



Loch Lubnaig



Above picture taken May 2015 looking south, and yes it is Loch Lubnaig. Just to show you how beautiful Scotland can look when you cannot see the Midge. The loch is located only twenty miles west of the Stirling Court Hotel.

Hi All, No Editors Ramble this time, I did a basic writing course last year. I was way out of my comfort zone. This is my second weeks effort. I read it out to the class at the end of the course. Was accused of being a romantic. Hope you enjoy it. Iain.

A Short Story.

A bracelet, a knife, and a photograph. These three objects always trigger my memory because they are a part of that period in time when I met the girl in the photograph. That is Elizabeth aged sixteen, she would never let anyone shorten it to Liz but she did let me call her Beth, but that story is not for now. My parents moved around a lot, Dad was a member of the Armed Forces so I went to many schools in and around Army camps. I met Elizabeth when I arrived at my latest school; I had my fourteenth birthday during the summer holidays.

It was the start of the Autumn Term, I was glad of that because I remember joining a school midterm and had many problems catching up with the schoolwork. Seemed to be at a different level to the school I had just left. Oh Elizabeth, she was in my classes for Maths and English, in fact I sat behind her in the maths class. I still do not know how we started chatting or what we talked about but I do remember looking at her a lot, an awful lot.

Sitting behind her meant that I could gaze at Elizabeth without it being too noticeable. In addition, she was a very good-looking girl, well I thought that she was and I still do. What was she like? Not as tall as me, beautiful smile, her face seemed to light up. The fact she was smiling at me was, to me, the most amazing part. I missed that when we went on our separate buses to go home at the end of the school day. I found over the years through talking to male friends that we many of us had very different ideas on what comprised our ideal girl.

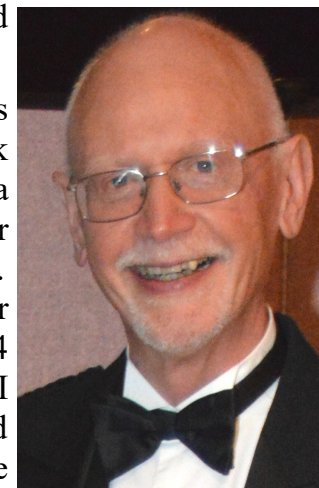
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Firstly, I wish you all a Healthy and prosperous 2017.

When talking to members I am always impressed by the amount of charitable work that you all do – whether it is helping a neighbour, supporting a services comrade or more formal charitable work and fund-raising. In fact, I think it would be very up-lifting for all of us if this was collated into an A4 booklet to be handed out at the reunion. I would ask Iain's help in editing it and I would undertake the printing. I suggest articles be restricted to 200 words (and a photo if happy to do so). Anonymity can be preserved by just signing with initials or a nom de plume. I don't see it as boasting, but sharing ideas and strengthening the value of our association.



One of my Christmas presents was Ranulph Fiennes new book "FEAR – our ultimate challenge". It got me thinking as to how the substance of fear changes as we age – as a child we face fear, perhaps by being bullied, or waiting outside the headmaster's study for a caning or on just going to a new school. During our service life, we face fear on active service or on adventure training or expeditions. Now our most likely fears arise with our health. But it takes the same courage to face our fears whatever they are and reflects our personality in the way we do so. So often we see modest, quiet friends show the utmost courage, and we just hope we can show the same courage when our turn comes.

On a lighter note, I look forward to seeing many of you at the Recce in March in York.

Peter Crane

Another Scottish Reunion

I can remember a time when we could have made the five hour trip to Stirling without a bathroom break, heck, we used to make it all the way from the North of England to Krefeld with just the one stop-off and that was only because we had to board the ferry. But on this particular foray into Scotland we crossed our legs until we reached Gretna Green where we'd agreed to meet up with a few of our members. It occurs to me that Gretna Green may be losing its romantic air in favour of the more dubious distinction of being the first and/or last loo stop in Scotland. The car park was jam packed and there were masses of coaches, but, so far as I could make out, they were all heading south, a mass exodus from Scotland and over the weekend we found out why. It rained and then it rained again! And then it rained some more. All those romantic stories about Scotland being ever shrouded in mist. Rubbish! Scotland is actually steaming, like wet knickers drying on the oven door.



Friday night was the usual, 'Hi, how've you been?' kind of a night with conversations carried on from last year being easily interrupted and put on hold until next year. When I first attended our reunions, more than a decade ago, there were quite a few stalwarts of the all night booze up; starting at whatever time they arrived on Friday afternoon. Alas, we no longer get up in the morning to find said stalwarts stretched out across the breakfast bar. These days we find them shame facedly hanging their heads because they went to their pits before anybody else and not, like some (you people know who you are), to continue the party until the wee small hours of the late evening.

On Saturday morning we ambled into reception to find quite a few of our group up in arms because overnight we had been classified as 'militant extremists' and barred from accessing our web-site. The poor receptionist, inundated with cries of 'What does this mean?' and 'Is this for real?' Finally broke down and said, 'Look, anybody with eyes can see that you couldn't possibly be militants; of any description...'

