

*Bradbury Mercury*  
1960s 16 Signal Regiment Reunion Club



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Edited by Iain Haldane  
[www.the-60s-16ers.com](http://www.the-60s-16ers.com)

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Pollok Country Park is Glasgow's largest park and the only Country Park within Glasgow. Its extensive woodlands and gardens provide a quiet sanctuary for both visitors and wildlife. The Park is rich in rural history formerly being part of the Old Pollok Estate and ancestral home to the Maxwell Family. The Park is also home to the world famous Burrell Collection.

## On Front Page:

Pollock Country Park which is only a mile and a half to the back entrance by Shank's Pony and three miles away by car from our house.

## Editors Ramble.

At last I got it published. Sorry It did not get sent out till the 3rd of February but you can blame that on Rita and I taking a trip to Las Vegas ( Page 11 ) at a crucial time. Just as well I got most of it done before we left. I also managed to persuade Wayne to write a small article for the Mercury ( Pages 16/17 ). Thanks again to all who submitted articles. I would like suggestions for photographs etc you would like to see on the front and back pages. E.g. Some place you been, War memorial, Place of Interest etc. Hardest job I have is filling up the odd spaces left when an article does not fill the page. I try and fill that with short jokes. Of course it seems that all the jokes I have seen lately seem to fail the current list of Political Correctness. I seem to remember that a few years ago some American Lawyers took the case to court that there were too many anti lawyer jokes about. Then again that might just be its own lawyer joke or an Urban Legend.

Thats all for now Folks.

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## Our Chairperson's Letter

Season's greetings and yet another year passes, my mind does not recognise it but my body does.

And what a year it was, the long hot summer and now into the season of storms and snow. We had yet another great reunion weekend, thanks to Carol who was our liaison and organiser with the Hotel. And well done Lorri our entertainments organiser. I also have to thank Sally Bowles and Marlene Deitrich for gracing us with their presence that leads on to the two beautiful ladies who accompanied Sally. Well done Sid and Dave, yes I did recognise you!!!!.



What a brilliant piece of method acting by Peter, a wonderful lamppost for Marlene.

On to a serious bit, we really do need more members coming forward to volunteer for the positions that become vacant on the committee; we cannot rely on the same people all the time. This year the positions of Entertainments organiser and Chairperson will become vacant. So please think about it. Also do not forget to bring your proposals for the 2015 reunion venue.

To end I would like to thank a few unsung heroes. Ian, for year after year, trying to shepherd us into some form of line up so he can take the group photo. Audrey, for writing a piece to publish in the Wire and my dear old mate Ted H, for forming and looking after the web site, he always changes the front page to reflect the periods of the year and they look wonderful.

Thank you all for being part of the group.

Many regards, Charlie.

December 2013

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A new client had just come in to see a famous lawyer.

"Can you tell me how much you charge?", said the client.

"Of course", the lawyer replied, "I charge £200 to answer three questions!"

"Well that's a bit steep, isn't it?"

"Yes it is", said the lawyer, "And what's your third question?"

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"You seem to be in some distress," said the kindly judge to the witness. "Is anything the matter?"

"Well, your Honour," said the witness, "I swore to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but every time I try, some lawyer objects."

# The 60's 16ers

By Audrey Grainge

On Friday October 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 the **60s-16ers** descended on **Fownes Hotel** in the middle of **Worcester** it was then straight to the bar where noise level could have broken the sound barrier. After dinner it was back to the bar with more people having arrived so more talking and drinking and catching up well into the early hours.

Saturday morning dawned with light rain but it didn't put off the intrepid walkers who set off at a smart pace to walk around the river, leaving the rest of us to wander into town or just sit around talking.

Saturday was the night we all dress up in our best bib and tuckers for the Gala Dinner and Dance and yes you guessed it more talking.

Sunday morning our AGM, (the serious business of the weekend), then it was back to the bar to do what we are best at. On Sunday afternoon many of us took part in a light hearted general knowledge quiz with lots of laughter and maybe a bit of cheating going on.

