 – 1999 James Holdsworth Brothers Ltd, Mirfield

My two sons Phillip and Andrew were growing up fast and progressing exceedingly well academically. After leaving the pub Ann and I were able to enjoy supporting our boys in whatever endeavour they chose, whether it was music, hobbies or sport. Phillip played the violin and Andrew played the cornet. They both enjoyed sport and involved themselves in Judo, so Ann and I went along and played badminton with friends of ours whilst the boys enjoyed their Judo in the Calderdale Sports Centre in Halifax. On some of these evenings our sons and their friends would take over badminton from us while we rested and enjoyed a drink.

My friend Chris Hirst, his Company's name was Hirst & William's, who I had worked for on leaving the Royal Marines, had gone into partnership with a Textile Group called James Holdsworth Brothers Ltd and Holdsworth's were looking for a Quality Services Manager. Although I had no experience in this field whatsoever, he, nevertheless, recommended me for the job.

The Headquarters of James Holdsworth Company Group was situated in their Textile Mill at Mirfield, West Yorkshire. The original Holdsworth Brothers was a Family Company established in 1790 and the

Managing Director at the time was Bill Holdsworth. The Subsidiary Companies were Hirst & Williams, Wire Manufacturers and Lila Hurst, Cloth Manufacturers and they were established in Holdsworth's Textile Mill at Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire. My main office would be at Mirfield and I would also have an office in Slaithwaite.

I was utterly gobsmacked when my application and interview were successful and I got the job. The great thing about it was that I had to start work on the very Monday after I had finished on the Friday with the Chamber of Commerce. I really did stick two fingers up on my farewell party that previous Friday night.

I had no idea what I was letting myself in for when I arrived on my first day at work. They not only wanted me to be the Quality Services Manager, but wanted me to have additional rolls as the Health and Safety Manager and the Personnel Manager. I hadn't got a bloody clue on how to do any of the jobs or what the Company manufactured; have any of you ever heard of a product called Card Clothing? I thought not.

In its most basic form Card Clothing fillets consist of very long strips of layered cloth glued together with a rubber top coating, supplied and sold by Lila Hurst, into which are inserted wire teeth by the recipient Company at which time they become long combs.

The wire teeth are inserted mechanically into the fillets like staples by a team of Setters using Setting Machines which cut the teeth from coils of wire supplied by Hirst & Williams. Holdsworth's manufactured many different types of Card Clothing fillets using over a hundred of these Setting Machines. The Card Clothing fillets were sold at home and abroad.

Once the Card Clothing fillets were manufactured by Holdsworth's and sold, the customer wrapped the Card Clothing fillets round cylinders of various sizes in textile machines which combed raw wool and other fibres ready for spinning. If necessary, Holdsworth's could also supply Fitters who could visit their factories and fit the Card Clothing fillets for them, or the customer could send the cylinders to our Mill at Mirfield and we would fit them on our premises and return them. Once the wool or fibres were spun into thread it was wound round bobbins ready for the weaving machines. Large numbers of these bobbins of thread would be mounted on textile weaving machines which would then turn the thread into textile material.

I told the missus that I didn't think I would be able to do these jobs and she told to me get my arse back in there and start using some of that flannel that I was so good at when I was younger and she reminded me that I was Commando trained!

I quickly built up a Company reference library and started to read myself into the job. My contacts with my last job enabled me to find a government approved Company with the authority to award quality status to the BS EN ISO 9002 British and European Standard. This standard was recognised throughout the world and my new Company wished to achieve it so they could use it on their letter heads, invoices and in the market place. Armed with the necessary contacts, literature, and computer equipment I was on my way.

I was responsible for producing a Quality Assurance Policy Manual, an Operational Procedure Manual, an Employee Handbook and a Health and Safety Manual for the parent company and two subsidiary companies and I was given a free hand with no time restrictions.

My first job was to understand what the Company manufactured, how they manufactured it, why they manufactured it and where they sourced their raw materials from. Complete traceability records from the raw materials to the finished product had to be maintained throughout the manufacturing process. My efforts would have to be approved and assessed by an authorised Government Agency to enable the Company to be accredited with the European and British Standards of quality. Once accredited there would be a continuous process of audits and annual

inspections necessary if the Company wanted to retain the Quality standard and name.

Once I got into the nuts and bolts of the job it was fascinating and I was surprised how much knowledge I had, having worked with Chris Hirst in his wire factory. Hirst & Williams now manufactured coils of hardened and tempered steel wire which he supplied to James Holdsworth for the 'teeth' of the Card Clothing fillets. Although Hirst & Williams was part of the Group it still had to make a profit as a standalone Company, therefore it also had other customers that the wire was sold to and it also manufacture other products for the wire industry.

Lila Hurst, which had the same standing in the Group as Hirst & Williams, manufactured the cloth for the Card Clothing. This entailed gluing two metre wide rolls of different cloths together until the required number of layers and tensile strengths had been reached and then adding a rubber top coating. Once the glue and rubber had set the rolls, between 20 and 30 metres long, would be cut into strips two to three inches wide, which were called fillets and then despatched to the customer so that the wire teeth could be added to make Card Clothing fillets. Lila Hurst made many different varieties of this product and sold it to Holdsworth's and other customers.

To enable me to write the Operational Procedure Manual and the Quality Assurance Policy Manual I had to start with the Mirfield Factory and literally sit down with a note book and observe and record every detail of the manufacturing process and I also had to question the operators on the procedures they were carrying out and to what standards they were working to. This had to be linked to the sourcing of all materials so that traceability from start to finish could be followed.

Initially the skilled operators of the different processes resented my presence and were unhappy that a complete outsider and textile ignoramus was observing and recording their every action and timing each process. Some of these people had worked at the factory for 30 years or more. Not only did I have a job of work to do but I also had to convince the staff why it was necessary for me to question every detail and explain to them how important it was to be precise because the customers were now insisting that our products have quality control certificates before they would purchase anything from our Company. To achieve this I had to write the manuals and get the whole system accredited and it was vital to have the staff's support.

Eventually I gained their respect and support and I did this by explaining carefully exactly what I was

doing and why, having my lunch with them and when invited, going for a drink and generally mixing with them and not being a stuck up office wallah. Shop floor workers, by tradition, distrust white collar workers. At this point I really enjoyed working at Holdsworth's and I was very enthusiastic about my job and couldn't wait to get into work each day.

In 1993, exactly one year after I joined the Company, I had completed the two Quality Manuals which were audited and approved by the governing body and I was successful in obtaining full accreditation to the British and European Quality Standard BS EN ISO 9002 for James Holdsworth's Mirfield operation and they could now use this quality standard on all their documentation. In addition I had produced the Employee Handbook and the Health and Safety Manual for the Company Group. My next task was to start on the quality systems for the other two companies in the Group.

Now that Ann had her CMS certificate she was able to move on from being a Secretary and in 1993 was successful in obtaining a position with a new department in Kirklees Council as the Unit Coordinator of the Marketing Department in Huddersfield.

Once again Ann had dropped lucky and was encouraged by her new boss to attend University for

two years to obtain her Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) from 1993 to 1995. This meant going to University in the evenings and one half day a week.

Also in 1993, when my oldest son was 17 he passed his driving test at the first attempt. He took great delight in this because his dad had two attempts before passing. I was very competitive with my two sons so a win over me always delighted them.

Before my oldest son Phillip went to University in 1994, he was 18 years of age; he asked if we could go on holiday to Malta so that he could see where he was born. We agreed and decided to make it a family holiday so off we went with Ann's mum Lillian, Ann's brother Donald, Phillip 18, Andrew 16, Ann and I.

When we landed in Malta the holiday representative approached me and informed me that she had some bad news because there had been some over booking at our Hotel and we would have to be separated. I quickly reminded her that this was a family group, we had planned this holiday for a very long time, we had paid our money and we were not going to stay in any other Hotel other than the one we had paid for. If necessary my family would camp out in the foyer of the St Georges Hotel, St Georges Bay until our four rooms were ready for

our occupation. The rep quickly moved off and got some other gullible souls to move hotels.

It was a wonderful two weeks holiday, the weather was perfect, the Hotel was wonderful and Phillip got to see where he was born and all the other places he had been taken to as a baby (see photograph). We did meet the people who were moved instead of us and they told us that they had been given an apartment which was over a night club and they were not very happy and still trying to get back into our Hotel. Did I feel sorry for them? I'm afraid I didn't, they should have fought back like I did.



Top Photograph

Phillip Stollery, David Stollery, Andrew Stollery and Donald McCallum (Uncle). At the top of Straight Street, better known as 'The Gut', during our holiday in Malta for Phillip's 18th Birthday 1994.

Bottom Photograph

Phillip Stollery, Ann Stollery, David Stollery and Andrew Stollery. Sitting by the fountain in front of the Gateway to Valletta, Malta 1994.



Ann's Aunt Bessie, the wife of her Uncle Jack who died in 1988, passed away in 1995. Ann visited Bessie nearly every Saturday afternoon for a long number of years. Ann used to visit Bessie after taking Lillian her mother home. Lillian used to come to our house on a Friday to have a bath and her hair done and usually stayed overnight. Ann's visits to Bessie were a bone of contention between Ann and her mum Lillian because Bessie and Lillian didn't particularly get on with each other. Bessie drank and Lillian didn't. They both played Ann like a fiddle as a result of their rivalry and many a Saturday Ann would come home crying after having heated words with Bessie and her mother.