What a cheek! Did she know who we were, we could be extremely militant, sometimes we actually were, and even now, given half a chance, we could descend on Downing Street en-masse demanding Fair play for Old Farts or... maybe... say... help me out here people, I got nothin'. In fact it was all easily sorted; I think the receptionist sent a group photo of us to the web-masters which, much to my chagrin, was apparently all it took.

After the small contretemps re our official standing, some of us hot footed it up to Stirling Castle in the rain. My wheelchair and I were not too thrilled with the authentic cobbled courtyard up there. I had things wobbling, and rattling that I thought had long since given up the ghost and to any of you doubters out there, just you try it. Anyway, the whole reason for this visit was so that a few of our 'poor old souls' could go and admire the tapestries. Evidently, they'd been present when the tapestries were first hung and they wanted to see how they'd fared.

We didn't go further afield because we were worried about missing out on our afternoon naps, well, some of us were, weren't we Reme? There is no way that we (he) could stay up beyond 22:00hrs without a power nap in the afternoon. Aw, bless.

The Gala dinner – and thank you, Iain, for arranging that wonderful piper; there's nothing quite like the grandeur of being piped into dinner. And, as usual, everyone looked sensational – except, maybe, er, Sue, does he really not suit black? I have to tell you that quite a few people think he only wears that white dinner jacket because he thinks it turns him into a dead ringer for James Bond.

This particular evening, though, was the start of the Anglo-Scottish "entente cordial" collapse. Now, the cabaret act being Scottish and the vast majority of us being English led to a particularly surreal cross-border shout out. It was with pure glee that I, a slightly deaf person who very much over uses the word 'what', heard people shouting, 'what did she say' or 'did you catch that?' 'I can't make out a word'. It didn't help that our host, the extremely Scottish, Iain H, doesn't speak English, not a word. Oh, I've just been reliably informed that he *was* speaking English, hmm, okay...

How wonderful was the music though, and the dancing, Scottish reels, the Dashing White Sergeant, the Gay Gordon, the not so Gay Gordon, this towards the end of the evening when the vast majority could no longer put one foot in front of the other without specific instructions. I



learned all of these dances at school and remember them vividly. Unfortunately most of the participants didn't, at least they didn't remember the fact that speed and agility are an intrinsic requirement if you don't want to end up looking like, well, old folk, fervently praying that God grant them the strength to get back to their seats.

Sunday morning and the AGM – by the time we arrived, having been delayed by breakfast, all the back seats were taken by the low-profile brigade of which we are usually fully paid up members. The only seats available now, were at the front and from there we were almost suffocated by the smug aura emanating from that lot at the back. The whole reason that *I* am writing this *report* is because they didn't save us a place and I was right in the firing line, thanks for that Bill.

Did anybody notice that whacking great monument of William Wallace behind the hotel, I didn't get to visit it, what with power naps and rain, but I believe it to be haunted...

How do I know this, well, do y'ken (bit of Scottish there) that on Sunday evening we had our fancy dress special? Yep, the one where everyone, or mostly everyone, dresses up. Well, do ye also ken, that this year the theme was Scotland?

Aye, Scotland, and I have to say that very few of you took it seriously, shame on you Moira and Bruce. A Viking marauder, wee Moira, really? And Bruce, a (Scottish) bumble bee that wasn't even wearing a kilt. We did have Sean Connery dressed up as James Bond; bonus! Billy Connolly was there too, which was good, unfortunately, no jokes, which was bad. We had two Rab C's but only one Mary had to stay on your toes there, Mary, Doll.



Flora McDonald and Nicola S(t)urgeon also graced us with their presence as did Oor Wullie parked on his bucket and then, there was that thistle...

I know you're all waiting with bated breath for an explanation on the haunting. You must surely have seen it on Sunday evening, right there on the dance floor, whirling around like the clappers. William Wallace himself, but, and this may be of interest to Mel Gibson, he was not wearing

woad, (unlike the thistle). No, not a trace and to be honest, it would definitely have been the right thing to do given the ferociousness of Iain's natural born phizog.

We bade our fond farewells on Sunday evening as now that we're knocking on we have to do that obligatory thing of old folks everywhere; beating the traffic and we did this by leaving the hotel at five o'clock on Monday

morning. Five in the morning! Now you see, I personally, am not that old, but I made the mistake of marrying someone who is and apparently I must (by association) abide by the Old Farts' dictate of always being ahead of the game.

I think now is the time that I should be drawing attention to Iain and Rita Haldane for organising such a fantastic week-end, just like to point out Iain that we dinnae holt ye responsible fer it bucketin down the while; so thank you, both of you. And on that note, see you all next year in York, take care.

Written by *Gwen Theis*

(With absolutely no regard for the truth)



Kerry & Christine's July 2016 10 day round trip visit to Brittany.

