

A HISTORY OF THE PETROLEUM CENTRE RLC - WEST MOORS

1. The Petroleum Centre RLC is a 470-acre site on the outskirts of the Dorset Village of West Moors, close to the A31, and 8 miles North of Bournemouth. It is the Army's only such establishment responsible for the re-supply of Petroleum products to the Army in Peace, Transition to War and War. In addition, the depot also holds and issues all Royal Air Force oils and lubricants and it is also responsible for many essential support, training and research functions.

2. Today the depot is barely recognisable from POL Depot Q-328, its original incarnation. In 1939 the land was acquired from the owner of the Gundry Enclosure in order to build an ammunition depot. In 1943 the site was handed over to the American Forces who began to develop it as an ammunition and petroleum depot. Although the depot was incomplete, it was activated on the 18 Nov 43, with the petroleum function under the command of Lt John T Kimberley. At its peak the depot held 75,000 tons of gasoline in 5 gallon jerricans and lubricants and diesel in 55 gallon drums. The depot was the sole storage and shipping agency for petroleum products for the Allied invasion of France, when the outload peaked at 1,700 tons per day. The importance of the site made it a prime target for German bombers who used the rail track as a guide to the depot, fortunately only one bomb landed within 50 yards of the depot. It was noted that during the Second World War the workforce at the depot primarily consisted of black Americans. After D-Day the depot received a Presidential Unit Citation in recognition of the important role it played in the Allied Victory.

3. Towards the end of the War the installation at West Moors contained a Prisoner of War camp for displaced persons. A first hand account of life in this POW camp was provided by Mr Willy Rau. Mr Rau joined the Panzer Grenadiers in 1939 and served on the Eastern Front where he earned the Russian Campaign Medal. He was also awarded the Wounded Medal and the Iron Cross Grade II for rescuing 2 injured soldiers from their burning tank in Stalingrad. Whilst fighting on the Eastern Front in 1940 he was captured in Benghazi and as a POW was shipped first to America and then to the POW camp at West Moors in 1945. Mr Rau recollects that there were approximately 200 people held at this site and that security was minimal, with dog patrols but no security fences. Later the security was increased, with more dog patrols, security fences and powerful search lights, however, he suspects this was to protect the petroleum rather than to restrain the prisoners. The prisoners were accommodated in Nissan huts where Newman's Close now stands and daily work consisted of assisting the Americans with the running of the depot. After the War, Mr Rau married a local girl called Vera in 1947. He also continued to work on the depot firstly, building roads and Headquarters on the site and later in the laboratory as an assistant. As he began his new life he threw away his Iron Cross as a gesture and in 1982 he was presented with the Imperial Service Medal for his lifetime's work on the depot.

4. At the end of the war the British took control of the depot as the Americans left West Moors. Lt John Butler came from 9 Petroleum Depot at Bicester to take command of West Moors in 1946, Q-328 was renamed No 1 Petroleum Reserve Depot RASC and Lt Col L J Blackiston RASC was appointed the first Comdt. At this time conditions were still very primitive as there were no proper roads or accommodation buildings, therefore, POW Nissan huts were still in use. On 25 Jun 47 Lt Col A Grieve was appointed Comdt. He began major building work such as proper roads, the HQ building and concrete bases for storage sites.

5. On 2 May 49, Lt Col J F Waterfield RASC took over the position as Comdt. During his command the Offrs' Long Petroleum Installations Course began in 1949/50. The course was at this time conducted solely in the Laboratory. Now all Comdts are pi Officers.

6. In 1958 the Fairfax Complex was opened in the only building now remaining from POL Depot Q-328 in the Second World War. It took its name from Fairfax Barracks in Farnborough where the Royal Engineers had a petroleum training facility. The Fairfax Complex was, and still is, a training and trials wing for Petroleum handling equipment. One of its earliest and most memorable projects was the Flame Thrower Fuel Batch Mixer (FTFBM), much of which is captured on film.

7. In 1962 the depot started building its own purpose-built Laboratory, however, due to financial constraints, it was not completed or operational until 1964. In Feb 1964 the Depot was renamed the Petroleum Organisation United Kingdom. On the 15 Jul saw the transfer of the petroleum trade to the RAOC, this brought 47 Coy to West Moors. 47 Coy was commanded by Maj John who later became Brig John "late Godfather of the Petroleum Fraternity". 47 Coy were well travelled; members were active in Aden in 1967 trialling dracones on Exercise Forsdale MEXE and in Norway in 1968 as part of NATO Exercise Polar Express.