After Bessie had been in a Hospice, she was suffering with terminal cancer; she couldn't climb the stairs in her house so we moved her into the lounge. Whilst Bessie was away in the Hospice Ann and I and our two sons had decorated the lounge and the kitchen and moved Bessie's bed downstairs so that it was all ready for her to live in and greet her visitors in comfortable surroundings. Bessie was very brave right up to her death because she emphatically believed that she was on her way to meet her husband Jack. For the last week of Bessie's life Ann slept on the floor until she died.

1995 was becoming an eventful year when Andrew passed his driving test on the first attempt. Yes, dad

got an earful again! Ann also passed her DMS and was presented with her Diploma from Huddersfield University.

This was also the beginning of a very difficult 5 years because Andrew started to suffer, from time to time, with severe depression after being involved in cannabis smoking with a group of his friends. Andrew had an adverse reaction to cannabis which brought his self-esteem to zero, although it did not seem to affect his friends.

Sometimes Ann and I wouldn't know what we would be coming home to as Andrew self-harmed during this period. It was a traumatic and frightening time in our lives and not a very happy or comfortable time for Andrew either. Despite not being given any information or help from the various doctors that visited or we went to see, we persevered and our love and his determination pulled him through, Andrew never once resorted to medication for his illness. Despite all of Andrews's problems he still managed to hold down a few jobs during his illness and was able to get valuable training in his chosen field of Information Technology.

Also in 1995, I had achieved accreditation for Hirst & Williams and Lila Hurst at the Holdsworth's Mill in Slaithwaite and was also busy updating the Company Groups Health and Safety Systems, Fire Regulations and Company Handbooks and I

completed these in the same year. In addition I had to audit and update all the systems on a regular basis because of new technology and innovations that were creeping into the textile industry and the necessity for an annual assessment by the Quality Control Board which was a requirement if we wanted to keep the quality system intact.

My older brother John had moved back to Yeovil in Somerset, where his two daughters lived, after getting a council tenant in Yeovil to swap council houses with him. Ann and I became frequent visitors and on the occasion we visited in 1996 I had another one of my turns and was rushed into Yeovil Hospital with a suspected heart attack. After being thoroughly examined by a doctor and his team and being stabbed with loads of needles and had various tubes stuck into me, I was declared OK and released the following day. Once again the reason for my sudden collapse was given as a severe gastric attack.

When we returned to Elland from Yeovil, Andrew borrowed our car to take some friends out and had an accident due to black ice. He wrote off 3 stationery vehicles all belonging to the same family and made a right mess of our car, which I needed for work and now had to do without for a few weeks. It was one of the best cars we had owned, a 1600cc Ford Orion and when it was returned it was even better because it had a brand new engine, I really

loved that car. About a month after the car was repaired and returned to me Andrew borrowed it again and this time, due to icy roads, he was involved in another accident and our car was written off completely. Thank goodness nobody was injured in any of these accidents and on both occasions, Andrew was exonerated. Andrew once had the gall to call me a bad driver!

Strangely we did see our car again and it was now repaired and parked in our old pubs car park, The Royal Oak. We always thought that written off car's couldn't be put back on the road again, but this one was?

For the next couple of years I continued to maintain, update and audit all of the Quality Systems for the three Companies' in the Holdsworth Group. My responsibilities still included Human Resources, Health & Safety and Fire Regulations and I was also involved in investigating new computer technology for the Card Clothing operation.

It was a good job that I was on the ball with Health & Safety because it would be needed after a Building Firm was contracted to repair the roof of the Factory at Mirfield. When they arrived I explained our Health & Safety policy and got the contractor to sign the various disclaimers. Early the next day one of the workmen slipped off the long roof ladder he was climbing and his leg got caught in the ladder about

twelve rungs above the ground, so his downward fall was abruptly halted. When we rushed over to release him from his predicament we all thought that he had broken his back and his leg, because he was in considerable pain in both those areas of his body.

He was rushed to hospital and incredibly returned to work later the same day with nothing more than severe bruising. I asked him why he had returned to work and he said that he would not have received sick pay and couldn't afford to lose any pay for the number of days he would have been off. How he got released from Hospital I do not know, because the bruising was very severe, all I can say is that he was a very plucky lad. Thank goodness we were covered and did not have to pay compensation.

Also on the Health & Safety side was another member of our staff who tried to con her way into some compensation by claiming for Repetitive Strain Injury whilst she was off work with a bad back. The girl had a long record of absences through sickness. She was part of the all-female Filler-In Team and their job was to replace missing or damaged teeth in the Card Clothing fillets. This team of ladies had to inspect every inch of every fillet that was manufactured by our Company.

The Filler-In Team worked at a very long wooden inspection bench and they had to sit down on chairs

and bend forwards to inspect and repair the fillets. After I had received the compensation claim my first task was to call in an Ergonomics expert to check this team out. After the check had been completed it was noted that the ladies could not sit with the correct posture because the chairs the operators were using were not fit for purpose, crap in other words and were causing aching backs. Although Bill Holdsworth wasn't happy the Company had to purchase a dozen new swivel back chairs at about one hundred and fifty quid a throw.

My investigations continued and I discovered that the individual seeking compensation had had a bad car accident a couple of years previously and suffered with serious whiplash injuries to her neck and back and her work had aggravated those old injuries. She had failed to notify Holdsworth's of the old injuries as she should have done in accordance with our Health & Safety policy. I also obtained supporting documentation from her Doctor. She failed in her attempt to claim for RSI and shortly after lost her job through her constant absences.

Each year, whilst I worked for Holdsworth's, all the admin staff received a Christmas bonus of 3 bottles of spirits, a large tin of chocolates and a large fresh turkey. Suddenly in 1997, without explanation, these gifts stopped, except for a very few of the

inner circle who had been with the Company for a lot longer than me, I hasten to add that I was not one of the very few. It should have started to ring warning bells because following the stoppage of the Christmas bonuses any new modifications I was attempting to incorporate into the Quality system were being put on hold and generally delayed, excuses made or obstacles were being placed in my way. These changes to the system were going to be needed in the not too distant future if Holdsworth's and the other two Company's wished to retain the Quality System, but nobody was listening. At our regular Management meetings my arguments were falling on deaf ears.

In February of 1998 Ann's mother Lillian, at the age of 75, was diagnosed with cancer and it took effect at once and she deteriorated immediately despite the Doctor saying that her body was coping well. She was given 12 to 18 months to live but was dead by April. It was very sad because we had hoped that she would be able to see our oldest son Phillip graduate from University with honours in July 1998.

During Lillian's last week of life Ann looked after her by sleeping in the Lounge after we had turned it into a bedroom, just like she had done for her Auntie Bessie. One afternoon Ann heard a noise in the chimney and a little later another noise which was now coming from behind the gas fire and then she

discovered that a large black crow had fallen down the chimney and had gotten trapped. Ann finally managed to free the bird from behind the fire and it flew round the room until she caught it after she had donned a pair of gloves. As she managed to open the front door to release the bird two District Nurses were waiting to enter and were confronted by this person clasping a large black crow, what a sight that must have been. A strange omen, Lillian died that night.

Bill Holdsworth had brought in a team of Consultants at about £300 a day to look at the Mirfield Staff organisation with a view to producing new Terms and Conditions of Employment and to get Staff to complete their own Job Descriptions which would be modified by the consulting team. This team of Consultants constantly targeted me to help them because I had already produced my own Terms and Conditions and Job Description and I had produced the Company Handbook. I believe that Bill had thrown money away by utilising these people as they wanted me to produce Job Descriptions for the rest of the Company, when in fact they were paid to do this very job. I could have saved the Company loads of dosh if they had asked me to do the job. When all the dust had settled and the Consultants had long gone, having received a wad of cash, nothing changed at all and the Company continued as it had done before.

At this stage Bill Holdsworth employed an accountant as a Financial Director and we called him the Ginger Whinger. This was a new appointment as the only finance man in the Company was a bookkeeper who had been doing the job for donkey's years. It was thought that the Finance Director would be looking at ways of making the Company more financially viable; involving himself in pricing, sourcing cheaper materials, pay structures and that sort of thing. Nobody had noticed that when the Ginger Whinger had arrived he carried with him an axe and he was looking to cut, what he perceived, to be dead wood from within the Company.

What this new Director should have been looking at was the archaic wage structure in the Company, such as an outdated wage system which paid holiday pay and paid workers a sort of piece work which included remuneration for bad workmanship. He should have been looking at the purchase of clothing and footwear for the workers year in and year out, when the workers still had brand new clothing and footwear unworn from previous years, yet they still ordered the same amount each year. He should have been looking at the Sales Director who was swanning off to the Far East haemorrhaging money from Holdsworth's on top class Hotels and travel and not bringing back any orders for the Company. He also should have been

looking at the enormous amounts of money spent on goodies purchased each Christmas for salesmen from prospective customers which, in my mind, was a form of bribery. He should have been looking at improving efficiency, deadlines, production, sourcing and of course the overall pricing structure. Instead this Finance Director was looking for redundancies which would of course substantiate his own wages. He must have been excellent at his job, because he lost a lot of good people and eventually the Company.

I believe that the Ginger Whinger had a debilitating effect on Bill and that's why the Company started to slide into oblivion, plus the fact that Bill was not a very good at man management in any case, as he admitted to my face when we last met.

