

*Bradbury Mercury*  
1960s 16 Signal Regiment Reunion Club



Issue Number 23

Compiled by Ted Theis

February 2009



Our Front Page: 'Mercury', (Jimmy) taken in the grounds of Tatton park, Cheshire

### **In memory of Pat Coles**

Taff would like to thank all members of the 60s-16ers for their kind support on the death of his beloved wife Pat.



Pat died on the 6th November 2008 (which was their 43rd wedding anniversary), the funeral was held at Wythycombe Parish Church at 11 am on the morning of the 20th November.

Pat had insisted on having a party in May 2008 to celebrate her life and the birthdays of her daughter and grand-daughter. During this party, they raised a massive £4600.00 in aid of Cancer Research UK and Force. This was added to the £1050.00 raised at Pat's funeral which went to Exmouth Lymestone Hospice Care.

On behalf of all club members, we send our sincere condolences to Taff and his family on their very sad loss.

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## Chairman ' s opening address

I hope you and your families have enjoyed the excesses of a happy festive season. May Rae and I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for 2009.

Firstly may I say how pleased and honoured I was to be selected as your new chairman. I look forward to working with the committee and all of our members for the next two years. I am conscious of the hard act that I must follow and would like to congratulate Syd, Bridget and all of their team for their hard work in what must have seemed a thankless task on occasions. I think they did a remarkable job particularly in organising the Harrogate reunion in such a short time and seeing it turn into such a successful occasion.

I think we are very lucky to have such a large and active membership which may sometimes be taken for granted. Rae and I recently attended the 14 Signal Regiment reunion which represents a similar sized unit to 16 but over a longer time frame than our 10 years. It turned out to be one of their best attended functions with all of 24 of us attending!!

I'm sure Chris Bartlett would be very proud of our current strength and track record. Talking of Chris many of us will remember the day of his passing as if it were yesterday. Although a very sad and emotional occasion it was turned around into a memorable reunion by the strengths of some of our members and also through the hard work and dedication of our hosts within the serving ranks of 16 Signal Regiment. Probably the most important player on the host team was the then RSM John Fradley who made many fans amongst our members over his handling of our needs in such a sensitive and positive manner. Well I am pleased to report that John, who is now a serving Major, and his wife Helen have accepted our invitation to attend our next Gala Dinner at Blackpool and he will propose the traditional toast to the memory of Chris. I am sure many will look forward to meeting them again and repaying some of the hospitality they offered us in 2001.

I recently visited the Regiment whilst in Germany on a family visit and I will report fully elsewhere or at Blackpool but it is worth mentioning that the current CO is very supportive of our organisation and efforts.

I was very sorry to hear of the death of Pat Coles and sent Taff a card on your behalf. Although a desperate time for Taff, it was good to see many of his old mates rallying around and offering practical and moral support in his time of need.

I am sure I have rabbitied on for far too long without even mentioning next year's Reunion. You will see the main details on our website and as things firm up we will ensure you are kept informed.

For now may I close in once again wishing you a Happy and Healthy New Year and I look forward to seeing as many as possible of you in Blackpool in October.

Yours,

Bill



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# Report for Harrogate 2008

## By Margaret and Charlie Wickham



There we were, minding our own business; on a Thursday prior to the reunion, when suddenly the phone rang (it doesn't do that too often). It was Charlie who answered the phone in his own inimitable way, meant to scare the life out of cold callers, usually works too.....only this was not a cold caller. IT WAS THE GREAT OGG (for those of you who do not know her by this



name....Gwen Theis!). "Charlie," she said, (we know, a little bit familiar) but she went on to say, "can you and Margaret do the write-up on the reunion for the Bradbury Mercury?" Well, you can't really say no, can you, not to Oggy! So here we are putting our personal slant on this year's reunion.

### Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008

All packed and ready to roll, we left Shoeburyness on a bright sunny morning, hoping we had everything we would need for at least a week. The journey was quite pleasant, a few hold-ups, an hours delay somewhere on the A1, then five hours later we reached Harrogate. We arrived right on rush hour. It took us at least thirty minutes crossing Harrogate to the Cairns Hotel. Never having been to Harrogate before we were quite taken aback by the beauty of the place, the traffic was another matter!