On Friday 22nd July we left home in Worsley Manchester to go on our first ever stay in France. We drove down to Portsmouth arriving at 4pm having stopped on route for lunch, we stayed the night at a Travelodge 1.3 miles from the ferry terminal as our ferry wasn't due to sail until 8:15am the next morning.



We boarded the ferry at 07:15am on the Saturday morning and went to our reclining seats in the reserved lounge. The ferry was 30 minutes late in departing but made up the time while at sea, we docked in Caen at 15:20pm. It then took us until 20:15pm to reach our rented accommodation 248 miles from Caen. This

was the village of Loperec in the Finistere region of Brittany. When we arrived, there was a nice welcome pack of the staples necessary to see us through until we went to the Supermarket (called Casino) the next morning.



Sunday 24th. We went to the next village called Pont-de-Buis to the Casino Supermarket to get some supplies in and,

then we rested for the rest of the day.

Monday 25th. Today we decided to have a look at some of the area around Finistere, we started at a place called Crozon hoping to see a genuine French market, but when we arrive the market was a small affair consisting of just three farmers fruit and vegetable stalls. Next on our list was a



very nice estuary village called Le Faou. We spent a nice couple of hours there, and then we moved on to St. Rivoal, which turned out to be just a few houses. We decided it and get some lunch, on the way we passed through a village called Brasparts (true, not a joke) we stopped in Loperec village for lunch (a Chicken Buffet) 24 euro's for 2, a bargain I thought, then back to the Gite (cottage) having done 80 miles (not kilometres) for the day.

Tuesday 26th. We went to the Supermarket, I bought a Waterproof Jacket & a Sweatshirt I liked, Christine bought herself a pair of Loafers, we went back to the Gite did some washing, and stayed here for the rest of the day, first dull (weather wise) day of the trip up to now.



Wednesday 27th. Today we went to a Market in a small town called

Landivisiau, rained all day, I am glad I bought the waterproof yesterday, today I bought a new leather belt for myself and a French Beret for my pal John Deas and Christine bought a new handbag for herself. We stopped briefly in a place called Landerneau on the way to Pleyben village for lunch, we then went to a Chocolatier Shop and presto! We bought some Chocolate & Nougat then back to the Gite.

Thursday 28th. As it was raining we stayed at the Gite and did our packing as we are going up to Caen Normandy tomorrow to be closer to the ferry port because it is a five hour drive from here and the ferry leaves for England at 08:15 on Saturday morning.

Friday 29th. We had breakfast and left the Gite at around 10:00 am. We drove the 248 miles to Caen and stayed in an Aparthotel until the next morning when we went to the ferry port to board the boat back to Portsmouth where we arrived at 13:30pm.

Saturday 30th July. When we landed we travelled up to Bidford-on-Avon Worcestershire and stayed the night in a very nice country B&B where, at breakfast on Sunday we met a guy who noticed the Signals stickers on my



car, and he told me his father was in the Signals in the 60s and 70s, but not in 16 Sigs (or I'd have signed him up). After breakfast, we drove home to end a very pleasant ten-day trip.

Kerry & Christine Stylianou.



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THREE Chelsea Pensioners enjoyed a tour of Fleet Flagship HMS Ocean during her stopover in Bahrain.

The veteran trio were in the kingdom for the 200th anniversary of the Bahrain/UK relationship.

Ocean's Executive Warrant Officer Carl 'Speedy' Steedman, *pictured above with the trio*, invited the pensioners aboard the helicopter carrier.

Derek 'Yorky' Layton, John Honey, and David McIntyre were welcomed by the CO Capt Rob Pedre before being taken on a tour by Speedy, CPO Mick Rickwood and Paddy Ashe.

The highlight of the visit, particularly for Yorky, was visiting the bridge to sit in the Captain's chair.

WO1 Steedman said: "It was an absolute pleasure and a real honour to welcome Yorky, John, and David on to our ship. The Chelsea Pensioners are a national treasure and it was great to see the scarlet coats walking Ocean's decks. Although a couple were in their 80s they cut about like our youngest sailors."

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Canadian Odyssey

Our holiday began on the 21st May 2016. We arrived at Gatwick with plenty of time to spare. We had paid extra to bypass the queues at check in. That was great as the queues were almost around the block. We waited at the departure gate until time to board our Transat flight.

Flight took about 9 hours, so after watching a movie, being served a strange wrap for lunch, and given a bottle of champagne for our 50th wedding anniversary. Now that was a nice gesture. We landed in Calgary, Canada. We went through customs but had to declare the cash we were carrying. Rose had her card hacked two days before we left. However, as luck would have it we had been collecting dollars since Christmas, at a great rate of exchange.



