My Boy Service Sep 58 – May 61
By Stuart Madden

Arrival

Having been brought up as a "barrack rat", and living in London I felt no trepidation when I woke on that fateful day – 9 September 1958.
Final check of the kit list, said to my mother "I don't have a razor" she responded "tell them you don't shave" (more later)

Left the house hair neatly parted, re-combed into a "Tony Curtis" the moment I was out of sight, onto Waterloo and then to Brookwood.
Can't remember how I got to Blackdown, but met at the gate by this guy who looked about 8 feet high, then realised that I was only 5ft 1 ½ in, a real short-arse (not a good combination when coupled with a big mouth)

Escorted to Recruit House, in the old white block (I think it was A Block), looked around and everybody was huge, thank god Roger Slade was there, as he was slightly shorter than me, not much though.

Recruit House

Found my bed-space, situated between the Chater twins, who squabbled the whole time. Noticed some Junior NCO's at the end of the room, but they ignored us, the only one I remember was Vick Green, a footballer of note

Next day at the QM for kitting out, I think the only equipment we were sized for was our boots, SD's and SD Caps. Rest of kit came as a "job lot" in a kitbag, back to the room and told to get into Denims. Mine were so large I had to take 3 steps before the trousers moved. We were then issued with some brown paper & string, told to pack our civvy's and they were sent home. I don't remember ever seeing that jacket again.

I was asked where my shaving kit was, and naively responded "my mum says I don't shave" – response was somewhat loud and accompanied by the red face and bulging eyed look that reliably informed me that I did shave now.
(Didn't shave for another year, just got George the barber to run his razor over the bum fluff during the weekly hair cut)

At the Barbers we got our first taste of George's hairdressing skills – all with the clippers, I remember Joe Johnson, who had very long hair, and the look on his face when George got to him.
The principle was "under your hat is yours – below the hat is the Army's"

Then we met our House Officer, a National Service 2.Lt. "Loey Steevens", he was wearing BD's and looked to me, like a sack of potatoes tied in the middle, remember, I had been brought up with the Life Guards, and their Officers were immaculately tailored in Service Dress Jackets, Riding Breeches and Riding Boots. So he was quite a shock.

Then we met "Tara" McCann, what a terrifying man, could spot an upside down web belt from 200 meters.

Finally allocated my number “23507745”, bugger! Slade is 23507744!!!
Rest of Recruit Training went in a blur, and on passing out I was posted to Gordon House

Gordon House

Now I was nervous, Gordon House, reputed to be the hardest house, had the maddest House Officer, Mad Jack (or Wacky) Thompson, and if my memory is correct the House Sgt was Barnes.

Memories become somewhat fragmented, however who could forget Friday Night, Bull Night, I always seemed to be on Ablutions or Passageways, never Dusting & Brasses. Bumpering the floor all evening, all for the CO on Saturday Morning, then the Drill Parade

Formed up, Taff Alderman leading us in a rendition of the “Madison”, then the March on to the Square at Dettingen, full parade rehearsal, then if Tara was unhappy, march round the quarters and do it all again.

Sunday the joy of marching through the village to Church, sitting through the most boring hour, only fun was trying to break wind loudly during the sermon, somebody always managed it.

One incident I will always remember, was that I had taken great pride in slashing the peak of my SD Cap, modelled on the maestro of slashed hats, Willie Watson.
Timber Woods (he had taken over from Barney) came into the room, took the hat of my head and smashed the top onto the corner of my locker door and virtually ripped it in half. I was in tears and could have killed him – we were never soul mates !!!.

Duncan Learmonth charged me for smoking in the barrack room, he thought it was funny, I got 3 days jankers and did 42, could not get off, in the end most of Gordon House were also on jankers and I think Plod Macey was embarrassed so he put a stop to it.

I was lousy at sport, but joined the Saddle Club, now here was something I could do and I became very involved, even used to help exercise the horses in the mornings, got involved in the Aldershot Show etc, but screwed it up somehow and packed in – what a foolish boy.