We booked in, unpacked, then decided to head for the bar area. We had heard a bit of noise and joviality coming from that direction on our way in and decided that it must be fellow members. We were right! This part I like (M speaking)! We all greeted each other, customary kiss and hug, in some cases a hand shake! It was



Jim enjoying the Friday Night meet & greet

so good to be with good friends, we hadn't attended a reunion since Loughborough. We had a drink and headed in to dinner.

After dinner we all headed back in to the bar area and spent a very sociable evening chatting and catching up. Members of the Harrogate Royal Signals Association had been invited along to join us for drinks in the evening. It was quite a shock for me (C speaking) to see Alex Kubu. I served with Alex in 7 Signal Regiment from 1964-1967 some 40 odd years ago, he looked exactly the same. Alex was a wonderful rugby player. Somebody asked me what his nickname was, to this question I replied "Alex is a

big Fijian so we all called him Alex!" Bedtime.....more tomorrow!

## Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008

The entertainment committee arranged a coach trip to Eden Camp and Castle Howard; this was to leave the hotel car park at approximately 0900 hrs (at least that was the plan). We didn't go on the trip so we hope someone else will perhaps give an account of how the day went.

After a leisurely breakfast we went for a walk around the town, with Hazel and Ted Hebden. We spent time looking for all Ted's old drinking haunts. It was surprising we weren't challenged by anyone as Ted insisted on peering through windows saying,



“I am sure it was here!” Ted was a Harrogate Apprentice. We also spent a lot of time looking for Ted's old girl friends, but of course Ted being Dave he was looking at the wrong age group, ignoring all the older women, until he was reminded how OLD he is. (We seem to remember something similar being reported in the January 06 edition of the magazine)! We spent a very pleasant morning in Harrogate and the weather was great.

In the afternoon we had another very important appointment with some friends we had not seen for 33 years, Chris and Bob Faulds, who have settled in Harrogate. We flew out to Cyprus together in 1969, their daughter Sam was only one year old and our Victor was just 6 months old, so as you can imagine it was quite an emotional and wonderful afternoon. Believe it or not, they haven't changed a bit!

We were back at the hotel in time to change, ready for the group photograph and our Gala dinner. Iain Haldane, patience must be his middle name, sorted everyone into some semblance of order and the photograph was duly taken. Everyone, male and female alike, had scrubbed up really well and looked fantastic. Check out the photos!

Photo on right, memories of the day trip to Eden Camp, courtesy of Dave Walker

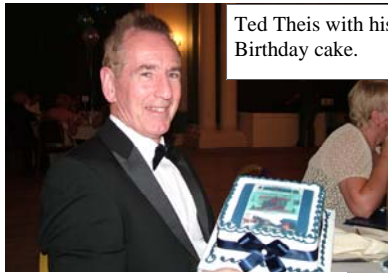


After dinner the hotel waiting staff were duly thanked and the evening's entertainment, provided by Duo Connect, began. We talked, listened, drank, danced, drank some more.



Syd thanking the Staff for all their hard work.

We also sang 'Happy Birthday' to Ted Theis who was celebrating his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday.



Ted Theis with his Birthday cake.

Picture courtesy of Dave Walker

We must mention the raffle which was drawn in a totally different way to previous years. Well done Mr. Aldous, it worked and we actually won a prize! There were photographs taken throughout the evening by various people, we hope we get to see the better ones....no surprises! Before we knew it, it was time for bed (all our friends know, we are not night people!)



Photo's , Dave Aldous our MC for the night and some prize winners

Pictures courtesy of Margaret and Charlie Wickham

## Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2008

The weekend is flying past. This morning, after breakfast we had the AGM. This started at 11.00 am. We voted in our new Chairman, Bill White and said goodbye and thank you to the outgoing Chairman, Syd Wilson (we wish you peace on your allotment forever more!). The venue for next year's Reunion was chosen, Blackpool. We had a special raffle for a German beer mug which raised over £100 for the charity 'Help for Heroes'. There were various reports and discussions during the meeting but again we are sure this information will be sent out to all in due course. It was lunch time on another beautiful day. Chris Abbot had found a nice little pub just outside Harrogate, so a few of us decided to venture forth. We went in two cars to somewhere that was supposed to be just a little way down the road. A comfort break



Margaret & Charlie can be seen here with Sue & Reme Harper, Hazel & Ted Hebden, Chris Abbot, Sheila Bracey, Gwen Theis

would have been good during the journey!