Sunday evening a highlight of the weekend for most of us. Takes the form of Fancy Dress (not obligatory) this years theme was "Musicals" and the entertainment mainly offered up by the members themselves and we have some very talented ones I might add. This was as usual Hilarious but the icing on the cake was **Laurie's** rendition of Lily Marlene and Mein Herr.

All too soon it was Monday and as they say all good things must come to an end and off we all went in different directions with the familiar cry of "See you next Year".

Anyone out there who were in 16 Sigs Regt in the 1960's feel they would like to join us in a fun weekend we are going to Hereford October 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> 2014 Log on to 16ers website [www.the-60s-16ers.com](http://www.the-60s-16ers.com) and get in touch.

We would love to see you.

*Audrey Grainge*

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## The 1960s 16<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment Website – The Mercury Magazine.

Hello,

It seems ages since I took over the website following its creation by Taff Powell in the very early days. Hardly anyone knew much about them, as I remember it was much a pioneering period as far as The World Wide Web was concerned and it's hard to believe the rapid changes which have taken place since that time. It's strange that we can even look back on our own reunions with some nostalgia as I am sure that we were even younger then.

Anyway the object of this article is to look forward rather than back so I will not dwell on it.

Now that we are into 2014 I have no doubt that many of us got those little "tablets" – "iPads" – "Androids" or what ever strange buzz names are in use as presents at Christmas or before.

You will soon see that when you look at our website that everything is out of line owing to a minefield of different screen sizes, resolutions, all kinds of differing platforms not to

mention operating systems such as Google's Android and Apple's iOS competing against each other with names such as "Jellybean", "KitKat" (bet your bottom dollar that the next new one will be called Lion Bar), or at least something to do with Nestle.

Over the next few weeks I will be having a close look of how this particular problem is being addressed by modern websites with a view to at least reproducing our front page in a more up to date programming language known as "HTML5". Hopefully the change over will be seamless and it will still look the same to both ourselves and the outside world as per the current format. Except of course you should be able to view it symmetrically as per your desktops. I am looking to have something in place by the Spring.

More recently we have been introducing "protected areas" to the website, namely the Comcen where there is a lot of activity and Archive copies of the Mercury Magazine. Also application forms for the reunion and the list of "Whose Coming" This was done with an element of security in mind ( not letting people know your home will be empty ) and also that Paid Up members will get priority when applying for attendance. It also gives the paid up members something extra for their money and just maybe a better feeling of "belonging". Every single thing we do there some kind of cost associated with it so it is only fair that those paying are also getting the benefits. Whilst I personally have some mixed feelings about protected areas where potential members may feel excluded I can see the points in having them.

There are quite a lot of different items on our website as well as breakdown of all the reunions. Within the "Goodies" pages you will find for instance various crosswords which are tailor made for our members with a definite military theme. There are tips for freebie software and other stuff you may find useful on your computer such as anti virus and computer maintenance programs. There is an area reserved for jokes, progress of military pensions campaigns ( for service pre 1975 ), Video clips, live webcams, links to a National Newspaper, brain games, typing speed tests, member memories personal articles, a news update area, a page set aside for our absent friends with their names being circulated 24hrs a day, and probably much other stuff I have forgotten about !

One area which is little used is the "Live Chat" where any person can type one to one online. It's not quite like Facebook but it was there long before !

There is an element of member advertising allowed to bring in revenue to the club coffers though of course the viewers are limited. You might remember I did some experimentation of opening our website to outside advertisers who were reserved various areas when they could post adverts. This revenue brought in by this exercise was so little it wasn't worth my bother. It was called Project Wonderful. The advertisers were actually reserved small areas which they were allowed to overwrite with their own ads, so some changed on a daily basis. What should we be offering our viewers in the future? Well given that there are far more websites around than there was when we first started then they have a lot more to offer in practically any subject you could hope for. Our unique organisation suggests that the content of the website should be what we want, maybe we could get more ideas from within the membership. I do feel that we already doing what is necessary to fulfil the dream which Chris Bartlett had all those years ago.