My niece Debbie collected us from the airport and delivered us to her home. We were told by Debbie that we would be sleeping in the basement, which turned out to be a very large apartment. We spent the next ten days getting to know the family. I have never met my Grandnieces. Malcolm and Debbie could not do enough to make our stay more enjoyable. Malcolm showed us internet videos of him jumping off the tops of mountains and skiing down vertical faces. Great to watch but not something I could do or even want to do. Doing normal shopping took on expedition standards, a lot of you would have been to the states so know what the size of the shopping malls are. Nevertheless, we took a while to take it all in.

Our next day out was to Banff and the Hot Springs. The water was very warm and with the snow on the mountains all around us, it was magical. After our dip in the hot pool, we went into Banff town for a walk about and took photos of Mount Rundle. We decided to have lunch and found what looked like a nice pub. Lunch was great but we were surprised to find telephones on each table. Why! When we left the bar, our niece said she was sorry, but she had taken us to a "swingers bar". We were very disappointed our phone NEVER even rang. (No comments from any of you lot.) It was another great day out.



We called in to Canmore on the way back to Calgary, took photos of the three sisters mountains, we were still in Banff national park. Hard to explain how the mountains appear to be right next to the road, but a stunning sight.

One of the best days out was at a wolf sanctuary, bit scary, you went into the pens then sat on chairs. We were asked not to make any sudden movements as this scared the wolves, scared the wolves? I was shaking. Can they smell fear???. You were given tit bits to hold out to them but asked not to try to pat them. Are you

kidding? Nevertheless we held out our tit bits and they came up to you had a look at what you had then decided to take some or move on to someone who had something they liked. Once they had taken their tit bit, you checked your fingers. You could see how a pack of these animals could bring down a larger animal.



Another of our days out was to a mining town called Black Diamond, the first nations discovered coal, but the railway needed it, so began mining. In the town was a 1950's diner, we just had to try one of their great hamburgers.

Another day we took a trip out to a small village called Bragg Creek, just a few first nation's shops. John Wayne would not look out of place walking around. Unfortunately they had been in a severe flood in 2013 and had to rebuild everything. The local people supported the shops by shopping there rather than at the large malls.

Well today, we started our trip into the mountains. We have already picked up our hire car (a Chevy Trak) we left Calgary and drove on Interstate 1, drove once again into Banff National Park. Up pass the three sisters at Canmore and passed

60s-16ers Reunion Group, Stirling Court Hotel, October 2016.



The Ladies, WRAF & Naafi who served in Krefeld.



Continued from page 13

Banff and onto Lake Louise village where we were booked into a hotel. Lake Louise village consisted of one cross road, and a group of shops for tourists. The Fairmount Hotel was not far away and we had hoped to book an evening meal looking down the lake to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Unfortunately they only did dinner for guests staying at the hotel. Very disappointed. The view down the lake is said to be the most photographed in the world.



From Lake Louise we went on to Jasper National Park, our B&B was the Mountain River Lodge and was 30 miles outside Jasper in the wilds of Mount Robson national park. From our room and balcony we could see Mount Robson. Stunning view. The pine trees at the base of Mount Robson were sheer mass of dark green, the river in front of the B&B, had that light blue hue of the glacier run off. We then set off for a visit to Maligne Lake another famous photo setting. We stayed three nights at Mountain River Lodge; the people who ran the place

could not be more helpful. We did find that the Lodge was quite a distance from the nearest town, which was Jasper.

It then got very hot about 30 degrees; weather in the mountains can be very changeable. The Canadians call it PRECIPITATION. They didn't want to lie to you about what was coming. (rain, hail, snow, windy or sunny)

Today we are on our way back to Lake Louise. Drove for about four hours watching out for bears or deer, sometimes they cross the highway so you have to be on our guard. We arrived at Lake Louise in late afternoon. Booked into the same Mountaineer Lodge hotel that we used on the way up. Rested for the evening, just watching TV. The next day was the 10th June, our anniversary so we made tea and opened cards. It is crazy to think we have been married Fifty years, half a century. (Skip keeps telling everyone - the first two years were great. That is only because there were NO kids). We had our anniversary dinner in an old railway station, which is now a restaurant. What a fantastic meal we had. The walls were covered with photos of the old railway workers and miners. It was great to see how they managed in olden times.

The next day we went over to the small row of shops, Rose just had to buy more t-shirts. The owner of the shop asked us where we had come from. We explained we had come to Lake Louise to celebrate our 50th anniversary and we had the idea of having dinner looking down the lake. She congratulated us then gave us two coins with poppies on; we told her it was appropriate, as we were ex-service. People in the shop were saying "thank you" for your service; we tried to explain it was a long time ago and in another army. They just said "you still served" and that is what counts. A bit different from the way our soldiers are treated in the UK.

Anyway, we had a brilliant day, with great people. A wedding anniversary to remember.

Set off the next morning to go to Kananaskis valley. As we drove out of Lake Louise, it started to snow heavily. We drove for about thirty minutes before the snow stopped. Our next stop was the hotel in Kananaskis. The hotel was deep in the woods, wild life abounds. Passed lakes and waterfalls, had to stop to let deer cross the road. Rose was taking photos all this time. We took photos of the hotel. On the second day, we woke up to see deer right outside the window. The whole complex of hotel, restaurants, shops, coffee shops, bike hire was all under cover. We do not think about life in the freezer, -30 and more. We spent three days here, great rest and just visiting lakes, waterfalls and roadside diners.