We had a wonderful afternoon, good company, Gwen and Ted Theis, Hazel and Ted Hebden, Sue and Reme, Sheila Bracey and Chris Abbott. Lots and lots of laughter, reminisces (there were various references to 'BUT NOTHING HAPPENED'), good music, good food (loads of chips).

We extend a big thank you to Sue and Gordon Harper for letting us share their Ruby wedding (40 years) celebration. Well done Chris for finding such a lovely location, we all thoroughly enjoyed our afternoon.

We were back in time for the evening entertainment which was being provided by the Blarney Boys. There is always a drawback on the Sunday evening of a reunion; some people need to leave to get back for the Monday morning start. Those of us that remained enjoyed our sing-a-long from the song sheets that were handed out. The dancing was something entirely different...photographic proof is available for those of you who participated in what was called 'an old Irish dance'. Personally (M speaking) I have never seen it before! Everyone seemed to enjoy the energetic work out. We didn't stay late as we were driving on up to Scotland the following morning.



Photos courtesy  
of Margaret and  
Charlie Wickham

Some Sunday night  
revellers enjoying  
themselves, dancing  
to the music of  
'The Blarney Boys'.



Photo by Ian H

## Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2008

That time when you say cheerio to one and all. Some folks we won't see for another year or two, others we will see quite soon. Thank you for your friendship and company and our thanks to the organising and entertainment committee, without whom we wouldn't have had such a great weekend.

We mentioned that we were going to Scotland. We were adding to the Reunion and going to visit Fliss and Bill Jack. Bill, who, we are pleased to report, is making good progress, still sore but on the road to recovery. We spend two days with them before heading back this side of the border.

### Mini Reunion reminder from Dixie.

Paignton 27th Feb to 2nd March Livermead Cliff Hotel. Please contact Dixie or Noreen for further information. So far there are approximately 24 attending . Deposits are £30 per person required ASAP



Haldane

Copies can be obtained direct from Ian

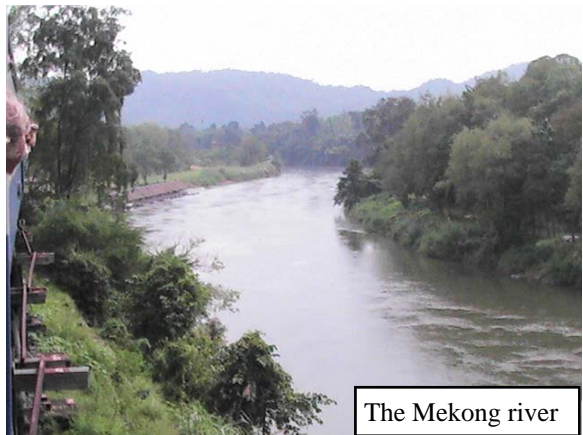
**Terri and Andrew Crow—Far East visit continued from August edition.....**

We only had one day in Hong Kong so it was a case of which trip do I go on, so I went on a trip which took in the centre of the shopping region with a drive by of some of the other sights. I was taken to the place where there is an escalator which is in total 800mtrs long. We only did a small piece of it and then walked around the old Police station which is on Bow Street believe it or not and has the courts and the prison behind it, all very efficient but sadly closed down now. I was then shown some of the street markets and saw lots of live fish which could be bought as you saw it and live poultry. By the time we had seen all this and some more temples for good measure it was quite late so it was a quick flit round the markets to see if I could get some bargains and back to the liner. I did manage to get Teri a very nice Chinese jacket and some dresses for the grand children.

We left Hong Kong on a very pleasant evening, the liner left via the front of Hong Kong and at night it really is a grand sight with all the sky scrapers lit up. As it was November the whole sides of these buildings were lit up with Christmas lights and designs for the New Year. Teri and I went to the top deck so as to get a good view of the front and the liner had music and wine there to make the occasion worth while.

