FOREWORD BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER



Lt Col M L C Jiggens BSc MBIM RAOC

The time has come to mark the end of an era in the RAOC. On the 31st December 1985 this unit disbands and the RAOC loses its own independent junior unit. We have had our own junior units for some 60 years and 50 years ago the first Apprentices in the Army were recruited. These first Apprentices wore the RAOC cap badge.

Many thousands of young men have started their Army service in this unit and its predecessors and have gone on to provide the backbone of Sergeants' Messes throughout the RAOC. Many have also been commissioned and reached senior posts in the Army. All those who have been associated with training them over the years, not only the instructors but also those, both military and civilians, who have provided the administrative support, can take pride and satisfaction in the success of those trained here. I would particularly like to thank the loyal and devoted service of our civilian staff over the years.

THE HISTORY OF JUNIOR TRAINING IN THE RAOC

The Early Years 1925-1930

In 1925 a policy decision was made to increase the establishment of unit armourers from one SNCO to a Staff Sergeant and a LCpl as an assistant. It was this move which brought to the RAOC Depot in Hilsea Barracks an intake of approximately 100 junior entrants of 'boys' as they were called, mostly for training as armourers but a handful were chosen as trainee buglers.

To foster an immediate and lasting competitive spirit within the new barrack block the intake was divided into four teams, each occupying its own room, to conform with the competition requirements of the Boys Army Cup, a popular and much coveted prize right across the ranks of junior units within the Army.

Boys were enlisted at the age of fourteen, the then legal minimum school leaving age, and were given a long and lasting training in military subjects, with some education, and by all accounts a disproportionate amount of sport, soccer being the principal pursuit: a factor reflected in the number of Corps soccer players to come from the ex-boys.

The newly formed boys school soon began producing results and because of its active fostering of competitive spirit was host to the Boys Army Cup many times over this period.

Life for the boys, as indeed for servicemen in general, was not an easy one: their accommodation was spartan, and a constant complaint amongst the boys was that of hunger and it is in pursuit of an answer to this problem that the boys showed themselves to be at their most resourceful.To combat their hunger the boys would frequently break into the dining hall to feast on what ever food had been left out, desperate measures indeed! Such activity cannot, however, go unnoticed and consequently all the windows were wired up to prevent the thefts, the cookhouse now secure, the staff content. Imagine their surprise at the steady, albeit decreased disappearance of tasty morsels from the apparently impregnable cookhouse, a mystery never to be solved. A point proudly made by Major (Retd) H T Humphrey MBE as he reveals of his service as a boy soldier at the time "…. the point is that I was looking after the Roman Catholic Church Hut and we discovered that the key fitted the back door of the dining hall ..."

But punishment was frequent and carried no frills in those days, one of its principal exponents naturally being RSM Bill Cooke, who was a great believer in 'short and sharp' being the best policy although it is said he gave his 'victims' the choice of him or the Officer Commanding, a choice indeed for a trembling boy! Corporal punishment was allowed if parents consented.

1931-1939

During this period the events in boy service within the RAOC are slightly more elaborated on, the memories fresher, the details clearer.

Boys at this time were housed in 'J' block at Hilsea Barracks although there were a few with No 5 Section RAOC at Bramley. The Barrack block was now completely full, housing some 200 boys, all the rooms being of uniformly spartan composition. The beds were simple and unsprung; the rooms contained one six foot table and only the necessary cleaning implements to keep the stained wooden floors highly polished. The room would also have a coal tub and box which became purely decorative due to there being no coal issued and no fires allowed anyway!

Primary heating was by hot water pipes which were temperamental at the best of times and not employed during daytime. No hot water was allowed in the washrooms either, which makes one wonder how 200 boys managed to turn out well scrubbed every day.

The food, by all accounts, had made no significant improvement in either quality or quantity: it was plain if palatable and was prepared and cooked by RAOC storemen; bread was limited and the humble crust was regarded by all as a desirable extra occasionally available. Trainee armourers were entitled to an extra half a slice of bread and margarine on their return from evening classes twice weekly, a privilege which occasionally became exploited by those not entitled to it, as Major (Retd) S H Spanner, at this time a trainee bugler, recalls.