As 1998 progressed the nature of Holdsworth's was changing drastically and the atmosphere was deteriorating so badly that it was spreading rapidly throughout the rest of the Company Group. It was like a disease and Bill Holdsworth, the Managing Director, was making things worse by being suspicious of everybody and he was very quick to accuse anybody if mistakes were made. His immediate reaction was to get me to discipline them with written warnings and with a view to getting rid of them as soon as possible, something I could not do as disciplinary rules had to be followed. Bill was

becoming paranoid and it was affecting the whole Group.

Both the other two Managing Directors of Hirst & Williams and Lila Hurst were also in a state of confusion and anger and couldn't understand what was going on because there was still a healthy flow of orders coming into the Companies and there did not seem to be any rhyme or reason for the confusion being stimulated by Bill Holdsworth. It looked as though Bill was heading for a nervous breakdown; he was certainly starting to drink more.

To the latter end of the year he would hurry into my office and come round my desk to inspect the computer to see if I was involving myself in Company work instead of things of a personal nature and he would always have some inane question to ask me to cover up his furtiveness. I almost felt like a naughty school boy being constantly checked up on by the teacher. It was a great relief when I had to work away from the Company at Mirfield, which, thankfully, I had to do quite often.

I had also fallen out with Bill's secretary Janet as she had almost ordered me to come in on Saturday mornings and do the Company filing. I informed her politely that I was not a filing clerk and during my recent discussions with the Managing Director filing was definitely not one of my responsibilities. Bad

move, Janet was also the Sales Director's Secretary and they used to spend hours alone in his office during the working week. Janet was the Queen Bee and yours truly had subdued her sting, retribution was at hand!

The writing was definitely on the wall as none of my new work was being accepted or approved for publication by Holdsworth's. Everything I had done in preparation for the new manuals and systems that had to be implemented to keep the Quality system in existence were in heaps around my desk and I was just going through the motions of auditing and tweaking the various systems that I was responsible for. My other duties of Health & Safety, Personnel Management, clothing issues and looking after the other two Companies in the Group kept me busy enough, but it was like running on the spot, I was going nowhere fast.

Early in 1999, to the surprise of everyone else except me, I was made redundant and at the age of 58 and I was once again kicked out on my ear. My Quality duties were to be carried out by the Managing Director of Lila Hurst Ltd. After serving my notice, collecting my small wad of cash and having a farewell party, I once again rode off into the sunset, to new horizons or not, as the case maybe.

Just as I was being made redundant Ann finally left the Secretarial world behind her and moved from

Kirklees to Calderdale Council into a new Management role as their Customer Services Manager with a staff of 12 spread all over West Yorkshire from Todmorden in the Upper Valley to Brighouse in the Lower Valley and to Ovendon in North Halifax.

Her duties included the writing of the operational manual and getting everyone in her team working to the same script. It was very difficult to achieve this because they were so spread out and Ann could not get them together for discussions face to face or for them to meet each other in a convivial atmosphere. Ann discussed it with me and it was decided that we would hold a garden party in the summer and invite all her staff and partners. The party was a resounding success and Ann became the greatest Manager that had ever lived, according to her staff of course. We continued this summer party the following year and it has now become an annual event, which continues to this day, although the reasons for the party no longer exist and have been lost in the midst of time. Some of the old hands still turn up, including my work colleagues from the Halifax Bank and new faces are added each year.

My youngest son Andrew was still living at home, working and still getting over his depression and my oldest son Phillip had finished University and had gone travelling around the world before joining a

Company that had given him a bursary for his final year, Allied Dunbar (later Zurich) in Swindon.

Would this be my last adventure, was I going to have a long happy retirement and be a good house husband or was I destined to join another Company heading for disaster?

After I left James Holdsworth Brothers Ltd, Bill Holdsworth sold the factory in Mirfield and paid for a brand new factory to be built on land they owned beside the old mill at Slaithwaite. On completion of this new factory the Textile Company went into receivership and the card clothing operation ceased to exist. The Receivers allowed Bill to retain all the properties at Slaithwaite and they are all rented out to pay off the debts of the failed Company. As well as being a rent collector, Bill Holdsworth has a small Bistro in Mirfield.

The best part of the story is that the Ginger Whinger survived the demise of the Company and there is just him and Bill Holdsworth left running this tiny bit of the Company so he obviously did something correct in respect of his own predicament. How one can justify the employment of two rent collectors for such a small Company, I do not know.

Chapter 24

1999 – 2001 Forced Retirement

For some strange reason I was not really bothered about being made redundant this time, perhaps it was because of my age or perhaps I was getting fed up with work generally, although having said that, I still applied for jobs whenever the opportunity arose. I refused to sign on at the Job Centre because they were less than useless and fortunately I did not resort to the sherry bottle as I did when I left the Pub all those years before.

I settled into becoming a house husband and made sure that I did everything in the house so that Ann could come home, relax, have a meal and, after a hard day's work, put her feet up. I carried out and enjoyed doing all the housework, cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing and shopping, although Ann kept her hand in by cooking during the week-ends.

Although Ann and I have had many holidays since leaving The Royal Oak (we have just about done the whole of the Mediterranean) in 2000 Ann and I decided to celebrate our Silver Wedding anniversary by having an all-inclusive three week long haul holiday to the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean (see photograph). We stopped on the Caribbean side of the island in a place called Bayahibe. The private beach had soft white sand which was shaded

by palm trees and the sea was warm and blue, just like a tropical paradise. The hotel was surrounded by green lawns and the gardens were full of flowering shrubs. The large swimming pool was hardly used as most of the guests sunbathed on the beach and swam in the sea. The grounds of the hotel were surrounded by walls and the main gate had a manned barrier. The food was excellent and not only did we have a main restaurant we also had four other themed restaurants available to us at no extra cost. Several people were married in the hotel during our stay.

By the swimming pool was a large palm tree with a plank of wood embedded in the main trunk. The palm tree had been moved from the beach as a monument in remembrance of a vicious hurricane (George) the year before when the plank of wood had been blown by the wind to become embedded through the trunk of the palm tree. Just imagine what it would have done if it had hit a human being!

During our holiday we met and made friends with several Americans, who generally only came for a week as they were afraid of losing their jobs if they stayed any longer, plus the fact that for them it is like us when we visit Spain, it is fairly close and easy to get to. We enjoyed their company very much and found them to be warm, friendly and sociable people and we had many invitations to visit them in

America and still keep in touch with a few of them today. As yet we haven't had the time to visit any of them, but we still have hopes to do so in the future.

In general the surrounding villages in Bayahibe were not safe to visit but in the local village nearest to the hotel lived our Security Manager and he guaranteed our safety so a couple of times we went for a walk at night with our American friends for a drink in the local Bars. To get to the village we had to walk along the beach and we were clocked out and in by a guard who was positioned on the boundary of the hotel. The locals were very accommodating despite being unhappy that so few people spent money in their village to help their economy because everybody staying in the hotel came under the all-inclusive umbrella. The main reason Ann and I visited were the friends we made who belonged to the local diving team that sometimes trained hotel guests and they lived in the village. The Bars were very rough and basic, almost ramshackle, and when it was our turn to buy a round it consisted of a bottle of rum and half a dozen cokes plonked in the middle of our table. Although we were not threatened in any way we did witness one or two fights. Dirty dancing by the locals was also one of the highlights of the evenings out as were the primitive toilets we had to use.

We took one trip to see the island and ended up in a perfect replica of a Spanish village fairly near to our hotel which was built by a wealthy Dominican as a present for his daughter. People actually lived and worked in this village and there were bars, shops and businesses and a holiday resort. Ann and I were having a drink on a balcony of a Bar overlooking the centre of the village when who should walk by with her film crew but Judith Chalmers. She stopped and chatted with us as she hoped that we were staying in the village and she could interview and film us as part of her holiday programme which would be shown in England. I tried to persuade her with drink, money and my body but she wasn't having any of it and quickly moved off to film somebody else. This was also the village that Michael Jackson was married in when he wed Lisa Presley.



Top Photograph

In the Main Restaurant of Casa Del Mar, Bayahibe, Dominican Republic
celebrating our 25th Wedding Anniversary.

Bottom Photograph

After our 25th Anniversary meal we continue our celebrations at the hotel
Bar with our American friends Terri and Steve.



During these two years Ann and I travelled all over Yorkshire at the week-ends. As all the housework was done and Ann had every week-end off, it enabled us to hop in the car and visit all the places that Ann wished she had visited during her youth. We were also able to go to places that we both had been unable to visit because of work commitments and bringing up the children. We tried to cover the whole of Yorkshire, North, West, and South from Whitby to Hornsea and from Ripon to Sheffield and then over into Lancashire from Morecambe to Southport and anywhere in between. We got to visit many places, even places that Ann had never seen whilst growing up in Yorkshire.

In December 2000 an application for a job that I had made six months previously came to fruition and was followed up by the Halifax Building Society and I was offered a position in the Post Room to commence January 2001. Also at this time Andrew was coming to the end of his problems and he seemed a much better person for it. It had been a rough ride for him but he had toughed it out and I admired him for his fortitude, at the end of the day he is our son, what more can one say, we love him to bits.

2001 dawned and the family was off to a flying start. Ann and I had decided to sell our house in Alexandra Crescent and move into a small bungalow in Old

Earth in the January and I also started work in Halifax. On the day we moved in I had yet another one of my turn's i.e. severe chest pains and was rushed by ambulance with blue lights flashing and sirens blaring to the Halifax Infirmary with a suspected heart attack. After many tests I was released next day with the same words ringing in my ears, we think it was a severe gastric attack. Poor old Ann had the brunt of the moving in workload once again. At least she had Andrew and brother (Don) to help as he was moving in with us.