We then spent a day at sea and as we were heading south the weather got better as we went and so we were able to do some sun bathing at last and Teri was able to stretch out on a sun lounger on the top deck. Teri also went into the Gym which was well equipped with a wide variety of machines. Teri chose the cycling machine and peddled fast enough to keep the ships generator going for a few more hours.

After the day at sea we then arrived at Vietnam and weighed



The Mekong river

anchor off the coast of Da Nang which is a small place and several trips were done to the local town and countryside so we could get a vision of how these people live. Since I was going to do the trip to Saigon the next day I didn't go on any trip here but I did take the 'Tender' to land to see what was there. Not a lot as it happened but they are obviously used to the ships coming as there was a small market selling fake watches, clothes and jewellery. The watches were quite good as many of them were automatic and although cost more than the Chinese watches they were better made and had a bit of weight to them so even felt like they were real. Couldn't resist so I bought one and they had real Pearl necklaces and bracelets at very good prices as well.

Next day and a bit further down the coast we arrived at Nha Trang which yet again was 'Tender' transfer to the shore. This is possible for wheel chair personnel but can be a bit dodgy as the tender can wobble about a bit (depending on the weather). They will help to lift wheel chairs but that can be a bit unnerving for the person in the wheel chair and this was one of the reasons Teri didn't get to see Saigon. Once ashore it was a 3 hour bus trip to Saigon (Ho Chi Min city), this was on a normal bus and on bad roads so not good for wheelchair users. The courier on the bus went on for about 2 hours and I'm afraid I didn't listen to a lot of what was said apart from we will stop for a comfort break now.

Once in Saigon which is not much to write home about but does have an amazing amount of people on motorbikes, mopeds and scooters. Every time the lights changed at the road junctions there would be at least 100 two wheeled vehicles there by the time they changed to Green. This was happening at every junction, really, I kid you not, so if you where walking you had to be very aware of the roads when you crossed them.

Once in Saigon (most people there still called it that) we were taken to the museum and shown round (yawn) and then had a show which was a bit like Punch and Judy in water and this was in the museum as well.



After that there wasn't much of interest in Saigon, it is a frantic city with lots of bikes and little else, quite a dirty place. We got taken to where the market is and that was good for some bargains. 'T' Shirts

were very cheap but be aware they are not good quality and shrink a lot. In the UK I get XL, size in Vietnam I needed XXXXXL and they were still too small. Any way after the long trip back which took even longer due to commuter traffic going home it was good to be back to the coast and a trip on a hydrofoil out to the liner.

We then had a day at sea and it was a lot warmer now and we were on our way to Singapore. At Singapore I had a trip booked to do the 'War tour'. Teri and I had been to Singapore way back in 1991 and stayed



A radio operator, a display from Changi Prison

there for 3 days before going on to Australia and so didn't need a tour of Singapore itself. Most of the new building since then was explained as we went on the trip to see the places of interest to do with the war.

They are building at a fantastic rate and are

building a new area which is supposed to be a match for Las Vegas when finished. Anyway moving on, our bus took us to Changi Jail which is a museum and chapel of rest as well. We spent about half an hour there and then onto the main Cemetery of the War Dead and Remembrance building. It was very well kept and I found some headstones of Signal Regt guys and even a Catering Corps guy.

We spent about 20 minutes there as it was a bit wet. After that it was back into the city to see 'Fort Canning' which was the GHQ for Singapore and where all the big wigs were hiding! I mean planning the surrender of the allies? I mean the defence of Singapore.

This is quite interesting as it has waxwork figures dressed as squaddies of the time and directing you into the place. Inside it has the Generals made to look like the personnel who were really there at the time. In one room it has them all around a table and on speaker discussing the surrender (15 Feb 42) and if they should and the reasoning to why. I found this to be interesting. We spent about an hour here before getting back on the bus and back to the liner.

We then had another whole day and night at sea before getting to our final destination, Bangkok.

Due to this being the final stop everyone had to get off and since there was something in the region of 2000 people it was a big operation which went quite well considering and we were on a bus enroute for Bangkok which was about 2 hours drive away.