"I have dressed up in my best SD suit with white belt and puttees and queued at the cookhouse pretending to be an armourer just to get the half

slice".

Training at this time was primarily trade orientated with Saturday mornings only being reserved for parades and military training. Military training itself was confined only to the very basics although the length of time spent in boys service, around 3 - 4 years, meant that such subjects did not have to be crammed. Despite the time spent there the days were well filled and leave kept to a minimum.

Reveille was 0600 on weekdays, including Saturday, and was followed by PT at 0630 to start the day off 'healthy and glowing' before the work parade at 0800. Trainee armourers underwent instruction in the Hilsea Depot workshops under the guidance of the permanent staff there, travelling to Portsmouth Technical School for further instruction for two evenings every week.

Trainee buglers had a less variable day learning calls and spending most of their time out in the middle of the sports field practising them.

Education was regarded as extremely important as most boys were expected to be promoted to Lance Corporal almost immediately on reaching adult service and to achieve this the various qualifications had to be gained during their time at the depot. To this end each evening was occupied with instruction for the third, and eventually second, class Army Certificates of Education.

Boys were paid 6/5d per week of which they received 1/- until they were 16 years of age when their cash in hand was doubled to 2/-. The balance was put into credits after deductions for damages, laundry and the weekly haircut. There were no pay increases until entering adult service at the age of 18, save that of a bugler on appointment who received an extra 2d per day; needless to say money was scarce among the boys and luxuries were unheard of.

All potential clerks underwent initial training as buglers and those boys quite often had close family connections with the Corps, usually coming from military posts or schools. The depot had 3 established buglers with half a dozen or so undergoing training, and buglers were posted to outstations on completion of their initial training doubling as orderly room clerks as they continued their education. Bearing in mind the difference between 'boys' and 'men' as regards pay and experience, life for buglers in a unit must have been hard.

Early in 1936 the RAOC took on an extra 200 boys for training as fitters, a task later to come under the auspice of the REME on its formation. These boys were housed and trained in Hilsea in the School of Instruction. There were now some 400 boys undergoing various forms of training at Hilsea and it is interesting to note that the level of exposure at a public level was virtually nil. Entry was through internal and well subscribed channels and obviously the need to advertise was not thought unduly necessary.

In 1937 the junior ranks of the RAOC were again swelled by the recruitment of a further 100 boys earmarked for the resurgence in fitting and armoury trades. They were housed in the old first world war prisoner-of-war camp at Bramley which had enough hutted accommodation and workshop area to temporarily accommodate them until the opening of the Army Technical School (Boys) at Arborfield in March 1939. The initial intake at Arborfield numbered 200 but by early 1940, as obviously demand for qualified tradesmen increased the numbers had shot up to nearly 1,000.

It is interesting to take note of the enlistment procedures and career prospects of junior entrants in the pre-war years:

a. **Armourers**

Armourers enlisted in the RAOC from school and, depending on their suitability, underwent training at Hilsea as already described. On completion of their training at the age of about 19 they then moved to Woolwich and regular employment.

b. **Buglers**

The majority of buglers (if not all) went on to become clerks and most progressed to Ordnance Executive Officers (OEO) with the rank of Lieutenant by the age of 40-42. The age of entry being around 14 for Buglers and armourers alike.

c. **'Special Enlistment'**

This was an enlistment option designed to attract those who had stayed on at school until Higher Certificate level. The enlistment age was 17½, ie 6 months before the commencement age for 'man' service. It was a restricted method of entry and was intended to provide suitable material for consideration for a 'Y' Cadetship at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. The 'Y' Cadetship was a limited

scholarship of which only 12 per year were available to the whole Army. For a Corps man to achieve this meant 18 months service in a line regiment before even being selected. Failure to be selected for Sandhurst did not mean disaster, however, as the candidate would return to the ranks of the RAOC, thus safeguarding his career and the prospects for a well-educated man in the RAOC ranks were quite promising. It is worth noting that several 'specially enlisted' RAOC candidates were awarded 'Emergency Commissions' at a Field Regular Commissions Board when the outbreak of war disrupted the planned path to their 'Y' Cadetship.