Here we go again another new job and something new to learn. This time the challenges would be completely different because it was not a management job it was manual labour and other persons would have the responsibility of supervision and making the decisions and all little old me would have to do was to work my little socks off. I was really looking forward to working on the shop floor with no management duties.

Chapter 25

2001 – 2006 Halifax Building Society, Halifax

The duties I would be undertaking in the Post Room of the Halifax Building Society would be completely different to anything I had done before and the exciting thing was that all the Supervisors and Managers I would be working under would be Ladies, shame it wasn't the other way around!

My status in the Company was Postal Clerk which entailed collecting and delivering correspondence and mail to and from all the internal and external departments of the Halifax including Halifax Town Centre, the Computer Centre at Copley, and the rented offices in Dean Clough and the Leeds Central Office. The job also included working in a central sorting office in the building called Collinson's dealing with the distribution of incoming and outgoing mail, sorting internal correspondence, the despatch of Business, Registered and Recorded Delivery post and working the franking machines. The Collinson's building was attached to Trinity Road which was the Headquarters of Halifax Building Society. Our very large semi basement open plan office was shared with the printing department, which also belonged to our group of departments.

Once a new employee had been shown the ropes and taught the many collection rounds they would

then have plenty of opportunities to get out of the main building at Collinson's to work down at Copley or Dean Clough for a week of afternoons as part of a rota system. In addition to that there were all the internal rounds to carry out in Trinity Road, Collinson's and Commercial Street. I was really looking forward to being just a working slob with no management duties or decisions, nary a one.

When I first started work for this Company there was a great team of employee's in the Post Room of Halifax Building Society Collinson's Building and a lot of them were like me, on their last job before retirement. The atmosphere was brilliant and the Managers were great, everybody pulled their weight, were very good at their jobs and the department abounded with good humour.

Some of the friends I made were Liz, Colin, Brian, Barry, McLes, John, Pauline, June, Jane, David and others who don't spring to mind at this time. It was a pleasure going to work, although I wasn't too keen on my hours of work which were 1100am to 7pm Monday to Friday. Nevertheless it was a full time job and all the civilian pensions I had earned since leaving the Corps could be lumped together and put into a Halifax pension fund until I retired. It was hard manual work with plenty of lifting, pushing trolleys around and walking, so hopefully it would keep me fit.

Also in 2001 my youngest son Andrew met a girl and within a few months had left home and moved in with her, a lovely lass called Helen Wallace.

I was determined to remain an ordinary Postal Clerk until they kicked me out or I retired, whichever was the sooner. My determination lasted a year and then I was badgered into becoming the Department's representative on a Staff Committee which met once a month. Our Postal Department belonged to a group of Departments and the newly appointed overall Senior Manager of this group felt that each department had become isolated from the whole and it was necessary to bring us all together so she decided that a monthly staff meeting was the answer. Before attending the meeting the representative had to gather together any complaints, suggestions or anything that would benefit the smooth running, efficiency or cost effectiveness of the Company. The reps job was to disseminate the results of the monthly meetings to their respective departments. The whole staff also had to watch television programmes made by Head Office which kept the whole company informed of the machinations at a higher level. This was how we were informed of the merger with the Bank of Scotland. The newly appointed senior Manager of our group of departments only lasted a couple of years and the empire she had built around herself crumbled into dust, never to be heard from again.

In addition to everything else that was done to keep us in the picture, every three months each Department would host a bun feast and invite different groups for a get together. We would be given a talk by the bosses who would disseminate any company news and also hand out any presentations of certificates of merit if someone had excelled at work and gone that extra mile. The get together would finish off with tea, sandwiches and cream cakes.

When the merger with the Bank of Scotland was complete and we became The Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) there was an annual conference and Ball held in Edinburgh with selected representatives from the whole Company. Each individual who attended was selected on merit based on their work ethic. Each Conference lasted a full week-end. I am sad to say that I was never one of the selected few.

Work continued apace and 2004 became an important year for our little family.

In April 2004 Andrew married Helen in Burnsall, The Dales and like most weddings it was a delightful event and a happy time for Ann and me because we had the family together and a new member to welcome to our growing clan.

Ann changed jobs and became a Home Care Manager at Sowerby Bridge, which covered the Upper Valley of Calderdale and she had two teams of Community Workers and an Extra Care Scheme which meant she had a staff of 40. Although it was hard work Ann loved every minute of it and wished she had begun her career in Calderdale as a Home Care Manager. Eventually, Ann had to leave the Upper Valley and move to Brighouse to cover the Lower Valley and this time she had two teams of Community Workers and also a Rapid Response Team, with roughly the same numbers of staff. She would continue to carry out the duties of a Home Care Manager until her retirement.

In June 2004 I had a heart attack, caused by blocked arteries. I was rushed into Halifax Infirmary and after tests it was decided to carry out an angiogram within four days. On completion of this procedure I was informed by the surgeon that another operation would be required in three months' time at the Leeds Infirmary and this was called an angioplasty when stents would be inserted into one of my main arteries. The Surgeon also informed me that my previous attacks were also heart attacks, but could not be detected at the time because progress in the testing procedure had not been made until much later. He asked me if I smoked, yes I replied, cigars and he said not any more. I have never smoked since. Obviously the operation was

a success and after 3 months rehabilitation I returned to work on light duties.

By this time my good friends Barry and Lynda Hockley decided to sell up in England and retire to Spain to live in a brand new Villa which had been built on a plot of land in a new development near some orange and lemon groves in the Valle del Sol, Murcia. Ann and I managed to visit Barry and Lynda within a week of them moving into their Villa. We found where they lived in Spain more by luck than judgement as Barry and Lynda didn't even know their full address in Spain and the only information we had was Gea Y Truyols, Valle Del Sol, in Murcia. We arrived at Alicante, hired a car and proceeded to get lost having spent £25 on one phone call trying to find where we were stopping that night. We finally found our apartment about midnight and stopped the first night in Torrevieja.

We started our search for Barry and Lynda the next day in our hired car, having never driven in Spain before, taking many wrong turnings until we eventually arrived in the general area where we hoped Barry and Lynda lived. We were totally lost having searched through the district which was surrounded by orange and lemon groves.

We needed help desperately so when we saw a Spanish couple having a picnic by their car we tried to make them understand what we were trying to

do, unfortunately we couldn't speak Spanish and they couldn't speak English. They obviously understood that we were looking for somebody because they indicated for us to follow their car and took us to see another Spanish family who lived further down the main road. When we arrived we discovered that they also had no English. This was turning out to be a right circus. This new family then took us to their neighbours who, praise the Lord, were English and they thought they knew where Barry and Lynda lived. Once again we followed them and arrived at a new estate when I recognised a statue that Barry used to have in his garden in England and we had at last found them. We thanked the lovely Spanish families from the bottom of our hearts and there were kisses and hugs all round, what smashing people.

Barry and Lynda's villa was way out in the country well away from the normal tourist areas and their Villa is bounded on one side by open dry desert like countryside and the other side by Villa's which are nearly all owned by retired English couples, like a council estate only with villas. There are no paved roads into their estate, just dirt tracks. Not our cup of tea, but the weather was spectacular and the Villa was beautiful and we only came to visit our friends so we stayed with them for the next four nights.

During our journey to look for Barry and Lynda one of the Spanish ladies had given Ann some local fruit to eat and she had devoured them all. Our arrival was cause for a celebration so the drinks flowed liberally and Ann succumbed and became intoxicated. What with the excitement, trauma of the search and dodgy fruit Ann suffered the worst case of diarrhoea I have ever had the misfortune to clean up. What sort of fruit was it? We never got to the bottom of it!!!!!!

We have subsequently visited and stayed with Barry and Lynda in Spain many times. Nowadays Ann and I prefer to stay in a rented property when we visit and that gives everybody freedom from the strain of having to cater and look after holidaymakers all the time.

Back home in England I continued to work for Halifax Bank and once again got too involved and agreed to write a manual for the Company on one of the systems I had developed which would eventually be moving away from our Post Room to our large distribution centre at Copley.

The work ethic of the post room had slowly changed for the worse and the atmosphere had deteriorated due to the uncertainty of the future disposition of the Postal Services in the Halifax Bank. Everyone was kept in the dark and there were more secrets than they had at MI6 but the rumour was that the

whole Postal Department was to be moved to Leeds and as a result jobs would be lost and other staff would have to transfer to Leeds. By this time I was nearing retirement so wasn't that bothered, although I was given the opportunity to work until I was 70, not bloody likely.

It was time at last to say goodbye to being employed, I was bone tired and fed up with the politics at work and it was no longer a pleasure to turn up for work each day. There was no fun anymore and any good humour had gone out of the window because the Managers always seemed to be sniping at the staff. The Manager's attitude towards the workers beneath them had definitely deteriorated and they treated the staff with disdain. Although I would miss my fellow works colleagues very much, they had become my good friends, I would certainly not miss the Managers; they were now very uptight individuals, edgy and constantly looking over their shoulders in case they were on the list to be kicked out and they only seemed to care about their futures and didn't give a toss about anyone else.

It was time for them to kick me out and let me retire gracefully, so on my 65th birthday in 2006 having had a farewell party in the office, I said farewell to my co-workers and my last job as a wage earner and

walked off into the sunset as an officially retired person ready to receive my old age pension..