We stayed at the Landmark Hotel in the centre of the city, which was quite impressive although not an easy hotel for the buses as they had to stop in the main street and then reverse uphill to the main entrance to the hotel. Once there it was a long wait for them to process all the new arrivals and allocate rooms. Due to Teri being in the wheel chair we got sorted a bit quicker and got to our room which was for disabled people so was convenient for the lifts. Our room was on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor of a 29 floor hotel. The view wasn't brilliant as there was an even taller building right next to the 'Landmark'.

Once out of the Hotel there were plenty of small shops and stalls on the pavement where you could buy 'T' Shirts, watches, leather goods etc.

The next morning I was off on another trip, this time to the Bridge over the River Kwai. First stop was a reconstruction of the accommodation the prisoners had and a cemetery which was well looked after.

Next was the bridge which was very busy with tourists and souvenir shops but it was worth the visit and you do get an idea of what it must have been like for the prisoners working on it.

After the bridge its off to a restaurant and then a train trip which goes over a part built into the side of a cliff next to the river. It has a beautiful view but it's also another memory of what the POW's went through.

We arrived late in Bangkok and after queuing in the city traffic eventually got to the Hotel.

Next day was a shorter trip just to the Temples in the city and to see the Golden Buddha. The temples are worth seeing as they are quite big with lots of intricate work and colouring. There is a lot of other things to see in Bangkok but time didn't allow for that.

That evening we were taken to the Airport for our trip home with a stop off in Dubai to change planes and back to London. Teri didn't go on any of the trips but I videoed all the trips I went on for her to see when we got home.

Congratulations to Chris (Bud) Abbot and Sheila Bracey—we figured that if you'd wanted it kept quiet you wouldn't have told Reme!!!

All our good wishes, you two, for a long and happy relationship.



### **Thanks from Sandra Dixon**

Dear 60s-16ers.

Please accept my apologies for the delay in writing to thank you all for the flowers, cards, and e-mails, sent to me on the death of Allan in April 2008. I am sure you can understand it has been a very bad time for myself and family, I would also like to give my sincere thanks to Hazel, for the great run she did for our heroes, with Allan's name on the back of her T-shirt. He would have loved that, and it certainly brought tears to my eyes.

He enjoyed the times we came to the re-unions, it was the only time we went away in the last few years, as it was very hard to travel anywhere without help. Noreen & Dixie (Jnr) were a great help to me and I am grateful to them for that.

Once again, many thanks to you all.

Sandra Dixon

### **Reminder from the Treasurer**

**M**embers who have not yet paid their subs (£10.00 per member), at or since the reunion in September 2008, please forward them to the treasurer, Martin Boizot. Please make cheques payable to: 'Reunion Club' - NO CASH PLEASE—and send direct to:

**M Boizot at 2 Quantock View, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3AW**

**We have also had a letter from 'Help for Heroes' thanking the club for its donation of £107.20 (from the raffle at Harrogate)**

## MY CO'S INTERVIEW

By **Bill White, Chairman**

On a cold November morning my interview with the current Commanding Officer of 16 Signal Regiment, Lt Col Justin Hodges, started with the offer of a comfy seat and a cup of coffee which is something I don't remember Bob Pope offering when I was interviewed by him in the 1960s.

You will be pleased to hear that Colonel Justin fully supports our organisation and aims and was very pleased to re-open communications and support our Club, so much so that he has provisionally agreed to send a representative to our Blackpool Reunion to provide a video and audio brief for us on the current and future plans for the Regiment. I won't steal his thunder by going into detail, but it won't surprise you to hear that the pace of life is hectic and although the future is full of challenges, it also offers some exciting and rewarding prospects.

He had done his homework by scanning our website which had quite impressed him although having done Public Duties in London last year with his Regiment, he wasn't looking for recruits from our Newquay Drill Squad!! Although he will no longer be CO when the Regiment moves back to UK, Colonel Justin explained that he would like to follow the lead of a number of other Signal Regiments in forming a 16 Signal Regiment Reunion Club to cover all who have served over the full life of the unit. I explained that one of the main strengths of our Club was that we shared a common experience gained in the 1960s at Krefeld and although some of us may wish to support a new organisation we would still wish to retain our own Club quite separate from any other.