## **It was on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1958 That I bade goodbye to Dublin's Fair City**

It was very exciting for a not quite 17 year old stepping off the Train at Euston London on the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup>, D Day anniversary. This high remained with me for 5 years.

It was early 1963 when my best mate just up and signed on with one of the home County Regiments leaving me at a loose end, and then without any consideration in making a 9/22 year commitment in I went to the local enlistment centre. They gave me a Mickey Mouse general knowledge test and said "It's the Royal Signals for you me Boyo". Was I going to wave flags in the air! Was that to be my future in the British Army? As you all know our first impression's were Bulls—t and Marching. This coupled to the promise that being posted to any Signals Regiment throughout the world would be a wonderful experience. Bloody liars them Corporals. Leaving Catterick (dreary place) that I duly arrived at 7<sup>th</sup> Sigs Herford. This was a posting of which I have many painful memories resulting in my feeling that the Army was not for me. And so from then on I got out about what I put in. When I was posted to 16 Sigs I still felt the same. It was because of this negative attitude that my O/C Peter Crane placed me on semi permanent barrack room cleaner. This was followed by my being sent to Wuppertal to replace Harry Pritchard on the permanent link as the operator, the Technician being John Crawford. This lasted several Months where after Peter gave me a second chance back at Krefeld. It was this coupled to the arrival of Major Bill Pritchard as our Squadron O/C ( no Harry had not received accelerated promotion), Major Bill brought with him a very special brand of Soldiering and for the first time I began to warm to the Army.

Some while later I met Irene, a lass from Liverpool who worked in the camp YMCA shop. She had the honorary rank of Captain and should not have been fraternising with an ex barrack room cleaner, Scousers huh! Peter Crane invited Irene to a Radio Relay Troop evening out at a local pub which we named Fred's, actual name was the Fuchen Bar. Not sure if there was an element of romance, in any event I could mimic a Scouse accent reasonably well which Irene found funny so I chanced my arm and for a change I didn't come on too heavy, you already know the outcome.

As I said , after some time we felt right about each other and so we started saving to get wed, 12 months hence the deed was done, we then started to save the necessary £200 for my discharge under QR1961para 502(ii)(b) at own request on payment. Colonel Lucas also gave me a personal reference, is that unusual? A



quandary I faced was because of my tentative warming to 16 that for some while I felt the decision to quit the corps was premature. I missed a good many friends not least Major Bill to whom I didn't have the courage to say goodbye. I felt I was betraying his faith in me and the very large effort he had put in on my behalf. During my time in the Army my Mum struggled with our large family (9 children, yes Irish left footers). Each week I sent home nearly half of my £8 Army pay. This is a longwinded way of saying I couldn't afford a camera or for that matter very little else. Hence I have very few photos of my early life, millions since, unfortunately in my case the camera does not lie.



There were two Radio Relay Technicians; Corporal's John Crawford previously mentioned and Joe Oakley whose help greatly shaped my future. In the first instance John ( at Wuppertal) and later Joe at Krefeld, they encouraged me to study maths ( Logic, Analysis, Algebra and Geometry) as opposed to what people now call maths i.e. Arithmetic. When I left the Army I went back to (night) school and achieved O level maths and thereafter I took a condensed City and Guilds Electronics course (skipped the first 3 years) which led to my long term employment with Granada as a TV Tech. All this as a result of the Army; so I clearly have a lot of gratitude to the Royal Signals and in particular to Major Bill and the aforesaid Corporals. Another person who should not go without a mention, he being Harry Pritchard, we spent many an hour studying Algebra/Trig in the NAFFI canteen

with a shared plate of chips (lousy pay) who remembers sharing. During our combined efforts we realised that certain triangles were very easy to solve by knowing that roots 2 and 3 were constants in relation to their base/height, this was before either of us took formal tuition, so to say the least we were quite pleased with ourselves. Cpl Joe also helped greatly with a simple Trig memory aide “Some Officers Have Cash At Home Towards Old Age”. Harry remained in the Army and progressed from Radio Relay Op to Radio Relay Tech after which I believe he worked for Cable and Wireless in Singers or Hong Kong. I will leave the in between years for another time. Suffice to say that finding the 60s-16ers has been a real treat where 99.9% of you are magic and very, very funny.