The Post Room eventually disbanded, the Print Room moving to Copley and the majority of the post room staff moved to Leeds. Just a few original members of staff remained at Collinson's and carried out their duties from a wooden makeshift hut erected in the corner of the room that was previously occupied by the whole of the postal services and print room. The Collinson's Postal Staff would eventually all be made redundant in one foul swoop and their duties handed over to the Leeds operation. I would still be seeing a lot of them though because Ann and I would continue to hold our annual soiree and they were always invited.

A sad time perhaps for them, but a new adventure awaited me, I had no qualms about retirement and relished the challenge, if you recall I had two years training when Holdsworth's kicked me out and I was also really looking forward to having my evening meal at a reasonable time instead of the middle of the evening. Ann was extremely pleased as well because it meant she didn't have to turn out every evening before 7pm to collect me from work, we only had one car in those days and the buses were few and far between at that time of night.

I was now entering an exciting and entirely new phase of my life and this would be my very last job,

retirement, which I sincerely hope will last as long as my Royal Marines career.

Chapter 26

1958 – 2006 Harbinger of Doom

Now that I have time to reflect on my past working life perhaps my presence may have played a deciding factor in the future of certain military units and other organisations, or was it just a coincidence. Did my presence really affect the balance of things to come, you might say rubbish, but I find it damn amazing, read on:

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1958

I joined the Royal Marines and commenced my training at Royal Marines Barracks Deal in Kent and this has subsequently closed down.

1960

I completed my recruit training at Royal Marines Barracks Eastney, Portsmouth and this has subsequently closed down.

1961

I was a Marine serving with HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM in Singapore, when the British were eventually kicked out.

1966

I was a Corporal serving with 43 Cdo RM in Plymouth, when they were disbanded.

1967

I was a Sergeant serving with 45 Cdo RM in Aden, when the British were kicked out.

1975

I was a Colour Sergeant serving in DCGRM, London and this has now closed down and moved to Portsmouth.

1975

I was married to WREN Ann McCallum in the famous Register Office Caxton Hall and it has now closed down.

1977

I was a Warrant Officer serving with 41 Cdo RM in Malta when the British were kicked out.

1981

I was a Warrant Officer serving in CTCRM, Lympstone when the Royal Marines kicked me out.

1981

I worked for my mate in his company called Hirst & Williams and then again in **1992** as a Quality Manager and this Company no longer exists.

1982

I became the Landlord of the Royal Oak in Elland and it has now been converted into a large house and the Pub no longer exists.

1985

I was employed as a Manager in the Chamber of Commerce Training Company which no longer exists.

1992

I became the Quality Manager for the Textile Company James Holdsworth Brothers Ltd which no longer exists.

2001

I was employed by the Halifax Bank of Scotland as a Postal Clerk in the Post Room of Collinson's building for 5 years until I retired in 2006, so they didn't actually kick me out. The Post Room disbanded shortly after but now that department no longer exists.

The way things are going I wouldn't be surprised if eventually The Halifax went the same route.

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Chapter 27

2006 - 2012 West Yorkshire, Retirement

In 2006 my young son Andrew was separated from his wife Helen and soon after they were divorced. The first year of their marriage was wonderful and Helen was a delight to be around, Ann and I thought the world of her and took her into our hearts. The second year was very painful for Ann and me as we were not able to see much of them both for reasons they have kept to themselves, although it was difficult for us not to be able to see our youngest son as much as we would have liked, we tried to respect their wishes. It was a sad state of affairs, although they tried very hard to keep the marriage together. Helen suffered a miscarriage which was a very painful period in their respective lives and our hearts went out to them both. The Labrador puppy they had couldn't compensate for their loss, but they nevertheless tried their damndest to reconcile the situation and their feelings for each other. They even took a holiday to Goa to try and resolve the situation. Their split was amicable and Andrew retained the marital home and continued to live there with Saphie the family dog.

As I was now retired I had additional duties to my house husband role, that of a dog sitter. Obviously Andrew had to work so lunch times I would pop over and take Saphie (the dog) for walks. Ann and I were a two car family by this time so this was not a

burden. This situation couldn't last however, because Andrew's work took him all over the country and sometimes abroad and it wasn't right to leave the dog alone during the day time. Andrew offered to give Saphie to us so that she could stay in the family (she was a pedigree and a lovely dog) but we were not interested despite me being retired. Ann and I liked our independence too much as we were able to go away at the drop of a hat and we also enjoyed our holidays abroad too much, so we had to decline. Fortunately Saphie was taken on by a young couple who Andrew knew and was looked after by their father during the daytime, so she was never lonely. Andrew has seen Saphie since then and she is very happy with her new owners.

Retirement enabled me to take up additional hobbies to my walking stick making such as painting, table tennis, walking and of course writing. Initially there was plenty of work to do around the house and general DIY and what with housework, reading, shopping and looking after my wife, I don't know how I had time to go to work in the first place. Ann was happy because she could concentrate on her work and all she had to do (apart from her daily grind at work of course) was to look forward to our work free week-ends and our holidays abroad. Ann still kept her hand in by cooking at the week-ends.

Ann and I were asked by our sister-in-law Diane if we would accompany her and my brother Alan on a trip abroad as she had never flown before so we of course said yes. Where would you like to go we asked, Malta she replied, oh shit we thought! Having lived there twice and holidayed there once, Ann and I had never planned to go back to Malta ever again. Nevertheless we did go for two weeks and stopped in Sliema, unfortunately in a grotty hotel called the Plevna which had just been purchased by new owners. The rooms and bathrooms were filthy; they were short of staff and did not have a proper Chef. I even went out to the local supermarket and purchased some Cillet Bang to clean the bathroom with. A new Chef did arrive but only lasted two hours and at one time the bar ran out of the booze we were drinking. During our stay we decided to visit Gozo, travelling to the Ferry near Paradise Bay via a local rickety bus service from Sliema. It was a horrific journey, it took two hours to the ferry and two hours to return from the ferry and it was like sitting on planks of wood, talk about brontysorearse! Because of the time it took to travel to Gozo we had to cut short our stay drastically and we were all exhausted by the time we got back to our hotel, not an entirely enjoyable trip, but we did get to see a bit of Gozo.

Despite all of this, the weather in Malta was great, we got around quite a bit and made the best of a

poor situation and at the end of the fortnight we had had an enjoyable fun holiday and Diane had found out that flying wasn't as bad as she thought, although she did hold Ann's hand quite tightly coming and going!

On another occasion Ann and I had a wonderful holiday in Cyprus staying in the Louis Imperial Beach Hotel in Pathos. During this holiday we met and made friends with two lovely Scottish people called Dougie and Viv and on our return to Britain we kept in touch and then visited them in their holiday home in the Cairngorms. We received an E-Mail from Viv saying that she had been able to obtain some cheap tickets for a week's holiday abroad and would we like to meet them there. Where would you like us to meet you we asked, Malta she replied, oh shit we thought! Once more into the breach dear friends, but this time we would make sure that we stayed in a more upmarket hotel. The hotel we stayed in was the Riu Seabank in Mellieha Bay and it was first class, as was the holiday.

We had one small hiccup, Gozo again! Our friends decided that they would like to visit Gozo and fortunately we were just round the corner from the ferry so it did not take a long time to get to Gozo from our hotel. When we arrived on the island, it was a Sunday morning, we took a bus to Victoria and then we tried to get information about some

wonderful statues of the life of Christ that were situated in the grounds of a Church that Ann and I had visited when we lived in Malta. We were reliably informed that the Church we were seeking was called Ta'Pinu and we were also told which bus to catch. We arrived at the Church just before midday and were told by the driver that there were no more local buses that day. We were also informed by a Nun that the Church was closing in ten minutes and would not be opening again that day, so the visit was a brief one. No statues in, around or on the Church or the grounds. We were later informed that they had all been removed to private grounds because of the damage that had been done to them by vandals.

What to do, the heat was searing, we didn't know where we were, we were hungry and we had no transport and worst of all Dougie couldn't walk very far or fast because of chest problems. We started to slowly walk towards what looked like a village and on the way we saw a young woman pushing a pram and enquired of her if there were any buses and she confirmed that after mid-day on Sunday's the only buses to run were the ones from Victoria to the ferry terminus, there were no local taxi firms but there was a small supermarket open about a mile down the road where we could purchase some lunch. Off us old fogies toddled until we reached the shop and purchased our lunch. We sat across the road from

the shop and sat on the roadside consuming our fare. Whilst dining on this sumptuous feast I spotted two cyclists approaching and yelled out to them to give us a lift. They waved, carried out their purchases and then came across to have a chat with us. They were English and had a holiday home just up the road so we explained our plight. The husband of the two instantly offered us a lift to Victoria in his car which was just up the road. He left, he came back with our carriage and off we jolly well went and arrived safely in Victoria. What a splendid gentleman, he wouldn't accept anything for his troubles. After a tour of Victoria it was time to catch our bus to the ferry. Another adventure successfully completed, another dodgy situation resolved, bring it on!

I won't bore you further with the details of our many other trips and holidays we have taken over the years both at home and abroad, suffice to say that we have been able to visit all of our friends and family in Britain, instead of contacting them by correspondence and telephone and we have made many new friends during our travels abroad. We have also been able to make several visits to our friends who now live permanently abroad.

My oldest son who had lived and worked in Swindon since leaving University had been courting a lovely girl called Suzy Pizze and they decided it would be

a good idea to give up their jobs and tour the world for six months or so. Phillip having made all the arrangements beforehand so that everything was paid for and they would not have to work at all during the time that they would be touring. There was a hiccup in Singapore when they both caught chicken pox and were bedridden for a week or so. Thank goodness other young travellers helped them out with food and liquids when they were bedridden. Sometime after their return from this tour they decided to marry in 2007.