1950-1956 - Toy Soldiers - New Moves and the Miller Report

The emphasis on the boys training had been slowly changing since the pre-war years and the boys school now employed a much more military orientated syllabus. It was much like a boarding school in establishment, being divided into houses and competing against each other in this way. The entry age to the RAOC Boys Training School, Gosport, as it was now titled, was 15 years old except for those enlisting from Northern Ireland who joined at 14 ½. There was very little, if any, trade training at the school, the principal occupation being education; this was regarded as extremely important and was well organised involving a sizable education staff under the command of one Major Legge with a Captain James to assist him.

It is interesting to note not only the change in direction of the syllabus, but also of the approach to the public. The boy service now adopts a much higher profile and to project this image the school formed a display team to perform at public functions and exhibitions as public relations and recruiting medium. The activity was described as the 'Toy Soldiers Display Party' and comprised of about 90 boys at full strength, divided into two 'armies' dressed in mock period uniforms. The spectacle opened in the arena at a venue with the two armies drawn up in review order facing each other across the arena. The two 'commanders' would then meet in the centre and one would be invited to review the other's "troops" which was done with all due ceremony before returning to the centre of the arena where an 'insult' would be made, a gauntlet thrown down and the challenge taken up. Both 'commanders' would then return to their respective armies. 'Cavalry Charges' and 'artillery exchanges' were made before the two sides became locked in a well orchestrated 'mortal combat' to the accompaniment of the smoke and din of the battle. It provided an exciting spectacle for all who saw it and was testament to the enthusiasm and dedication of the boys and permanent staff who staged it, under the careful control of Sergeant Les Jordan. The Display Party performed at many public events including the Edinburgh Tattoo, Jersey Flower Show and the Royal Tournament, the latter providing the venue for the boys to perform in front of Her Majesty The Queen in 1952.

The projection of the Boys School into the public eye was obviously a successful one and the decision was made to increase the strength to two companies of junior soldiers, the new company to be located at Fort Gomer about three miles down the coast from Haslar. The accommodation at Fort Gomer had been unoccupied for several years and needed extensive clearing and restoration work at the hands of boys work parties who were given an additional incentive by being paid for each rat they caught; it is no surprise to discover that there was much rat catching and very little cleaning, and progress was slow.

There was now an establishment of two companies both operating from separate locations, 'A' Company under the command of Major Underwood at Haslar and 'B' Company at Fort Gomer under the command of Major Vaughan-Griffiths, and the development of individual identities was inevitable. Also, to increase the numbers in the intake, a lowering of entry standards had been implemented and several boys turned out to be totally unsuitable for army life as their training progressed. An added difficulty for the staff was the number of boys who had chosen army life only in preference to borstal when given the option by the juvenile courts, bringing several discipline problems into the school. The senior ranks of this era must obviously have had their work cut out and the task of WO1 Musto of the education staff must have occasionally been an unenviable one.

The permanent staff were assisted in the running of the school by boy NCOs in much the same way as the present day. Each team or house had a regular sergeant and JNCO with a boy sergeant or corporal to assist, and 1952 saw the promotion to boy sergeant major of Frank Webster, the first in the history of the RAOC, who became commissioned shortly afterwards and reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before retiring in 1980.

Later in 1953 the army began to undergo a period of consolidation, more activities being centralised for ease of administration and to reduce running costs.

To this end the Boys School, as one of many junior units in the army, was disbanded and after the Christmas leave the boys reported to Blackdown to form A and B companies of 1 Regular Training Battalion RAOC, C and D Companies comprising of regular soldiers in training.

The boys had their own wing in North Frith barracks across the road from the main Alma Barracks and had their own guardroom and entrance. The move was considered by many to be a wise one, bringing the two companies together as a distinct unit and making communication and competition between the two more practical.

The syllabus became broader in its outlook if not changing significantly; military subjects such as weapon training and first aid were well established and drill became much more evident, education remained an important part of the training and the emergence of trade training as a subject was popular. Boxing was a much expounded sport and shooting competitions were popular amongst the boys and permanent staff alike. A highlight of the syllabus was the regular visit to the Isle of Wight where the boys were introduced to adventurous activities such as rambling and rock climbing and practised sleeping out under canvas. The exercise usually involved a certain amount of military pursuits, giving the boys some excellent ground to practise their skills, and these exercises were the forerunners of the modern day External Leadership Training which forms an integral part of the syllabus.