So back to Calgary and the family. We rested for a couple of days then Debs took us to Drumhella. A very large museum with every sort of dinosaur you could wish for. (I know we fitted right in there). They were still digging them up in an area known as the Alberta Badlands. This is located about two miles from the museum.

It was time to hire another car, this time they gave us a Dodge Charger to get us to the Waterton Lakes Independence Peace Park, two hundred and sixty



kilometres south of Calgary. Waterton Lake is a mountain lake eleven kilometres long and four thousand, three hundred feet above sea level. Driving through the town we saw deer eating grass off the front lawns. We stayed at the Bayshore Inn, real old wooden double storey building right on the lakeside. On our first day, the wind was so strong it blew a tree down on the

main street. It crushed a tourist car and damaged the front of a store. The waves on the lake were about three feet high so no boat ride today. Second day was clear and sunny. The Lake was flat calm. We put off our boat ride and went to see if we could find the Bison or buffalo. They were kept in a large area of natural beauty, which had wood and hills. The road around the compound had potholes the size of gullies. You had to keep driving around until you could find the buffalo. It was great to see such wild animals that you have only seen on films or read about. It was only a small herd of about ten adults and five young. Our third day we went on the boat ride. Wind had dropped completely and the lake was like a mirror. The trip took about two hours and travelled to the USA side. Along the lake, we stopped and looked at the "border". It looked like someone had taken a lawnmower through the forest. Apparently, they have a team of people who make sure the border is clearly marked. It goes on for miles. There are also two markers on the lakeside. We arrived on the US side

and were told that we could walk about but do not leave the lakeside. There was a US custom post if you wanted to enter the US. You had to have your passport with you. It is funny to think that you are having a ride on a boat, but your four thousand feet above sea level. Took one hour to arrive back from the Canadian side. The workforce in the small town was mostly from the



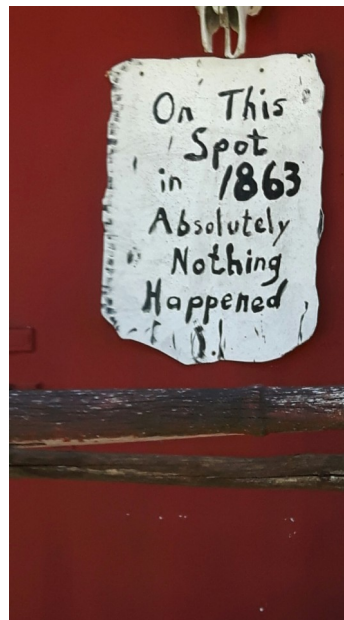
Blackfoot tribe, and came from the US. The Blackfeet have a large reservation in Montana, US.

Today we were on our way back to Calgary. Driving along the interstate, we came across a town called Nanton. The town has a Bomber Command Museum and parked outside the hanger was a Lancaster Bomber. Back home in Calgary. Our next trip was to Nanaimo, Vancouver Island.

On the Monday we flew out to Nanaimo which is the airport nearest to Wayne and Brenda Edwards. They were there to meet us, lump in the throat and a great sight to see them both after so long. In the afternoon they took Rose and I to the local bay. We walked along the boardwalk; we had to stop a few times because Wayne is getting on.



(Okay! I am the one who needed to stop for a rest, as I am not that good at walking long distances).



On Tuesday, we went to an area of woodlands known as Cathedral Groves. Douglas Firs, some are over two hundred feet high, and eight hundred years old. It is a very spiritual place full of moss hanging from the trees and branches. We went for a small walk (I had not recovered from Monday) Wayne carried a folding chair in case I needed to sit down, I think it was for Brenda really. A true friend.

We then drove along the highway and found a first nation store with a tepee outside. It was in front of an old trading post. A sign on the wall said, "In 1863 nothing happened here". Inside the store was a huge collection of woodcarvings clothing and wellies with first nation patterns on them. Brilliant store. Late afternoon Wayne and Brenda took us to their lawn bowling club; we met a very friendly group of people who made us very welcome.

Wednesday we went to the Bear Sanctuary, only one black bear left as they had released three bears the day before. (Just our luck) The four of us stood looking at the empty cage, when Rose said, "I can hear snoring" we all looked at Wayne but he was still awake. I said, "There is a real pongy smell" and the other three all looked at me. Wayne suddenly said, "The bear is sleeping right in front of us in the caged off area". All four of us need a sight test. We went around the park and it had loads of eagles, owls, and many more birds (of the feathered kind) later in the day we went for dinner at Nanaimo Marina. Bought ice creams and sat in the sun watched as the Canadian Navy (all two boats) moored up.