*Paddy Conroy.*

## Glasgow to Fort William by Train.

Since I left the Army and settled back in Glasgow I have been taking Rita around Scotland. I think it was to make up for the big trip we took in August 1974 when Rita found out that she was expecting our firstborn. She had a suspicion halfway up Ben Nevis, which was then reinforced by refusing food at Inveraray camp site.

We have been good friends for over 24 years with another couple, Liz and John Lomax. John and I met at night school at Cardonald College in Glasgow. We were kindred spirits in that we were both ex-servicemen and were upgrading our computer skills. Anyway enough preamble. We four had been talking for quite a while about taking the train to Fort William. This line is one of the most scenic in Britain although it is a choice between this and the run from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh.

Groupon were kind enough to put up an offer of a two night stay at a hotel in Fort William for the sum of £99. We planned to get the train that would get us into Fort William just after midday. This would give us the best of the day to admire the views we would get of the amazing scenery. As we are all Golden Oldies e.g. over 55 we got the return journey for the magnificent sum of £19 each.

We thought we had it cracked when we got on the train and got a table for four. The

luggage was put away after sufficient refreshment had been placed on the table. Sandwiches, some wine and spirits etc. We had thought we were well prepared for the 4 hour trip. But we noticed that three girls further back in our carriage that had three CARTONS of wine on their table.

Without giving a big travel spiel about the scenery some facts first. The train is a four coach DMU which stops at Crianlarich, the front two coaches went on to Oban and our two



coaches carried on to Fort William. After we got off the train it then carried on to Mallaig from where you can get a ferry over to Sky.

Yes I know there is a Sky Bridge but that is a way up to the north at Kyle of Lochalsh and a lot further by road. You can see from the pictures that you get fantastic views from the train; we even saw stags bounding away as train went by. We also stopped at the loneliest





station in the UK which is Corroul which is over 10 miles from the nearest public road. Passengers did get off and on at this station on both our outward and return journeys. We arrived in Fort William on time and walked from the train via the underpass and came up at Middle Street. This used to be the main road through the town until the by-pass was built. This runs

between the Loch and the town. We went to the pub and had a pint or two there till it was time to get a taxi to the Hotel. The taxi driver turned out to be a Glaswegian who had been in Fort William for 20 years. The hotel is the Innseagan House and is about a mile and half from the station.



We checked our rooms and took a walk on Loch Linnhe shores. It was Beautiful and cold but as we are well wrapped up it was what we Scots call bracing. We had as part of the deal B&B for two nights, with a dinner and afternoon tea to be taken whenever we decided. We choose dinner for the first night and booked the afternoon teas for the following day. Dinner was good, conversation excellent



and we imbibed some liquid refreshment and made plans for the following day. After breakfast we phoned our taxi driver and he took us up to the chairlift which is the only one in the UK. We got the tickets taking full advantage of our pensioner discounts. The journey up the side of Aonach Mor to the restaurant is breathtaking especially if the ladies keep telling you to stop moving about as it makes the cable car move.



There was still snow down to cable car terminus and there were a lot of skiers and snowboarders enjoying the day. We had clear blue skies for most of the morning till early afternoon. They had free Wi-Fi at the restaurant so I was able to talk to our grandson in New York via the iPad and show him the views. John also got in touch with his brother in Atlanta. It was getting a bit dull so we got back to the bottom of the hill and got the taxi back to the hotel. We then had



afternoon tea back at the hotel and planned our evening meal. It was decided to try the local curry restaurant, the food was good but I thought that the strength of the curries was much much less than Glasgow. After breakfast on the Sunday we stayed at the hotel till about midday and then walked up to the station. We had noted that the pub nearest the station did Sunday Roast Dinner at a reasonable price. The meal and drinks were ordered Liz and John offered to

walk to Morrisons and do a resupply of food and drink for the journey home, and of course the old folk guarded the valuables e.g. the cases and the drinks.