The final term saw a moderate relaxation and the commencement of trade training, a surprisingly low priority consideration over the years before. Leave passes became available to worthy cases, and 'walking out' privileges were occasionally granted providing those walking out passed a pre-inspection as to the smartness of their civilian clothes. The final term also saw the importance of the ever-present progress reports in the eyes of the boys, the prospect of failure at this stage being an unlikely one for some, a more worrying one for others; despite the privileges available to the boys in the final term they were still kept well in check under the watchful eye of the legendary CSM 'Baggy' Hall.

1954 also saw the formation of the boys band using the surplus drums and bugles from 2 Regular Training Battalion and provided a viable if somewhat less flamboyant successor to the Toy Soldiers Display as a means of advertising the boys wing, albeit on a much less grand scale, and provided the accompaniment at parades and the traditional 'compulsory' church attendances on Sundays.

By 1954 therewas some doubt nationally, as to whether Boys' Units were developing their full potential. In November a new selection procedure was introduced to improve the standards of entry of boys and cut down in service wastage. This was followed in December by the setting up of a committee to report on the organisation and administration of Boys' units.

The Committee, known as the Miller Committee after Lt Gen Sir Euan A Miller who was a member of the board, reported in February 1955, after visiting several units including the Boys' Company RAOC at Blackdown.

The findings altered the way of life in boys units and is still an important factor in junior entry administration. The Committee saw a need to treat the boys as boys and not as adult soldiers. There was a need for 'free time' to be limited and special facilities to be provided. Compulsory hobbies were started in the evenings and sport began to fill a much larger part of training time. WVS clubs were set up to provide a female touch and improve recreation facilities.

The training year was altered to a school term system with only three entry points instead of the steady trickle of boys joining as before. The Ministry of Education was invited to inspect the Boys' Schools. The Committee recommended that the three boys' units in the Aldershot area from the Royal Engineers, Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Army Ordnance Corps, be amalgamated to form a larger unit and moved elsewhere. This was not taken up.

1956-1960

The RAOC Junior Leaders Battalion, as the title had become, were continuing to use the Isle of Wight as their base for adventurous training but the emphasis had moved more towards adventure pursuits and away from the military subjects. 1960 also saw the first junior RAOC team competing in the Nijmegen Marches, making a good show of it too, and received decent coverage in the Corps publication of the time. Mention should also be made of the Junior Tradesmens Regiment at Rhyl which trained some RAOC boys, amongst others, over the period 1962-1974.

1966-1972

In 1966 the Junior Leaders Battalion went to Camp, under canvas, at Castlemartin in Pembrokeshire. Trouble broke out when the Commanding Officer

restricted off duty visits and struck the Sergeants' Mess tent after the senior ranks had kept him awake. Later in the year the Padre was told to move out of the Mess as he had upset the Commanding Officer. During the rest of 1966 and early 1967 morale in the unit went down, both permanent staff and juniors being affected.

Matters came to a head at Easter when a riot broke out in the Restaurant and, as one ex junior put it, the last he saw of the orderly officer was him backing into a corner, sword drawn, trying to stave off his attackers. The juniors then went on the rampage causing a lot of damage both inside and outside the unit before the Brigadier intervened and promised to look at their complaints.

The Commanding Officer and several other members of the permanent staff were rapidly posted and after the press had had its fill, life quietened down and the Battalion went about its business.

In the long run the so called 'Easter Mutiny' and several similar occurrences in other junior units brought some benefit. The policy of offering offenders the option of a borstal sentence or joining the Army ceased, leading to the removal of some of the less desirable elements.

Also it was realised that asking a 15 year old to sign away his freedom for so long was wrong. A new system was instituted in which a soldier under the age of 17 would give 2 weeks notice during his first 6 months service if his parents agreed and the minimum amount of adult service was cut to 3 years.

The RAOC Junior Leaders Battalion had its 2 year syllabus split into terms over this period. Between 1967 and 1969, when Lieutenant Colonel Ridgeway was the Commanding Officer, the terms were divided into 4 terms of military training, 2 of education, 1 spent on trade training and 1 term spent studying for Regimental Proficiency Certificates. Education covered subjects such as Geography, History, Maths and English as well as map reading, which was considered an educational subject for qualification to grade 3 and 2 in the Army Certificate of Education.