On Thursday we caught the turbo prop plane back to Calgary. The flight was about one and half hours and we were caught in a thunderstorm over the mountains. Guess who was in the loo when the plane dropped and rose suddenly. Rose was roaring with laughter, she was expecting me to come out covered in blue die. Thank god, that did not happen. Brenda and Wayne had prepared a bag full of goodies. Sandwiches, sweets, biscuits and just for good measure Wayne's favourite breakfast cereal. The passengers around us began to wonder what would come out of the bag next. Brenda and Wayne we just love you to bits.



We rested for a couple of days back in Calgary. Our last visit was to the largest Mall in Canada. It was in Edmonton that was a 4-hour car trip and called West End Mall.

We will leave

you with one photo of the Mall. Another amazing day! My niece Debbie and family had worked very hard to make our stay in Canada enjoyable.

WOULD WE GO BACK TO CANADA AGAIN?
YOU BET WE WOULD!

Skip & Rose Harding

FIRE!

When: 0700 hours 22nd December Herring Neck 2006

Where: Herring Neck, New World Island, Newfoundland, Canada.

Weather: minus 16 degrees Celsius, Wind Force 6, Snowfall heavy.

It was our 36th wedding anniversary, I was already up and dressed and had given Nicole a Wedding Anniversary card, and had gone into the kitchen to make us a drink and boil some eggs.

The kitchen, dining room and lounge were all one open area. I could smell smeeching – a scorching smell. I lifted the egg saucepan but there was nothing under that. I looked around and saw



a thin plume of smoke rising from the back of the large sofa in the sitting room area. I called to Nicole, "I think we have a fire," not thinking it was very serious. However when I pulled the sofa away from the wall I could see that the whole of the back of the sofa was well alight. We had two new domestic powder fire extinguishers - and we soon realised that neither worked. The only blanket we had was acrylic, so that didn't last long. I guessed it was an electrical fire from a socket behind the sofa, so I was careful where I poured the meagre amount of water that had dribbled out of the tap into the kitchen bowl. We did have smoke alarms but they were wired into the mains, so when the socket caught fire the circuit-breakers popped out and cut off the power to the smoke alarms.

By now the fire was spreading quite quickly and had used up a large amount of the oxygen in the air, so that we were suffocating. I could see that it would not be long before one of us collapsed through suffocation. I had no choice but had to open the front door, which I could still just reach. As you have already realised by now, there was a great flash of fire right across the room. All the plastic ceiling tiles came clattering down, and the heat scorched what hair that I had, turning it into tight ginger curls, so that when I ran my hand over my head they all came off leaving me bald.

At this stage we both agreed that the fire was out of control and we had to get out. Nicole was still in her pyjamas, luckily sensible winter pyjamas. We could not get near the front door, even though it was open, so went for the back door. This was made of steel, but the heat had buckled it and it took a

couple of strong shoulder charges to force it open. We didn't stop to pick up anything, such as passports or Nicole's jewellery, but fortunately I had my wallet in my pocket with credit cards.

Nicole then ran out, to go across to our neighbour to phone the fire brigade, still with bare feet – afterwards she said running on the snow was OK, but running across the road covered with rutted ice was painful. I did stop long enough to put on a pair of wellington boots.

Outside the snow was blowing horizontally, and by the time I had run around to the front of the house, the large picture windows had collapsed.

The house had been built by the previous owner, completely of wood, and he had used a large amount of the Canadian pine used in the construction of the two houses that were previously on the site – some of it probably one hundred years old.

Nicole raised our neighbour, Jack, asking him to phone the fire brigade. She looked on horrified as he got the telephone directory out “Isn't it 911?” she asked. “Oh, no” he said “It is a local number – here it is 17096297333 (Nicole remembers it to this day)”. The fire station was 20 miles away, in a blizzard, they were all volunteer firemen, so had to be roused from their houses over a large area.

By the time Jack had phoned, and loaned Nicole a thick jacket and boots, many of the locals had arrived.

Parked right in front of the house was a pickup truck which we had bought the evening before. Immediately behind it was our 4 wheel drive Toyota Rav 4. So it was temporarily protected by the pickup, but that was not going to last long. The keys were in the house, so it could not be driven away. Someone got their truck, another neighbour bravely put a tow rope on the

Rav and they dragged it away to safety, with just a melted plastic grille. I say bravely because the fuel tank of the pick-up could have exploded at any moment whilst he was fitting the tow rope.

The fire engine arrived after about 45 minutes – there was nothing they could do about the house but my large workshop was in danger of catching fire, so they concentrated on



keeping this wooden building damped down.

There was nothing more we could do, so we were taken down to a friend's house for breakfast. It was a small house, like a large residential caravan. So there were probably 20 of us crowded into their kitchen, being fed coffee and bacon sandwiches.