To keep ourselves amused a gang of us, me, Taff Keene, Vince Hyre, Spud Murphy, plus some names I can’t remember, used to wander off through the ranges and play around on the Guards Depot Assault Course and Confidence Course, remember breaking folding chairs, just to get the metal bar, this, when bent, normally lasted 3 or 4 go’s on the Death Slide.

Another memory is the Father of Tony Spence, who used to sell clothes on tick, he used to come to the NAAFI on a Sunday, with barrow loads of clothes and we hocked ourselves to the hilt, buying stuff from him.

I seemed to be permanently in debt and also permanently hungry, so the delivery of scones from the cookhouse to the NAAFI always resulted in a huge scrum, somehow I always managed a couple.

Steevens House

Jan 61 I moved into Senior boys, at the same time we moved across from North Frith to Dettingen.

I have to say my last term was brilliant, great bunch of blokes, sneaking off to Guildford, finally plucking up courage to talk to local ladies, Seven Stars Pub……

Hinkley Common, when Capt Gibson set light to the undergrowth was interesting.

Finished the term in a blaze of glory by being arrested by Plod Macey and released from close arrest the day before passing out, got 14 days RP's that ran into the leave which was a bit of a blow.
Decided to sneak out and was caught by Geordie Luke, who thought it was amusing to place my civvy clothes under close arrest.

Plod relented after a week and commuted my 14 days to 7 and sent me on leave, so that was it, 2 ½ years of Brats, never made NCO, only Phil Simmonds had been there longer than me and he was the J/RSM!!.

<u>Memorable Characters – Permanent Staff</u>

Capt "Mad Jack/Wacky" Thompson – last met him about 83 at the Army Ski Championships in Aviemore, he was a Major and I was a WO1, that surprised him

Maj "Plod" Macey – What a man, kind, decent and terrifying

Sgt "Timber" Woods – not my cup of tea

Sgt "Pop" Fenton – Great Bloke, sadly gone

Sgt Ken Bradshaw – Last seen as RQMS in Antwerp when he was sadly in a fatal traffic accident, brilliant shot

RSM "Tara" Paddy McCann – the blueprint for RSM's

Sgt John Bollers – met him several times, as RQMS in Singapore, as CSM at 6 OFP (I was in 20) as RSM at Bicester and as QM at Deepcut – Gentleman

Sgt "Drummy" King – Smart as paint

CSM Middleton – Known as "Winkey Why"

<u>Memorable Characters – Boys</u>

Taff Keen – great guy, amateur tattooist, last seen 84 on resettlement

Vince Hyre – crazy but fun, last seen Viersen 64

Charlie Ritchie – last met in Aden, both of us as Printers (well me almost!)

Johnny Dunbar- tough little boxer

Chippy Chandler – Fulham boy, great Drum Major

Phil Simmonds – last seen as WO2 in Bicester, where is he now?

Spud Murphy – Good mate, scouser

Wally Ince – brilliant bugler, had bad traffic accident in Germany, last seen in Blackdown in 66

Roger Slade – good mate, still in touch

Dave Vince – who could forget the song he composed "Ring up Deepcut 240 and join the Regular Army"

Mick Mullarkey – What a character, still in touch

<u>Others I Remember (In no particular order)</u>

Sammy Samples, Graham Whittington, Tony Spence, Mick Hinson, Bob Manners, Frank Pratt, Frenchy Forvargue, Pete Sissons (I believe he is no longer with us), Paddy Lugg, Paddy Phillips, Paddy Simmonds, Ken Avery, Jock Munro, Wally Fallaize, Vic Green, Mick Cross, Brummy McHale, Pete Goldstone, Guy Adams, Taff Alderman, Dave Quinn, Geoff Malthouse, Brian Wilde, Richard Smith, Les Wright, Duncan Learmounth, Richard Mulligan, Tim Snelling, Tich Watson, Alan Old, Polly Perkins, Bill Chamberlain, John Passey