There were 3 companies in the Battalion which was housed in its present location and shared Dettingen Barracks with 1 Regular Training Battalion. The junior soldiers undergoing training with the battalion were drawn from 3 Corps, the RAOC, REME and RE, all under the eagle eye of RSM Ward who was succeeded by RSM Carr in 1968. Adventure training and Company camps took place at Tregantle Fort in Plymouth and at Fremington Camp. The Junior Leaders were also actively involved in providing manpower during the Royal Tournament for arena tasks and the like and they were also involved in the same capacity at Wimbledon.

The blocks contained no baths or showers as these were located centrally in the bath house situated just across from what is now the NAAFI, and platoons were marched over in sports kit carrying soap and towel for their scrub down. The system of having boy NCOs had by now increased to encompass an apprentice or boy RSM and these apprentice NCOs were paid a small increment on reaching their particular rank, the weekly cash in hand payment for an apprentice being 20/-, the balance being held in credits.

In 1970 the Intelligence Corps began to accept junior soldiers. As numbers were small they were trained alongside the RAOC and REME Junior Leaders. A Sergeant from the Intelligence Corps was posted in to represent the Corps and to supervise Intelligence Corps training. The name 'RAOC Apprentices College' was adopted on 1 May 1970.

In June 1972 Her Majesty The Queen, the Colonel in Chief of the RAOC, came to Deepcut to open the newly built Blackdown Barracks. The Apprentice College lined the route through Deepcut to the Barracks and, later, from the Barracks to the Headquarters Mess. The Apprentices put on a display of hobbies and sports for Her Majesty in the Gymnasium.

In the Autumn of 1972 a group of Senior Apprentices, who were disenchanted with the College in general and their company in particular, started a group called 'The Young Mental Terror'. This began by bullying recruits and led in turn to demanding money with menaces, attacks on the guard and eventually to arson. After a series of fires in derelict buildings, the group burnt down 'A' Company office. As a result of the investigation 3 Apprentices were convicted of arson while the other members of the group were discharged.

1972-1984

In 1972, in preparation for the 'Raising of the School Leaving Age' (ROSLA) from 15 to 16, the College expanded taking 248 apprentices in the September intake. As this would have produced too great a strain on the existing organisation a third company, C Company, was set up while the remainder of the

College went to camp at Leek in Staffordshire. C Company only survived for a year as numbers fell throughout 1973 due to the Raising of the School Leaving Age.

The Raising of the School Leaving age caused many changes in the College. No longer would apprentices arrive at 15 to stay for an undefined number of terms until they reached the age of 17½. A definite length of 4 terms was introduced. Recruits over the age of 17 went to the Depot to be trained with adult recruits. Apprentices undertook a 3 term course, divided more or less evenly between military training, education and sport and ELT. Trade Training took place in the 4th term at the Employment Training School. All Apprentices were also trained to RPC3 standard.

Because of the short time spent in the College it was not considered that Apprentices could fill the appointments of Junior RSM and Junior CSM so these appointments were abolished. As a consequence officers had to appear on Passing Out Parades as there were insufficient Apprentice NCOs to take it themselves.

In the Spring of 1973 Lt Col Mathews left and was replaced by Lt Col Vickery who saw the College through the many changes of that year. Camp was held in September at Cultybraggan Camp. The weather was not kind, the the College undertook most activities in the rain. During the Winter Term full time driving instruction was provided by the British School of Motoring so that all senior apprentices could learn to drive before being posted. On the sporting front the College started to compete in the 'Welsh 3000', a most demanding race in the Welsh mountains. The football team won both the South East District Cup and League, coached by Ssgt Grimes, who served with the College after retirement up to its disbandment as a Patrolman.

Things settled down during 1974 when the lessons of the previous year were learnt and small improvements made to the programme. In March 2 platoon commanders led 51 apprentices on a battlefield tour of Normandy, looking at the battlefield of the 1944 campaign. Also in March the Corps of Drums was disbanded as it was felt that the apprentices would not be able to learn enough musically in the short time that they would be at the College to reach an acceptable standard.

Camp was held at Fremington in Devon. Again the weather in September was not kind. Many activities had to be curtailed or cancelled.