Nicole's friend, Marianne, was coming out in a couple of days, so Nicole asked if she could phone her to get her to bring some essential clothes. When Marianne asked what she wanted, Nicole quietly said, “Some Bras” – immediately there was silence – you could have heard a pin drop. Marianne then asked “What size?” Nicole tried to whisper her size, but Marianne could not hear her, as Nicole had to speak louder and louder whilst the men folk's ears in that little trailer home grew to the size of elephant's ears. Eventually they heard Christine (whose home it was) exclaimed in that curious West Country/Irish accent of the Newfoundlanders, “Cor, Oive niver eard o' that soize!” The men folk decided that Nicole should get a personalised number plate of “IMA 34G”.

We were then taken into Twillingate, the nearby town, and into the largest general store where we got coats, trousers, shirts socks and boots. We then went to the liquor store, on advice and bought a litre bottle of Newfoundland Rum (called Screech) and a litre bottle of whisky.

We were offered lots of accommodation, but decided to stay in Marianne's house. By that evening, most of the community had stopped by, everyone bringing something – either food or clothing. Most of these people were unemployed at this time. Also by the evening the two bottles of



spirit were empty as everyone had a tot to celebrate our survival – not everyone does in these situations apparently, people often going back to get something they particularly value and not able to get out, because of the speed at which wooden houses burn. The fire took 3 days to burn out.

Peter Crane

REME'S Reflective Ramblings

Sometime in early 1996 we got a call from two very good friends, namely Hazel & Ted Hebden and initially it was just a catch up call. Ted went on to tell me that he had seen a notice in a newspaper (Daily Mirror I believe) that had been placed in by Chris Bartlett, requesting anyone out there from 16 Signal Regiment, Krefeld during the 1960's who would be interested in a Reunion to get in touch. Well Sue and I jumped at the opportunity and 21 Reunions later, and we having been fortunate to attend everyone, this is my programme of our Clubs progress.

Southend June 1996 being the first and organised completely by our Founder - Chris Bartlett. Number of attendee's came to 34. There was nothing extravagant about the meet, but it was wonderful to come together again. One of the guys (we were Corporals together in Krefeld) turned out to be still serving and now a Lt. Colonel, had come over from Hong Kong where he was very prominent in the task of handing back Hong Kong. The man in question: - Ian Buckley. Fantastic to see one of our own doing so well! And no "Gwen Theis" I am not being obsequious, I truly mean what I say!

The following year in September, Chris became more adventurous and somehow organised our 2nd Reunion in no other establishment than Bradbury Barracks itself in Krefeld, now the home of 7 Signal Regiment. This is one group photograph that Sue and I are absent from. The reason, no it was not because Sue is not very photogenic. It was because the evening before in the Gymnasium (remember P.T.I. John Deas's workplace?) we were all invited to an All Ranks Shindig. On the square was a Bucking Bronco (mechanical) and one of their young Sgt's had set a good time. Therefore, yours truly had to compete, (this before my polio kicked in). My effort produced a better time and so I retired to the Gym and had a few more bebies. Sometime later in comes Trev Davies, "Reme, one of their lads has beaten you!" so back I went and had another go. This time disaster struck! The bloody animal threw me and came

down across my leg and what a mess! I find myself in the M.I. Room, Bronco immediately closed down and myself bedded down the following day. My consolation: - Terri Crow, along with Sue nursed me back to health.

Look at the photographs of the 1997 Reunion, (The Bronco). Must say 7 Sig's did us proud throughout our visit. It was Fantastic.

As we moved on and our numbers began to increase under the leadership of Chris and now being assisted by John Farrell – treasurer and Ricky Gordon Reunion Co-ordinator and Lorri Moore (nee Torrie) membership secretary we became a much closer band. The likes of Jackie & John Farrell, Chris & Judy Cottam, John Turvey & Shelia Bellingham and the now Retired Lt. Col & Mrs Buckley, solidifying our ever growing Club. Sadly, Ian & Julie apart, the others are no longer a part of us and they are very much missed by their absence.

It is not my intention to mention all 21 of our reunions but there is one I must cover, Rheindahlen 2000, this the time we lost the man who we, collectively, owe so much too, Chris Bartlett our Founder. Because of a mix-up over accommodation we had been put up in a transit block, which really made us feel like we were back in the army, except that it was male and female mixed in together. We had been entertained in the Sgt's Mess on the Friday night, in the morning Sue woke me to tell me that Bill Higgs was wondering up and down the corridor and was very anxious regarding Chris, I duly went into Chris's room where I found he had passed away.

The remainder of the weekend quite frankly was a blur and as a group we didn't know how to proceed. Nevertheless, proceed we did. We for the 1st time held a meeting which I chaired and democratically formed a committee where Ted & Hazel Hebden took the Chairmanship and Secretary's positions, with further elected positions from amongst those attending the 2000 Reunion.

We all felt Chris would have wanted us to continue. Continue we did! Now the workload and organisation was to be spread and members were invited to bring their choice of venue for each forthcoming years Reunion.