Their marriage took place on the 1st December 2007 and the wedding ceremony and reception were held in The Close Hotel, Tetbury where most of us stayed for the weekend. The Hotel staff looked after us royally and we all had a wonderful time. I must admit that even I had a tear in my eye during the wedding ceremony. They honeymooned in South Africa and Suzy took the opportunity to stay with relatives who lived there and on their return moved into a house of their own in Chipping Sodbury. Ann and I have stayed with Phillip's in-laws, Eric and Hilary, who are both retired and live fairly close to Phillip and Suzy and we enjoy their company very much whenever we visit the area.

In 2008 our Uncle George died in Ipswich. Initially, nobody from our side of the family was going to attend the funeral but Alan, who lived in Ipswich,

decided that we should be represented. George was quite well known for his work at Ipswich Hospital and also for his charity work which he carried out with his wife Yvonne. He was also a WWII hero and very well known to the British Legion in Ipswich who showed their respect with a full guard of honour with Standards flying at his funeral.

Alan informed me of his intentions so I decided to travel down from Yorkshire to accompany him to the funeral, although he did not want to attend the wake afterwards, alas our wives were unable to join us.

After the funeral I convinced Alan that it was our duty to attend the wake at the Newton Road Social Club in Ipswich and give our condolences to Yvonne and that we would only stop for a short while as we were not too sure how we were going to be treated, or even if we were going to be allowed in.

After we arrived at the club and gave our condolences to Yvonne we stood with a pint in hand well out of the way close to the exit just in case a swift departure was required. I turned to Alan with a warning that we were being approached by two ladies who were possibly our relatives and they may be about to ask us to leave, us thinking that we were the black sheep. They asked us if we were related to Jack Stollery and when we hesitantly replied in the positive they embraced us as long lost cousins

and nephews and welcomed us with great joy into the bosom of the family and told us how sad they were that it had taken so long for them to meet us.

Despite the sad occasion it turned out as a wonderful family reunion and everybody was so happy that we had decided to attend and to finally meet the family we had only heard about.

As a result of this Ann and I have got to know and been able to visit my Cousin Margaret Parnacott (Horace's eldest daughter) who lives in Manchester and her sister Ruth Abu-Deeb, who lives in Oxford and as a result of these meetings and correspondence have also been able to learn an awful lot about the Stollery family. Margaret and Ruth were brought up in a house in Crown Street, Ipswich Town Centre which backs onto Christchurch Park and although I knew they existed I had never met or seen them before the funeral. Ruth has since told me that she thought that she had done something wrong and that she was being ostracised by our side of the family, when in effect it was our father who had wronged her father.

Ann and I were also given the address of our other Cousin Barbara Yuille (Mike Stollery's daughter) who lives in NSW Australia and we are now in regular contact by mail.

Our Andrew, who by this time, was courting a lovely girl called Jenny Ehrhardt decided that he was going to get married again and his proposal was accepted by Jenny. They married on the 20th June 2010 in Somerset House Register Office in Halifax and the reception was held in Hey Green Hotel, Marsden. Both our families took over the Hotel and we all stopped the week-end. The wedding feast consisted of a hog roast and it was absolutely first class, although there was not enough to go round, plenty of meat but not enough salad etc. We were also entertained throughout the wedding with folk dancing from Germany and music from the Emly Moor Brass Band.

Andrew and Jenny went to South Africa for their honeymoon and survived the horse riding safari which was followed by a wild animal safari. Our Jenny is a pianist, rock climber, runner, sailor, horse rider and she also plays in a brass band, so Andrew has been able to learn a lot of enjoyable new skills. Jenny's dad Peter is a retired Paediatrician and her mum Joyce was awarded the MBE for her charity work, they live on a small holding just outside of Halifax and have sheep and two horses. Both Jenny and her mum have retained their own surnames for business and personal reasons.

During 2010 Ann and I were given some really wonderful news, our daughter-in-law Suzy was

pregnant. Phillip and Suzy actually came up to see us In Yorkshire so that they could impart the news to us personally, but, initially, not verbally? They gave us a few photographs and on the bottom of the pile was a photograph of the hospital scan of our granddaughter to be. I was so overjoyed at the possibility of becoming a Grandfather that I broke down into tears of happiness, like the big soft git I am.

I was 70 on 12th March 2011 and since I left the Corps in 1981 I had never visited or been invited to a Royal Marines establishment so Ann made arrangements with the RSM of CTCRM, Don Hayes, for us both to go down to witness a Royal Marines Troop receive their green berets and watch them carry out a passing for duty parade on completion of their training on Friday 11th March 2011, the day before my birthday. We stopped at a B&B in Little Lympstone for a long week-end.

It was an honour and privilege to be invited to CTCRM as a guest of honour in the Officers Mess on 11th March 2011 and to celebrate my impending 70th birthday and a privilege to be able to witness the passing out parade of 115 Troop. It was inspiring to see those young men complete the toughest training in the Armed Forces today and being awarded the coveted Green Beret. It was evident

how proud they were and how proud their parents were witnessing their achievements.

When you consider how brave they are to volunteer to join the Royal Marines during these interesting and difficult times it is an honour to be a witness to the future of the Royal Marines. It looks to be in safe hands.

I would like to thank my wife Ann and the RSM of CTCRM Don Hayes for making all this possible.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit, it was a wonderful experience. It was marvellous to see my old Mess and the Globe and Laurel that still exists in the foyer, after more than thirty years. I am very proud that I was able to play a small part in its inception and grateful that the Mess agreed to have it installed.

This visit has made an old man very happy and at the tender age of 70 I am glad to say that once a Marine always a Marine.

I would like to thank everyone at CTCRM for the kind hospitality my wife and I were shown during our visit to the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes and for being indulgent and patient with us and demonstrating that Esprit de Corps is alive and well. As a result of this visit Ann and I were persuaded to join the Royal Marines Association (RMA).

On return from Lympstone In March 2011 Ann retired early as a result of difficulties experienced with her particularly inept Senior Manager. It was a hard decision for Ann to make as she thoroughly enjoyed her work, unfortunately the inconsistencies and ineptitude of Senior Management and their flawed decisions made it almost impossible to function as a Home Care Manager and give the overworked Carers the 100% support they warranted.

Her leaving party was held in The Watermill at the bottom of Salterhebble Hill as you enter Halifax town and it was extremely well supported by her fellow Home Care Managers and quite a lot of Ann's staff's both old and new Senior Managers were not invited.

More excitement, our beautiful granddaughter, Francesca, Joy was born on the 1st April 2011 and our son Phillip was literally left holding the baby as Suzy had to have an emergency operation after losing an inordinate amount of blood because of tearing when she gave birth. After a very difficult and traumatic start, their small family are thriving and Ann and I managed to get down for visit to help out soon after the birth and for a longer visit later in the year and we also keep in close touch through Skype.

I tried to ensure that Ann did not miss going to work by involving her in a project of totally revamping our back garden. Together we demolished a greenhouse and garden shed, repaired and repainted all the garden fences, laid a new patio where the greenhouse stood and carted away several car loads of old concrete, earth and rubbish and also built a new shed. On completion Ann announced that she was knackered and wished that she was still employed in Home Care, only for a brief moment of course until she came to her senses.

In September 2011 Ann and I returned to Lympstone for the 65th reunion of the RMA at CTCRM and were lucky enough to be accommodated in the Sergeant's Mess for a long week-end. During this time we were also able to visit my old squad mate Des Foster and his wife Mary who both live in Exmouth. It was a thoroughly brilliant long week-end and we were looked after handsomely in the Mess, we might give it another go in 2012.

On our return to Yorkshire Ann and I joined our local RMA branch which is situated in Bradford. We have never been regular or staunch club member types as we don't like the commitment of attending regular meetings in case it ties us down when we want to go travelling at the drop of a hat. We have both promised that we will give it a go for a year and then decide if we are going to be regular members.

Also in 2011 some more wonderful news, our other lovely daughter-in-law Jenny announced that she was pregnant and it is to be another April birth in 2012. Sex of the baby as yet unknown and not quite so many tears from me this time. Ann and I are obviously looking forward to 2012 as it will be our granddaughter's first birthday and the birth of our second grandchild.

In addition to everything else that was going on in 2011 we managed to fit in two more holidays abroad (one to Cyprus again and then Malta), a holiday to chipping Sodbury, a holiday to Ipswich in Suffolk and of course visiting our friends in Scotland. Naturally we also managed to fit in our usual Summer Garden Party, which, unfortunately, was not as well attended compared to previous years. We have yet to decide whether we will continue the garden party tradition in 2012.

Towards the end of the 2011 we also decided to spend a little money and have some long overdue work done on the house. We had a sump and pump fitted in the void under the house because we had been suffering for a long time with the awful smell of stagnant water, caused by the water table which would not drain from the void. We have also had a brand new fence with concrete posts fitted to our front garden between us and the next door neighbour and also a brand new block paving

driveway. Wrought iron gates and fence for the front of the garden quickly followed in 2012.

Another lucky event this year was getting our little family together for Christmas 2011 at our house in Elland. Phillip, Suzy and Francesca came for the whole of Christmas and Andrew, Jenny and Uncle Donald joined us for Boxing Day (see photograph). Ann and I may have to wait a long time before we can enjoy a family get together over Christmas again now that our two boys have started to produce grandchildren.