The journey home was uneventful, more than half of being in the dark. We had to get off the train at Crianlarich take the bus provided as there was work on the line. That bus run down to Tarbert is scary at the least and the driver must have wanted to get home in a hurry. We actually



arrived back at Queen Street station 45 minutes before the train would have arrived. We then walked to the bus stop and using our Pensioner Bus Pass got the bus home.

N.B. I only took 340 photos this trip which are on my Skydrive. If anybody wants to see them please email me at [iaindfhaldane@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:iaindfhaldane@hotmail.co.uk).

## *Las Vegas Trip.*

*I was writing a great spiel about our Las Vegas trip and realised it would not fit in a A5 page (including pictures). So here is the short version. Spoke to Wayne Edwards at Worcester about the World Sevens Rugby in Las Vegas January 24-26 2014. Rita and I plus four went for an eight trip to Las Vegas. Stayed at the Luxor Hotel, it is worth a visit just to see this hotel. I hired a Dodge Caravan which does not have enough cup holders. We took a trip to Venice beach LA, paddled in the Pacific, gawked at Redco Drive, saw Wilshire Boulevard.*



*Also had a great time doing all the tourist bits. Went to the US Sevens finals on*



*the Sunday. Met with Brenda and Wayne Edwards. Had a great time, got sunburned. Took a trip in a helicopter (Xmas Gift) to*

*the Grand Canyon. Awesome. I only managed to take about 700 photographs this time, well you have to take your eyes from the viewfinder sometime.*



*Jain Haldane*





# GORDON THE GARDEN GNOME

Starting with the very first column regarding Gardening in our much loved Mercury magazine. Will there be another after this one ? All dependant on the feed-back, or lack of it !

Spring is on its way and all of you keen gardeners avidly awaiting grass cutting, weeding, hoeing and much much more. I can hear now Dave Aldous saying :- No man should have a garden any larger than his wife can manage. So because of Dave I will later include tips for our female readers.



Plant of this Issue :- PYRACANTHA (Firethorn).

This thorny branched shrub ideal for training up a fence or to adorn the face of your home, without any damage to the brick-work. Wonderful white blooms in May/June, followed by Red, Orange, or Yellow, Autumn berries. The Pyracantha berries encourage birds into your garden and also act as security on your walls and fences, this by the thorns it produces. To give you an idea of its worth, please see the attached photographs of my home, showing spring and autumn results



## GARDENING TIPS.

Having trouble with Slugs ? Save your egg shells, crunch them up and spread them on the soil around your plants.

Cats!!!!!! Using your garden like a Army Field Toilet ? Keep your tea bags, let them dry out, spray muscle rub on the bags and duly disperse them around troubled areas.

LADIES ! Worried about damaging your beautiful manicured nails and removing dirt that inevitably finds its way under ? SIMPLY, Before going out into the garden to work, run your nails over the surface of a bar of soap, filling them with tiny bits of it. When you come to wash your hands later, the soap from under the nails can be removed easily, leaving your nails beautifully clean.

Cut Flowers in the home ! Do you wish to keep them that little bit longer ? FLAT LEMONADE, is the answer. Top-up the vase with it and see the flower blooms last longer !

BANANAS ! Do keep your banana skins – they are full of Potassium ! Chop the skins into small pieces, then for all you ROSE growers fork the pieces

gently into the surface of the Rose, taking care not to disturb the plant roots. The potassium will be released into the soil. The result is :- Larger blooms which will last longer and hopefully better colouring.

FINALLY :- Do you want a gorgeous, aromatic, thornless Rose in your garden ? Go out and buy “Rosa Zephirine Drouhin” My favourite climber with profuse clusters of deep pink double blooms. And in addition they bloom for a long period.