Lt Gen Sir James Wilson KBE MC, the General Officer Commanding South East District, visited the College on 6 March 1975. During his visit he offered a prize to the best sports report written by an apprentice.

The College went to Penally Camp near Tenby in Wales for camp in May 1975. For once the weather was good and all activites were enjoyed to the full. Since then the College has always held its camp at Penally in May or early June, except for 1977. In September the College re-named its platoons after battles beginning with 'A' or 'B', depending on the company, instead of after Ordnance Officers.

Lt Col Vickery left in February 1976. His place was taken by Lt Col Bruce.

The 1976 Summer Passing Out Parade was taken by the Quartermaster General, General Sir William Jackson on the 12th August. It was decided to put on a special show for him and the term leavers, together with the RAOC Staff Band, and an Apprentice 'Battery' fired a Feu de Joie. The two cannons displayed on the square were used to provide the 21 gun salute though disaster nearly occurred when wadding from them nearly 'shot' the Inspecting Officer.

During the Summer Term the College was visited by a team of HMIs, who looked at all aspects of the College, especially the educational content. They went away generally satisfied with the way the College was run. Also during 1976 the Corps of Drums was re-formed in the hope that it would be able to provide a reasonable standard in the short time available.

1977 was a busy year for the College. In June the College went to camp at Cultybraggan in Perthshire. The weather was cold and wet but was unable to dampen the enthusiasm for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations which were held during camp with a lunch and various sporting activities. The Jubilee holiday was added to half term when the College returned. On its return there was a certain amount of hard work as the Education Wing eventually left the wooden 'spiders' and moved into three converted accommodation blocks in the main camp. At the same time Training Wing moved into Heather House, a converted quarter, after several years moving about the College with no permanent home. This was followed by a charity walk of 40 miles of the South Down Walk to Eastbourne where the College marched in behind the Corps of Drums. A platoon was entered for the Nijmegen March which it successfully completed.

The Summer Passing Out Parade was taken by Major General Callan and was important because the College said farewell to the Intelligence Corps; the last 6 members of which left to go to Ashford. To mark the end of Junior Service in the Intelligence Corps a Feu de Joie was again fired. In September the first REME Company Commander, Major Galbreath, arrived to take over the command of A Company. REME continued to supply the Commander of A Company until REME apprentices ceased to be trained at the College in 1983.

At the end of 1977 the College became involved in Operation Burberry, the Services' plan to deal with the Firemen's strike. Many of the Permanent Staff departed to become firemen while the College continued training on an improvised programme. All the military training was successfully completed although the Christmas Passing Out Parade, which was to have been a pageant, had to be cancelled and the Term Leavers were inspected at a small ceremony in the gymnasium.

The College returned to Penally for Camp in 1978. The weather was good and the adventurous training was enjoyed. During Camp the Corps of Drums beat the Retreat in Tenby in front of the Mayor, starting a tradition that has been carried on and cementing the good relationship with the town. On returning from Camp the College was joined by 2Lt Flaherty WRAC, the first female officer to serve in the College. She joined the Education Wing teaching English. In July the College spent a Saturday walking part of the Ridgeway Walk.

Lt Col Bruce left at the end of the Summer Term and was replaced in September by Lt Col Curtis who was no stranger to the College, having been Training Officer in the early 1970s.

The Passing Out Parade in December took the form of a pageant, charting the history of an apprentice as he passed through the College, showing aspects of his training, sports and hobbies and ending with a parade and inspection of the Term Leavers. Earlier in the year, in April, the College had taken part in another theatrical presentation. Together with the WRAC from the Depot Staff, the apprentices had put on a production of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat', under the direction of the Padre, the Rev Stockbridge, at the Tela Theatre in the Depot.

1979 was a busy year for the College. It was visited by the Quartermaster General, General Sir Richard Worsley KCB, OBE and the GOC South East District, Lieutenant General Sir George Cooper KCB, MC, who also returned to take the Winter Passing Out Parade.

Unfortunately the College Training Officer, Captain Hayes, was killed in a climbing accident in Snowdonia while leading a party of apprentices on an External Leadership Exercise.