Another year dawns and already our calendar is getting booked up. Ann and I had decided some while back that as soon as she retired and when the opportunity presented itself, we would take a long haul flight again to somewhere distant for an all-inclusive holiday. In March 2012 we flew premium class to Mexico for an all-inclusive 3 weeks holiday in Cancun. Mexico turned out to be a wonderful holiday as it coincided with the American Spring Break. For two weeks of our holiday hordes of young American students in their final year of college (approx. 21/22 years of age) came to our hotel in Mexico to let their hair down and do some serious partying. As Ann and I couldn't beat them we ended up joining them, making new friends and having a whale of a time. We found the young Americans to be polite and well behaved when they

were sober and bloody noisy when they had been on the bottle. From midnight to about 4am they were at their noisiest when they were going to bed, worse for wear, because the corridors of the hotel echoed with their shouts of goodnight and I love you's.

On our return from Mexico we travelled to Chipping Sodbury with Ann's brother Donald for a week in a rented cottage to celebrate our Granddaughter's first birthday on the 1st April and a bit of touring around.

On the 9th May 2012 another wonderful celebration, our second granddaughter was born and named Emily, Jessica, Lily, Ehrhardt Stollery. Once again things didn't go quite smoothly as Jenny had to have an emergency caesarean section and Andrew was left holding the baby. Everything is fine now and this little family is thriving.

In May Ann and I are went off to Spain, stopping in a rented Villa on a golf course complex, to celebrate our friend Lynda Hockley's 60th birthday. We plan to be off for a visit to Ipswich in Suffolk in July 2012 and then off to Cyprus in late August to top up our sun tan's before winter sets in.

Before I finally finish this story of mine I would like to leave you with a ditty, linking some of my stories together:

I've

(A verse or two, by David Stollery)

I've been a boy; I've been a man and I'm told I'm a dad

I've been a fool; I've been quite cool; I'm also barking mad

I've tried this and I've tried that and I've also eaten a frog

I've made this and I've made that and I've also owned a dog

I've carried wood for the fire; I've sold door to door
I've picked veg for a living and I've done much more
I've played many games of different names; I've also flown a kite

I've been on many planes of different names; I've even raced a bike

I've dug pits, I've trod roads, I've climbed hills, I've climbed tor

I've been hot, I've been wet and I've been cold to the core

I've seen mud, I've seen sand and I've waded through gunk

I've swum rivers, I've climbed trees and I've even been sunk

I've tackled Jungles, I've crossed deserts; I've also crossed a moor

I've sailed oceans, I've swum rivers and I've even been at war

I've fired guns, I've thrown knives; I've also used a bow

I've cooked dinners, I've washed dishes and I've even learned to sew

I've been blown by the storm and I've been scorched by the sun

I've been soaked to the skin and I've been toasted like a bun

I've dived into Oceans and I've played in the snow

I've seen season come and I've seen seasons go

I've been high, I've been low; I've lived in a hole

I've been mad, I've been sad and I've danced round a pole

I've been clean, I've been dirty, and I've been covered in grime

I've been hungry, I've been full, but that's not a crime

I've had weeks I've remembered and months I've forgotten

I've had years that were wonderful and some that were rotten

I've been a comedian an actor and also a fool

I've been up on a donkey and I've ridden a mule

I've made friends, I've made enemies; I've seen the world

I've seen life, I've seen death, and I've seen the flag unfurled

I've been loved and I've loved and I've lost and been lost

I've been happy, I've been sad and I've counted the cost

I've been rich, I've been poor; I've lived life without care

I've had cars, I've had bikes and I've even had hair

I've been drunk, I've been sober and I've also sipped tea

I've been thin now I'm fat but it's still honest me

I've had sons but no daughters; I've had wives, only two

I've lived in a Pub and I've slept in a loo

I've worked in the Bank's and I've worked in the Mills

I've worked all night and I've still paid my bills

I've survived my dawn and I've now reached my noon

I've glimpsed my twilight hope my nights not soon

I've still time to live and I've still time to play

I've still hope for the future and I'm aiming to stay

I've said my piece; I've told you my story

I've opened my heart but not for the glory

I've put my past in the present, my family to read

I've been honest and truthful it's now a done deed

Although this is not the end I do realise that it is the beginning of the end. Life is for living not for regretting and I am glad that I have tried a myriad of things during my life time, some of them against my better judgement, nevertheless if I had not tried them I would have always wondered what it would have been like, so in the end the attempts have all been worthwhile. There are some things that I regret, not many, but all in all I've had a good life and met some truly wonderful people.

I was given life so therefore I have lived the life that I was given and am thankful that life has so far given me 71 good years. In return I have definitely helped to give life to two other lives, perhaps three and through them the memories of my past just might live on.

Fate has guided my footsteps, failures and successes have all been down to me. I have never been jealous of what other people have, because in life you have to make your own luck and not depend on others to make it for you. Everybody who has ever lived has made a difference to this planet; it's just that some are more remembered for their endeavours than others. I would love to think that I will be remembered, perhaps for a kindness that I once did for someone.

I hope that I have made my wife and two sons a little proud of some of the things I have achieved as I am extremely proud of them.

The sun will continue to rise on this planet earth whether I'm on, above or below it.

Take care my friends and have a good life.

The beginning.....



Top Photo

Ann, David, Barry Hockley and Lynda Hockley enjoying a holiday at Barry and Lynda's Villa in Spain,
sometime in the 2000's

Bottom Photo

My wonderful family on Boxing Day 2011, Francesca, Suzy, Phillip, Dad, Mum, Andrew and Jenny
(who is pregnant)





This was an unexpected and welcome return to the Sergeant's Mess at Commando Training Centre Royal Marines to celebrate my 70th birthday in March 2011, arranged clandestinely by my wife Ann. This would be my first visit since leaving the Corps in 1981, exactly 30 years previously. I am proud to have made a new friend, the Regimental Sergeant Major, Don Hayes and to stand, once again, on the Globe and Laurel that I instigated over 30 years ago.

If a copy of this Form is required,
Form R. 138A is to be used.

S.—1241.
R.—138. | (Revised—Sept., 1939)

CUT ALONG HERE.

CERTIFICATE of the Service of

SURNAME (in block letters)	CHRISTIAN NAME OR NAMES
STOLLERY	David

in the Royal Marines.

Note.—The corner of this Certificate is to be cut off if the man is discharged with a "Bad" character or with disgrace, or if specially directed by the Admiralty. If the corner is cut off, the fact is to be noted in the Ledger.

First entry in the Service on enlistment at London	Date 18 March 1938	Division and Register Number AM 17069 Portsmouth
Date of re-engagement		Name and Address of next of Kin (To be noted in pencil.)
Date of birth 12 March 1941		Relationship : Son
Where born Town or Village Ipswich		Name : ANN
County Suffolk		Address : STOLLERY
Trade brought up to Under Porter		
Religious Denomination Church of England		
Man's signature on discharge to pension		Date of Marriage 4th Aug 57
Employment during Service.		Swimming Qualifications.
Nature RN 10 CTC 575 3 months	From 21 Apr 58	Qualification P.P.T. (V.G.) Signature /1957
	To 2 Mch 60	P.S.T. (V.G.)
ISSUED RN ID CARD NO 484467 15 JUNE 77		
ISSUER N.M. CAPTAIN W.H. HOBSON	21 May 65 24 Aug 67	Type of Engagement A.S.P.
Withdrawn F.W.T. 10 JUNE 77	2 Nov 67	A.S.Z.
Royal Engineers F.W.T. 24 Aug 67	8 Feb 68	A.S.S.
No: 144980 ISSUED		NI No: ZT-16-83:81-A
Medals, Clasps, &c., L.S. and G.C. Gratuity.		
Date received or forfeited 14 Dec 67	Nature of Decoration GSM & C.R.P. SOUTH AFRICA	Date received or forfeited
16 Mar 74	POSITIONED L.S. & G.C. MEDAL	Nature of Decoration
"	PAID 15 PCT GRATUITY	
12 July 79	PAID £2,230.00 KSAOP	
NHS. No: 10002270		
Description of Person	Stature Chest	Colour of
For Band Boys and Buglers only	On enlistment as a Boy On attaining the age of 18	Hair Eyes Complexion
On enlistment as Marine	5' 9"	Brown Blue Fresh
On Re-engagement	5' 10"	— — — — —
On final discharge from the Service	5' 11"	Fair Blue Fresh
Marks, Wounds and Scars		
CAUTION.—This is an Official Document. Any alteration made to it without proper authority will render the offender liable to severe penalties.		
R.M. 163/47/39.A. Sta. 21/39.		
*180 Wg. 43043/D8840 10M 4/48 S.E.R. Ltd. Co. 671 S.—1241. R.—138.		