During our conversation I did offer some ideas on how we could support both his deployed soldiers and also any families left behind or visiting UK. Whilst being very grateful for our offer, the formal Welfare system is now so organised that he didn't feel this necessary at present.

Well I think that covers the main points we discussed, any of which I would be happy to explain in more detail at Blackpool or as mentioned the CO's representative may be able to do it for us.



## REGRETS

### From Audrey and Dick Grainge

As much as we regretted missing the Reunion in Harrogate this year and in Newquay last year, we did enjoy nearly 3 weeks of wall-to-wall sunshine and temperatures in the high 20's. It was a holiday, but as the photo show's, it included work as well! We had to burn off some of the calories, with all the cheap drink and food that France (Brittany) has to offer.

During our second week we visited the house of a French couple that have a static caravan on the site, they live in a small town about one hours drive from the camp site we stay at. The town is called Sear, and many of the streets are named after Resistance fighters, shot by the Nazis in 1944 as the picture's show.



Audrey & Dick enjoying a spot of gardening



We also took the opportunity to visit an English couple who have set up home in Brittany and on the way took in the Museum of the Brittany Resistance at the small village of St. Marcel, which was completely destroyed in 1944 by the Nazis, with the exemption of the church and associated building

Next year 2009 we are planning to go out twice, in April and again in September and hopefully no more prunes in cognac.



**Dick in full flow on one of his shaggy dog stories**

**Blackpool Norbreck Hotel October 2009**



Banqueting hall, bedroom and dining room at the Norbreck Castle Hotel in sunny Blackpool  
Don't forget your bookings and deposits to Frank Del Pinto.  
Pictures taken from Web site.



## **LIEUTENANT GENERAL R BAXTER CBE** **New— ‘Master of Signals’**

Lieutenant General Robert Baxter was born in 1953, brought up in South America, and educated at the Edinburgh Academy, Edinburgh University and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He is a graduate of the long Staff Course (technical and staff) and the Higher Command and Staff Course. Early service included: military assistance in Africa; special communications; and, operational service in Northern Ireland, the Gulf and Balkans.

He has commanded a section, troop, squadron, regiment, and, most recently, the 1<sup>st</sup> Signal Brigade and Chief G6 HQ Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps he deployed to the Balkans supporting General Sir Mike Jackson's Kosovo Force. He was awarded the CBE for his service and much enjoyed the trials and pleasures of a Joint and Multi-national command that included signal, aviation, intelligence and logistic units from five nations and, a novelty for both parties, a Hungarian Mechanised Battalion. Close encounters with NATO command states and budgeting and procurement systems added spice to the whole experience.

Staff posts have included: Chief of Staff of 33 Armoured Brigade during the period it supported the 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian Corps; instructing in command, leadership and decision making at the Army Staff College; developing command doctrine, the approach to future warfare and future force structures in the Directorate of Land Warfare; project managing command support systems for all 3 Services in the Procurement Executive and establishing the precursor to the Integration Authority; and as a Director in the MOD helping dismantle Director General Information and Communication Services and forming-up the Directorate General of Information and the command and battlespace management focus under the MOD's Director of Operations: the Defence Information Strategy, the launch of the Defence Information Infrastructure Programme and supporting governance arrangements were key additional pieces of work

In April 2002 on promotion to Major General he assumed the appointment of Commandant, Royal Military College of Science, where he oversaw a significant change programme as the College adapted to life after the Defence Training Review. A short period as Director General Development and Doctrine followed when the Directorate was preparing to merge with the Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre. In December 2005 Major General Baxter took on the new post of COS Support at Head Quarters Land Command and on promotion to Lieutenant General assumed the appointment of Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Health) overseeing the Defence Health Change Programme.

Lieutenant General Baxter assumed the appointment of Master of Signals on 5 October 2008.

**Any items for inclusion in the August 09 edition please submit by 30th June.**

A big thanks, goes to Chris Gildea from ‘CKG Consultancy’ for printing this issue of our newsletter

Thanks Chris



### **The 1960s 16 Signal Regiment**

Please email or contact the person below with any items for future inclusion

Email: [oggyandted@googlemail.com](mailto:oggyandted@googlemail.com)  
[www.the-60s-16ers.com/](http://www.the-60s-16ers.com/)