In the autumn the 'Blackdown Fives' started. This is a series of 5 competitions in shooting, a command task, assault course, obstacle course and a quiz run by the College for local youth organisations. Teams of 4 compete to become the champions. The College provides the staff to run and host the event as well as providing sideshows to amuse and instruct waiting competitors and their supporters. This has become a highly successful annual event with an ever increasing number of entrants. Again the College entered a team for the Nijmegen March which was successfully completed.

There was a change of policy in 1979 towards the Corps of Drums. Instead of calling for volunteers to play, a platoon was nominated as 'band platoon', regardless of the musical ability of its members. Normally the band platoon would spend a term mastering the basics when it would take over the job from its predecessor for 2 terms. At the same time bell lyres were added to the drums and bugles and less emphasis was placed on the bugles.

Two major changes to training took place in 1980. To improve the standard of fieldcraft and minor tactics, a College Training Officer's Exercise was set up. This tested the Apprentices' skills and made sure that the instructors were kept on their toes teaching. The Junior Army Education Certificate was introduced to the Junior Army. This consisted of work in 8 modules of 24 hours each. Two modules were set and controlled through the Education Branch at Headquarters United Kingdom Land Forces, the other 6 being set by the unit. A certificate was awarded at the end of the course while certain students were allowed to go on to sit 1 or 2 subjects of the Education for Promotion Certificate (EPC) while still juniors.

The College was visited by General Sir Edwin Bramall KCB, OBE, MC, ADC, then Chief of the General Staff, while the Quartermaster General, Sir Richard Worsley KCB, OBE, inspected the Winter Passing Out Parade.

1981 was a quiet year. Lt Col Curtis left after the Summer Passing Out Parade, which had to be cancelled due to a very heavy downpour just as the

parade was due to begin. This was the first time in 20 years that bad weather had led to to Passing Out Parade being cancelled. Lt Col Curtis was replaced by Lt Col Putt

In a minor reorganisation all the permanent staff not in A or B companies became part of Headquarters Company which now took under its wing cooks and educators amongst others.

1982 saw the Corps of Drums in Germany. They were requested to perform as part of the celebration of the granting of the Freedom of Viersen to the RAOC.

The biggest event of 1983 was the move of REME Apprentices to Arborfield. The last REME Apprentices passed out at the end of the Summer Term. To mark the occasion REME permanent staff trooped a REME flag during the parade and the REME Term Leavers marched off behind it. In September the College began to practice its war role of providing Home Defence troops to guard key installations. To improve the training of the senior apprentices a 4th term battle camp was introduced to be a hard test of their skills in fieldcraft, minor tactics and shooting.

In January 1984 the College took a group of Apprentices who had joined the Army under the Youth Training Scheme. Some left very quickly but 16 stayed and later in the year decided to take the RAOC up on its offer of a permanent place in the Corps by transferring to become 'proper' Apprentices.

In May Lt Col Putt left and was replaced by Lt Col Jiggens.

No sooner was Lt Col Jiggens in command than the College was told in July that it was to amalgamate with the Junior Leaders Regiment RCT to form a new Junior Leaders Regiment and to move to Colerne. The two apprentice Company Headquarters moved out of the old wooden huts which they had occupied for years and took over a converted barrack block. The old offices were pulled down in July 1985. The Blackdown Fives competition was enlivened in 1984 when a Marching Band Tournament was held on the College Square at the same time, providing a lot of entertainment for waiting contestants.

To keep the College in the public eye to the very end it was decided to form an Indian Club Swinging Display Team. QMSI Martin researched the now obsolete physical training routines at the APTC Museum and the Royal Navy PT School. Arnhem Platoon was nominated as the Club Swinging Platoon and started training after Christmas leave. In 1985 the Club Swingers performed at many functions.

In January the new 3 term course was introduced. Trade Training will be carried out after the Apprentices leave the College. Lt Simms WRAC became the Platoon Commander of Burma Platoon during the Spring term, becoming the first WRAC Officer to be a Platoon Commander. The Pay Review of 1985 increased the apprentices' pay. A 16 year old on arrival in the College in its last year was paid £7.47 per day, a far cry from when the first 'boys' joined.

Commanding Officer's Footnote

I am indebted to the research work undertaken by Lt C Rushworth RAOC and Mr P Heap in preparing this history. They have been assisted by many ex-boys to all of whom we extend a grateful thank you.