NAME David STOLLERY

Name of Division or Ship (Tenders to be inserted in brackets)	Co.	Rank	Non- Substantive Rating	From	To	Cause of Discharge and other notations author- ised by Article 606 Clause 9, K.R. and A.I.
Depot RM		Marine	Ind. Class	18 Mch 58	26 June 58	
ITCRM		"		27 June 58	21 NOV 58	
RMB EASTNEY		"		22 JAN 59	16 Mch 59	
SWL (RMB EASTNEY)		"	(C)	17 Mch 59	6 APR 59	Transferred to the Technical Branch.
RMB PLYMOUTH		"		8 APR 59	12 APR 59	
RMB Plymouth		Marine	1st. Class	18 APR 59	25 FEB 60	
RMB EASTNEY		"		26 FEB 60	24 Mch 60	
RMB Plymouth		"		30 FEB 60	24 APR 60	
I.T.C. R.M.		"		25 Apr 60	5 JUNE 60	
HQ 3 CO 3 Bde RM		Marine 1st Class (C)		6 JUNE 60	27 NOV 61	
43 Commando R.M.		Marine Lt(C) (C)		1 DEC 61	15 FEB 62	
RMB EASTNEY		CORPORAL (C)		16 FEB 62	15 Mch 62	
43 COMMANDO R.M.		Marine Lt(C) (C)@		15 Mch 62	20 Mch 62	
43 COMMANDO R.M.		CORPORAL (C)		20 Mch 62	7 FEB 65	
11 CRM		CORPORAL (C)		8 Feb 65	12 Mch 65	
43 CO 3 R.M.		"		13 Mch 65	27 APR 66	
RMB EASTNEY		(C)		28 Apr 66	31 May 66	
43 CO 3 R.M.		"		1 JUNE 66	4 SEP 66	
45 Commando RM		CORPORAL (C)		5 SEP 66	17 JUL 67	
45 Commando RM		SERGEANT (C)		18 Jul 67	4 SEP 67	
Camp HQ Plymouth		"		5 Sep 67	7 OCT 70	
DCCRM		"		8 OCT 70	20 JUN 73	
"		C SGT (C)		1 JUL 73	21 JUN 73	
41 COMMANDO R.M.		C SGT CPRI		1 JAN 76	15 OCT 76	
CTCAN		C SGT CPRI		16 OCT 76	1 NOV 76	
41 COMMANDO R.M.		C SGT CPRI		20 Nov 76	8 JUNE 77	

Date	Wounds received in Action and Hurt Certificate ; also any Meritorious Service, Special Recommendations, Prizes or other Grants	Commandant's or Captain's Signature
13 Sep 61	Passport No. S.8005 - Expire 13 Sept 71 No. 802711 LXP/RS 18 Aug 81	C. Colman N.W. Norman C. Griffiths
11 MAR 81	RECOVERY OF #1876-98 OUTSTANDING LC-P.S.R.	

SERVICE.

Name of Division or Ship (Tenders to be inserted in brackets)	Co.	Rank	Non- Substantive Rating	From	To	Cause of Discharge and other notations author- ised by Article 660 Clause 9, R.R. and A.I.
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41(SAM) COO COY QP	W02	CPR1	9 JUNE 71	20 JULY 71	PENSIONED
CTCRM	W02	CPR1	21 JUNY 77	11 MAR 81	
LONG SERVICE PENSION AWARDED					

CANDIDATE & ADVANCEMENT QUALIFICATIONS		MISCELLANEOUS COURSES.	
7 Oct 58	Sectior Cols Q	13 JAN 78	13 JAN 78 FIRE DUTIES
18 Dec 58	Completed Training		45 DAYS M&S
18 Oct 59	Candidate		

Promotions and Reductions			Examinations passed and Notations of Qualifications other than those entered on History Sheets		
Rank	Co.	Date	Date	Particulars	Commandant's or Captain's Signature
E/corporal Marine		8 JAN 60	28 APR 58 RCT	70%	
		26 FEB 60	17 MARCH 59 SQ of C 3.		
CORPORAL (c)		19 MARCH 62	19 FEB 60 TNC Part I (Pass)		
Sergeant (c)		18 JUL 67	21 JAN 60 RNET I (Pass)		
Corporal - Sergeant		1 JAN 73	16 MARCH 62 QUALIFIED C.2		
W02		9 JUNE 71	12 MARCH 65 SCL (TECH) 2164		
			27 MAY 66 PASSED C. 1/66 C.E.		
			5 JAN 68 CPR 1		
			31 MARCH 69 HET GENERAL PAPER		
			6 FEB 74 GCE 'O' ENG-LANG.		
			19 NOV 76 S8 ACC 2/76		
			1 OCT 79 C1		

NAME David STOKERY				Date Dated L.S.P. 12/16/59 12.9.58	
REVIEW FORFEITED TOWARDS G.C. AND PENSIONS				Character and Efficiency on 31st December yearly, on final discharge, and other occasions prescribed by regulation. If qualified by service and recommended for Medal and Gratuity. "R.M.G." to be awarded on 31st December and final discharge; if not, a line to be drawn across column.	
Cause	Date	Years	Days		
Under age	From 18/16/58 to 11/16/59	- 359		If recommended for re-engagement after completion of 7 years' service on current engagement, "R.R." to be awarded on 31st December and until re-engaged; if not, a line to be drawn across column.	
Character is assessed as follows:—V.G., Good, Fair, Indifferent, Bad.					
NOTE AS TO METHOD OF ASSESSING EFFICIENCY.					
<p>Superior .. . above average efficiency .. . in substantive rank held at the time, without regard to fitness for promotion.</p> <p>Satisfactory .. . average efficiency .. .</p> <p>Moderate .. . less than average efficiency .. .</p> <p>Inferior .. . insufficient</p> <p>Variations in efficiency are often explained by the fact that the man had recently been promoted—see pages 2 and 3—and had not gained sufficient experience in his position to justify a higher award than that actually assessed.</p>					
TOWARDS ENGAGEMENTS				Character	
Under age				Efficiency in Rank noting substantive rank in brackets	Whether R.M.G. or not
From 18/16/58 to 11/16/59				1 day available	Date
1 day available				VG - (app)	12/16/59
1 day available				VG Sat (ENG)	31 Dec 59
1 day available				VG Sat (Mme)	31 Dec 60
1 day available				VG Sat (Mne)	31 Dec 61
1 day available				VG Sat (Cpl)	31 Dec 62
1 day available				VG Sat (Cpl)	31 Dec 63
1 day available				VG Sat (Cpl)	31 Dec 64
1 day available				VG Sat (Cpl)	31 Dec 65
1 day available				VG Sat (Cpl)	31 Dec 66
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	31 Dec 67
1 day available				VG Supr (SGT)	31 Dec 68
1 day available				VG Super (SGT)	31 Dec 69
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	1970
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	1971
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	1972
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	1973
1 day available				VG Sat (SGT)	1974
1 day available				VG Sat (CSgt)	1975
1 day available				VG Supr (CSgt)	1976
1 day available				VG SAT (mod)	1977
1 day available				VG SUPR (mod)	1978
1 day available				VG SUPR (W02)	1979
1 day available				VG Supr (W02)	1980
1 day available				VG SUPR (W02)	11 MAR 81
FORMER SERVICE ALLOWED To reckon towards G.C. Pay and Pensions					
In what Service	Years	Days			
SECOND CLASS FOR CONDUCT (inclusive dates)					
From	To				
GOOD CONDUCT BADGES					
Date	1st, 2nd, 3rd	Granted, Deprived, Restored			
(2) 1ST GRANTED 12/16/58 1ST GRANTED 12/16/58 2ND GRANTED 12/16/58 3RD GRANTED					
DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF GOOD CONDUCT PAY					
12/16/59					

WARRANT

The Right Honourable the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

To David Stollery

By virtue of the Authority to me, by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in this behalf given,
I do hereby Constitute and Appoint you to be a Warrant Officer in Her Majesty's
Royal Marines from the Ninth Day of June 1977, and to continue in the said
Office during the pleasure of the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for Defence. You are
therefore carefully, and diligently to discharge your Duty as such by doing and performing all manner
of things thereunto belonging, as required by the Established Regulations of the Service, and you are
to observe and follow such Orders and Directions as you shall receive from your Commanding,
or any other, your superior Officer, according to the Rules and Discipline of War.
GIVEN under my Hand and Seal this Ninth Day of June 1977.

francis weaver



Warrant Officer Second Class D ■ STOLLERY Royal Marines P017069X
Commando Training Centre Royal Marines

I wish to thank you for the many years of devoted service that you have given to the Royal Marines. I would particularly like to express my own appreciation and that of the Corps for your loyal and efficient service in 45 Commando during operations in Aden.

I note with satisfaction the high professional standards you have maintained throughout your service and that you received my personal commendation in 1978 during the Fire Brigade Union dispute.

As a Warrant Officer and Clerk you have made a special contribution to the Corps. You have helped to maintain our high standards and traditions and I wish you every good fortune for the future and continued success.

John Richards

SIR JOHN RICHARDS
LIEUTENANT GENERAL
COMMANDANT GENERAL ROYAL MARINES

25 NOVEMBER 1980



Form R111
(Est 1972)

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE
FROM REGULAR SERVICE IN THE ROYAL MARINES

STOLLERY

SURNAME..... David
Christian/Forenames.....
Official Number..... PO17069X
Rank on Discharge..... Warrant Officer Second Class
Place and Date of Enlistment..... Depot RM on 18th March 1958
Date of Discharge..... 11th March 1981
Cause of Discharge..... Pension
Royal Fleet Reserve Liability..... Nil
Character on Discharge (See Note Overleaf)..... Exemplary
Date of Birth..... 12th March 1941
Physical Description: Height..... 5' 11"
Colour of Eyes..... Blue
Colour of Hair..... Fair

Ship/Unit Stamp

RECORDS		Signature of Issuing Officer
MAR 1981		Rank and Appointment
D.R.O.R.M.		

A. Hawker
Captain R.M.
Records Officer



I thought I would include this photograph of myself to show that I was once younger and I did have some hair. Of course you can see that my forehead is getting longer!