## signing off Gordon the Garden Gnome

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### **A Different Christmas.**

Late last year a group of us were sitting in our Lawn Bowling Club House enjoying a well deserved beverage when the subject of Christmas was brought up. As most of us don't have family living here in Parksville a suggestion was made that we go away to a Casino Resort in Washington State (USA). The resort is located on an Indian Reservation just north of Seattle.

The resort consists of a Casino and a 370 room luxury hotel called Tulalip Resort Casino with a large shopping mall adjacent to it (something for everyone).

Twenty five of us set off by coach from Parksville on Christmas Eve morning and headed off to Tulalip. We arrived at the resort after a journey of about 6 hours we were all invited to a reception with an “open bar” and a snack type of buffet. This was supposed to last for about two hours, closing at 5p.m., our group managed to keep the bar open until about 8 p.m. If they wanted to keep pouring free drinks we felt it would have been impolite not to keep drinking them. So not wishing to appear rude to our “Southern Neighbours” we drank everything put before us until they decided to close the bar.

Christmas morning arrived and we ventured down to the restaurant for breakfast most of us looked remarkably well and only a couple of our group looked a little delicate. (NOT US) So after a huge buffet breakfast we all went our separate ways and met up again at noon to do a gift exchange. This was a

fun event with all kinds of gifts costing not more than \$10 being exchanged. We all met up for an evening Christmas Dinner buffet which proved to be very nice and an absolute “Stress Free” meal with no prep work and no clean up after. After our meal we adjourned to various hotel rooms where, you guessed it, more drinks.

Boxing Day arrived and the shopping mall was having a huge sale so most of us wandered over to check out the bargains. This was followed with more eating and drinking (what else does one do over the Christmas period).

December 27<sup>th</sup> arrived and it was time to head home so we boarded our coach and headed North back to Canada. We arrived home in the early evening and upon reflection, we all agreed that we had a great time with a fun group of people but it was a very different Christmas.



*Wayne and Brenda Edwards*

# The Harrogate Apprentice

Emblazoned on my memory is the day I caught the train  
To start a life at Pennypot, it's tattoo'd on my brain.  
I waved goodbye to Mum and Dad and hid my tearful eye  
The train took me to Harrogate, the time it seemed to fly.  
I stepped onto the platform, and wondered where to head  
Caught sight of khaki uniform and boots with lofted tread.  
I struggled with my suitcase, mum had packed it to the brim  
The soldier watched me stumble, his expression was quite grim.  
He had a notebook loaded with a massive bulldog clip  
He growled at me "What's your name?" and had a snarl upon his lip  
I stuttered "Rupert Ironside" my face was beetroot red.  
I wished my folks had thought more, and rather named me Fred.  
He scanned his list and realised it was my legal name  
He almost smiled but must have thought that I was not to blame  
For this trick fate had played on me, to give me such a title  
My surname not so common, but Rupert, it was vital  
That I could fight, the years at school I'd put up with a lot,  
Of teasing, pointed fingers, but at fifteen now, didn't give a jot.  
He pointed to a car park where I saw a dark green truck  
"Go and see the driver, his name is Corporal Buck,  
Get into the wagon, there's lads in there already".  
I stumbled to the vehicle, my gait was quite unsteady.  
I realised at fifteen years, my life was due to alter  
Now that I was standing here, my resolve, it seemed to falter.  
But anyhow I had no choice, I heaved myself inside,  
And in no time was mobile, my fear I tried to hide.  
We scrambled out at Pennypot and were forced to stand in line,  
A nasty man came stomping up, but I hoped that we'd be fine.  
Until he started shouting and made us say our name,

When I said, “Rupert Ironside” he looked the colour of a flame.

He came and stood before me and peered into my eye,

I felt his breath upon my face, and wondered if I would die.

But suddenly he spun around, and shouted at his men

“Take them to their billet and bring them here again.”