After Ted & Hazel had been doing Chairman and Secretary for 4 years it was definitely time to give them a break so I was elected as Chairman. Probably I am one of "The Odd Balls" in our setup but I actually enjoyed my 2 years. Assisted admirably by a wonderful Committee who were in communication with each other throughout and were also full of ideas and always willing to share them with me. My Vice Chair Chris Abbott, despite recently recovering from a stroke, was always by my side and a great help. Also who could forget Marlene O'Hagan, there weren't many days that went by without her telling me (no ordering me!) to do this or to do that. Jackie Carvill another of our team will confirm Marlene's involvement. It is hoped we as a team took our Club forward.

Bill & Rae White were now established members, and as you are all aware, we were to find that Bill had also done our Regiment from the 1960's proud by obtaining the Rank of Lt' Col. Bill was to take our club forward through the contacts he had made. Firstly, he proposed we join the R.S.A. as affiliated members. Although one of my mates Bill Jack was very much against joining. I'd like to think he now sees the benefits and that it has done us no harm! In 2015 we invited the then current Colonel and RSM along with their wives to the guests of the 60s-16ers at the Bideford Reunion. Bill White then arranged a visit to 16 Signal Regiment now stationed in Stafford the following April. Bill has also arranged guest speakers such as The Corps Colonel and not forgetting Brigadier Almonds, Lorna's brother.

It is impossible for us to reach the age we are and in particular to go back so far in time without losing members to the inevitability of death. Those members who have passed are remembered with love and affection and for the part they played, no matter how big or small.

However our numbers remain strong and a special mention must be made to the hard work it must have taken to compile such a comprehensive Database which was undertaken by Lorri right at the beginning of the 60s-16ers. Then she was helping Chris as membership secretary, and of course, subsequent committee members who have worked hard on finding new contacts and keeping it updated.

Now what about one of our Commanding Officers from the 1960's Col. Pope. He along with his wife Shirley graced many of our Reunions. I have memories of many of my C.O's from those times who would not have troubled themselves, but he did. Who recollects writing to Col. Pope for permission to marry? I certainly do! Finishing the letter off "I remain Sir, yours obediently" did he ever refuse anyone? Oh, yes! I remember one couple, Ted Hebden & Charlie Wickham being refused! Now did Hazel and Margaret know about that?

We are undoubtedly the envy of many other likewise organisations, such is the work that is produced by Ted Hebden on our website and our Mercury editor Iain Haldane. Also the structure of our annual reunions with Friday, Saturday & Sunday being so diverse. To have on board such personalities as Gwen Theis, with her humorous written words. Dave Aldous and Syd Wilson, who both are on the verge of being committed into a place of Mental Care, --- 500 miles comes to mind. The labours that Noreen Dixon has put in with the multiple Committee roles she has held, and the hard work Nicole Crane and Anne Sheppard have put in organising the raffle, which all helps the clubs finances.

If my memory has failed me in certain areas or that, I have left anyone out then I apologise sincerely! To Sue and I, you are all very important and we hope that together and by supporting our Committee and organisers we can go from strength to strength.

WITH THANKS TO CHRIS BARTLETT.

Reme Harper

Anyway back to the photograph it was one of mine, dad was very interested in taking pictures and I caught the bug from him. He had a complete home user film developing and enlarging kit and dad allowed me to use it. This was before digital of course and film was expensive so I spent a lot of time taking black and white pictures. Once Elizabeth knew that taking photographs was a hobby of mine she kept asking me to take pictures of her. I had looked at many pictures Dad had taken and I also seen some of my Aunt taken when she was at University.

Many of the family pictures seemed to overly posed, like studio pictures from weddings. The ones I liked most were the semi posed; they looked more pictures taken spontaneously but had obviously been setup. This is what I tried with Elizabeth, we tried many shots mainly outside on sunny days varying the angles but most of all having fun. The problem in those days was that it took quite a bit of time to get a picture in to your hands from the moment you pressed the shutter button. Well this picture is the result of all that, in all it took us about six months before we managed to get that one. As you can see it is a head and shoulders view, I got her to sit at an angle to the camera and I asked her gradually turn her face towards me.

I took about four good pictures as she slowly rotated her head, all the time with that beatific smile. On the left hand side of the photograph, you can see part of the tree that was our focal point, throughout that shoot. Why that tree well that was the one on which we carved our initials entwined in a heart with the penknife she gave me for my birthday. You might have guessed by now that is the bracelet I bought her for her birthday that same year.

Why do I have these three objects in front of me? I have always had that photograph on my desk wherever I have worked, the penknife I am sharpening and I have just finished cleaning the bracelet for Beth. She is upstairs getting ready because we are going out to dinner to celebrate our fortieth wedding anniversary. *Iain Haldane*

The words, comments and articles contained in this magazine are written by club members and are for the sole entertainment of club members and in no way reflects, the views or opinions, of the club generally or its officers.

Any items for the August 2017 edition please submit by 31st July 2017



The 1960s 16 Signal Regiment

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