



Creation of the RAOC, REME & RCT ex Boys Association

The formation of an Ex Boys Association was talked about in the 1950's and 1960's, it was uppermost in the thoughts of **Captain Peter Gibson** (later Major & MBE), who was an ex Boy himself in 1947/48 and returned as a Permanent Staff Officer (OC Steevens House in the 60's), however sadly nothing appeared to have been carried forward.

In 1997 **Paul David Jones** (1961/63 Body/Steevens Platoons) our Chairman, discussed the setting up of a Website with his brother ex J/RSM **Allan Jones** (1963/66 Baker Platoon) who was visiting from the USA **Allan** suggested a visit to the Museum at Deepcut to see what information they had on the Ex Boys?

They found that they had absolutely nothing related to Ex Boys service and **Paul** proposed that he would create a Website covering the time of their service 1961/63 & 1963/66.

Paul & Allan found around 20 photos each and Paul set about creating the website under the banner "RAOC Ex Boys Association" and incorporated the photos.

As **Allan** was living in the USA, **Paul** undertook to develop the website.

They named it as the **Junior Leaders RAOC** and created the website, the annual hosting costs of which were funded personally by Paul.

Over the next couple of years **Paul** found there was interest from ex Boys but as he was running a full time Architectural Practice he found that he could not handle the day to day email enquiries and the work involved in scanning and copying a large number of photos and other material.

Unfortunately Paul suffered a severe stroke and found he was unable devote the time necessary to progress the site.

Two years after suffering his stroke **Paul** made contact with another Ex Boy, **Richard Bond** (1961/63 Hill Platoon) who agreed to help with the site.

Paul and Richard were instrumental in the initial design; layout, scanning and placing photos onto the original website site, they met at each other's homes, both putting a lot of their time & money into getting it off the ground and are to be commended for moving the project forward.

Not long after **Richard** sadly gave up the running of the site for personal reasons.

Paul was already in contact with **George Tether** (1961/63 Steevens Platoon) who he had known as an ex Junior Leader and in 2001 **Bill Chamberlain** (1958/59 Gordon House) made contact with the Association and became a member.

In a number of chats with **Paul**, **Bill** agreed to assist with the site and he liaised with **George Tether** and they both set about revamping the website in 2003.

George Tether in his Role as Webmaster was the key behind what you see today on the website and its layout and functionality was undertaken over a lengthy period, with **Bill** assisting and providing with the Logo Design. A great deal of thanks must be given to **George Tether** for the hours put in to make the website into a virtual museum of our history and also simple to navigate.

We must put forward our thanks to all the Ex Boys and members of the P. Staff who kindly donated photos and material to the Ex Boys Association which could be archived to show what Boys Service was about and what it meant to us during our formative years.

Bill Chamberlain realised that there was a need for a “recruiting drive” as it was obvious that there must be many thousands of ex Boys who might be interested in the website and also in renewing friendships forged during those formative years.

He had been successful in tracing a number of his ex-Pals from Gordon House and after Scouring Documents and Photos that we already had, he created a Master list of ex Boys and set about locating as many as he could. From this master list and photos & documents on site he was able to compile a Nominal Roll as well as an Alpha list of ex Boys..

Bill, with the assistance of **George**, set up the Nominal Roll on the website and created an Alphabetical list of all the names on the Roll.

Bill has been instrumental in his voluntary Roll of locating “Lost Pals”.

Initially the numbers of Ex Boys registered with the Association was less than 30, today we have contact details for around 3000 with a further list of 5000 still to be located.

As the website and membership grew it was obvious that additional people were needed to help out as the workload for the 4 volunteers, including **Brian Wild** (J/RSM 1958/61 Body) who was our Treasurer at that time.

David McCarthy (1963/65 Mulcahy) came on board to assist Bill with updating the Roll and Alpha listings.

Adrian Hayward-Wills (1981/82 Alamein) kindly volunteered to take on the task of producing a Newsletter.

There had been a number of Mini Reunions held by various ex Boys since the initial formation.

The first Ex Boys Association Reunion was arranged in 2006 by **Paul Jones**, **Peter Britcher** (1961/64 P. Staff), **John Matthews** (1962/63 Baker), **Bruce Atkin** (1959/62 Watts) and **David Brown** (1961/63 Parsons/Steevens) and took place in Farnborough.

Since that initial get together we have held an Official Reunion Dinner every two years.

Today we see another volunteer **Ian Loftus** (1971/73 Cutforth) who now arranges the Reunions, having taken over the ropes from **Bill Chamberlain**.

There have been many other Reunions arranged by individuals and Groups, who have “come together” through our Association.

In 2015 the Website Forum was discontinued and the current **Facebook Group** was created in its place, thus allowing our ex Boys to communicate more effectively with each other.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/335982596587992/>

Our Facebook Group is not open to members of the public or other branches of the Armed Forces, although a family member of a deceased ex Boy may be permitted to join.

Whilst the Association Website is no longer administered by our Admin Team (other than to update the Nominal Roll) it continues to be freely open to viewing and many of the Photos and other Material can be downloaded and saved by visiting the site:

Opening up the item **and then** using “right click” on your mouse and **using the option "save image as..."**

<http://www.juniorleadersraoc.co.uk/>

**It is a great credit to all who have assisted in creating our Website & Association.
They have ensured the aims of our Association have been achieved.**

**“To create a website that depicts the history of our Boys Service”
“To allow a platform for Members to renew old friendships”**

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**Major Peter Gibson** became a **Member of the Ex Boys Association in 2012** and saw that his vision had finally materialised, sadly **Major Gibson passed away on 27 August 2017**.