Us boys looked at each other, the fear was plain to see

We shuffled to a building, I was quaking at the knee.

The sight was there before us, long lines of metal beds

All decked with rows of blankets and pillows for our heads.

It seemed like minutes later we were back before the man

Who’s hobby seemed loud shouting, he resembled Desperate Dan.

He walked back and forth before us his boots made such a din,

Again he started shouting, my head began to spin.

They took us to a building and opened up the door,

There were shelves of all things military from the ceiling to the floor.

It was quite a revelation, the speed the pile of kit

Was dumped upon the counter and confused me for a bit.

Each item of our clothing was talked of wrong way round,

There were things like drawers khaki, most people to confound,

Mugs tea, shorts sport, the list went on and on

The last thing was a kit bag, and it took a bit of brawn

To lug this bulging sausage shape from that building to our billet

It was awesome how this army stuff had managed sure to fill it.

I look back with affection at my days at Pennypot

The things the Army taught me, I really learned a lot.

The friendships forged, the laughs we had, the camaraderie

The three years on to graduate, our pride was plain to see.

We meet again from time to time, and hope to celebrate

That fateful day so long ago when we came to Harrogate.

*Moirra Graham*

## Shanghai Sojourn

Only four days after saying goodbye to our friends at the Worcester reunion, Gail and I boarded a Virgin Atlantic plane for a non-stop flight of 13 hours to Shanghai.

We were off to see our new grandson, Alexander (Alex), born on August 20<sup>th</sup>, the first child of our younger son, Chris, and his Chinese wife, Xiaoling. Thanks to modern technology, we had seen plenty of photos of him and had video calls with Chris and Xiao with baby Alex, but nothing beats seeing them all in the flesh. Alex does have a Chinese name as well, but we find it very difficult to pronounce.



**Gail & Alex mutual love**

We were met at the airport by Chris to help us with three very large and heavy suitcases, as we were bringing large quantities of Baby milk powder with us. A year earlier eleven Chinese babies had died and many others were hospitalised as a result of adulterated baby milk powder being sold, so Gail had been sending boxes of the stuff over and we were bring up the last half ton of it with us – well it felt like half a ton by the time we had negotiated public transport and two international airports.

The taxi ride was hair raising as there is absolutely no lane discipline and all drivers use all the lanes, 4 in this case, to move forward, constantly leaning on the horn and diving into any space that appears in front of them until having to stand on the brakes at traffic lights. Surprisingly, although driving standards are chaotic and all speed limits (though none were visible) were universally ignored, I never saw a single accident or heard police/ambulance sirens.

Chris and Xiao live on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of a 1970's apartment block with no lifts, so everything has to be hauled up, or down, many flights of concrete steps, including the pram with Alex in it when Gail and I started taking him out for walks.

Shanghai is a city that dwarfs London, nearly 30 million people live within the boundaries of the city, so noise and crowded roads and buildings are constant, and as Gail and I have lived in villages for nearly 40 years, it was the hardest thing to get used to.

The apartment was quite small by western standards, with 4 rooms in a line, a small bedroom at each end and living room and tiny kitchen and entrance way between them.

Alex had caught pneumonia at birth, and also had a hole in the heart, so was whisked away from his parents straight after diagnosis to another hospital where he stayed in isolation for 4 or 5 days before being allowed home. This was the first time that Xiao had Alex to herself so a lot of catching up was needed.

Poor Alex was very colicky right from the beginning, feeds were difficult and protracted, no amount of winding could help him get it all out, most nights for them were sleepless, so Gail organised a routine where she and I had Alex for 5 nights and 2 nights off at the weekend when Chris wasn't working. This worked well, and despite the colic, Alex is a very cheerful and happy baby, very alert and inquisitive, so generally after the 5 or 6 a.m. feed he invariably wanted to play, sleep was the last thing on his mind, so naturally his doting grandparents had to play with him!



**Xiao & Alex perfect harmony**

We also got into a routine of carrying Alex in his pram down the stairs for a walk to one of 2 parks about a kilometre away. We were often stopped by interested Chinese who were taken by his western looks and smiling face. English is routinely taught in all their schools so it was usually easy to talk with them, and quite a few older Chinese knew enough English to understand us.

We enjoyed those walks through the parks, there were many groups of older people doing Tai Chi, people dancing in a gentle, measured way, possibly like Chinese opera, music both from speakers and others playing instruments, one was a cornet player with another man singing to it. We also met one man a number of times singing to his own karaoke machine as he walked along. There was no embarrassment in all this, and we both found the openness and enjoyment they all had in their activities very refreshing.

The down side of these walks was the haul back up all the flights of steps, but it was worth it for the pleasure it gave us and the stimulation it gave Alex.

Gail and I used the Metro, a very large and still growing, underground network of modern trains, to visit other parts of the city. One of the places we visited was the Bund, a commercial area alongside the Huangpu river, famous for its skyscrapers of all different shapes and sizes, all of which are lit up at night creating a spectacle worth going to see (if you are already in Shanghai!).

Shanghai has a vast number of modern shopping malls, one called Global Harbour, which is miles from any water, is huge. It is 6 stories high, about half a mile long and a quarter wide, in the shape of a fat figure of eight. It has every “designer” name you could think of plus many more, the only real comparison I can make is that you could fit the entire centre of Taunton my nearest town, 3 or 4 times over, into it and still have room for a Grand Prix circuit in it!

During our stay, Gail knitted for England and so left a vast array of clothing along with all the items we had brought out with us, for Alex. Not to mention all the shopping for ever more (un)necessary clothing that our grandson couldn't possibly live without!



**Longhua Temple Pagoda**



**Jing'an Buddhist Temple**



**Golden Buddhas Longhua Temple**

We also visited two different Buddhist temples. One, Jing'an temple, is now completely surrounded by modern commercial skyscrapers, housing all the most famous “designer” names, and has obviously benefitted from its location as recently all the domes and minarets were regilded with real gold leaf. The other, Longhua temple, is not so rich but is stuffed full with Buddha's of all sizes and shapes, and has a very tall and imposing pagoda tower in front of the main entrance.

Of course it was a wrench leaving Chris, Xiao and Alex behind, but we have regular contact with them, and hopefully in a year or two they will come over and stay with us, and our stay with them gave us many moments to treasure until we are together again.

## The 60s-16ers at Krefeld

When we all come together to celebrate the fact,  
That we all served at Krefeld and know that we are backed  
By that special camaraderie, that service people know,  
The friendships that were forged back then and places we'd to go.  
The exercises in the wild, the rain, the snow, the sleet,  
The soggy clothes, the freezing hands and not forgetting feet.  
The aerials we had to hoist, the radios to tune,  
Sometimes we'd feel the nearest link was coming from the moon.  
The officers would urge us on and say "We'll soon be done"  
But they had no idea, how difficult to run  
That radio, inside that truck, when nobody would call,  
We'd spin the dials and twist the knobs and say "God bless us all".  
Now if you believe we'd say such things in that dire situation  
Then you'd believe that Dave was scalped on some Indian reservation.  
We liked the food, we loved the beer, we liked the NAAFI club,  
But let us not forget the dear old German 'Oompa' pubs.  
That we can come, and meet like this, and talk of days gone by,  
To realise, looking back how quickly time does fly.  
We talk about the things we did, and say "Remember when"  
So we'll strive to be together, each year, to meet again.

*Maira Graham*



These pictures of Pollock Country Park were taken on 5th November 2013 at about 15:00.

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 2014 edition please submit by 30th June 2014**



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

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

Email: [iaindfhaldane@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:iaindfhaldane@hotmail.co.uk)

Tel: 0141 876 1385

[www.the-60s-16ers.com/](http://www.the-60s-16ers.com/)

Webmaster: [tedhebden@bigfoot.com](mailto:tedhebden@bigfoot.com)