8. On 1 Nov 71 the depot was renamed, yet again, to Petroleum Centre RAOC. 1970 saw 3 newsworthy events, all for the wrong reasons. In that year the depot football team made the Guinness Book of Records for the whole team being sent off in the shortest time. Pte A C Thrower stole a fire engine in order to draw attention to his dissatisfaction with his career; and Pte G Stewart, a cook, attempted to set fire to the depot in order to draw attention away from the fact that he had set fire to his own barrack room.

9. The subject of fire was again to become national headline news, on Fri 27 Aug 76, due to the hot summer weather there were 6 major forest and heathland fires in the West Moors area, which were advancing toward the depot in a U shape. Ministry of Defence, then civilian fire-fighters, were battling to keep the fire away from the bulk storage tanks. At this point, when disaster seemed inevitable, the wind suddenly changed direction away from the storage tanks and no major petroleum fires occurred. The 1976 fire is commemorated by an oil painting by Mr Les Quaintence, the Graphics Officer at that time, which now hangs in the Offrs' Mess. Although the fire caused no damage to the infrastructure of the depot many improvements were made in the following years. In 1978-79 extensive improvements were made to the Jerrican filling area and also the bulk storage fuel tanks. Concrete bases were constructed upon which the storage tanks could safely stand. The contractor made full use of the "hover" method of moving bulk storage tanks. This method involved the construction of a rubber skirt around the base of the tank that was inflated so that the tank could "hover" six inches above the ground and thus could be easily moved.

10. 1988 the Depot was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The heathland, typical of the local area, had been largely left undisturbed, thus allowing indigenous flora and fauna, to thrive in their natural habitat. A large variety of water sources provide an important breeding ground for at least 25 species of dragonfly catalogued so far, several of these are classified as either rare or uncommon as well as 30 species of butterflies, West Moors boasts 190 species of plants, including many rare orchids, such as the Coral Necklace which is the only site in Dorset where it flowers.

11. The formation of the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) on the 5 Apr 93 saw the depot change its name to The Petroleum Centre RLC.

12. The most recent development at West Moors and the work of the current Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor, Lt Col P J Taylorson, is the Dorset Fire Brigade's Training Wing, formally opened on the 6 Mar 96. This project initiated with the change in the fire status of the depot negated the requirement for the Defence Fire Service to be located on site. This left a serviceable fire station unused, whilst the Dorset Fire Brigade needed to establish its own training facility. By bringing the Dorset Fire Brigade Training Wing to the old site of the Depot DFS, the Dorset taxpayer was spared £2.5 million. The Dorset Fire Service gained an excellent facility that allows firemen to train on real petroleum fires and in return the Army has its fire training provided courtesy of the Dorset Fire Brigade on their new facilities. Present at the opening ceremony was Earl Howe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence.

13. In summary, the Petroleum Centre RLC is now barely recognisable from its humble beginnings as POL Depot Q-328 in the Second World War. It is now a highly developed modern facility, for example, it has recently disbanded manual accounts and now uses GLOBAL and RAFSITS. Furthermore, with the closure of RAF Carlisle the Depot now handles all the RAF stock. The Depot also boasts the School of Petroleum; 93 Petroleum Squadron RLC, part of 9 Supply Regiment; the Petroleum Laboratory and the Petroleum Inspectorate as unique and important functions provided to the British Army from West Moors as the sole storage and distribution installation for petroleum products.

A HISTORY of

The Petroleum Centre RLC

WEST MOORS

GREER ROBERTS

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Petroleum Centre, The Royal Logistic Corps, occupies 470 acres of land on the outskirts of the Dorset village of West Moors, which is situated close to the A31 road and approximately 8 miles north of Bournemouth.

(Map 1)

2. The Petroleum Centre RLC is part of the Army Base, Storage and Distribution Agency (ABSDA) and is the Army's only such establishment. It is an integral part of the Army's Supply Chain, responsible for the resupply of Petroleum products to the Army in Peace, Transition to War and War. The Petroleum Depot RLC is also responsible for a whole range of support training and research functions.

3. Continuous modernisation had meant the depot is hardly recognisable from Depot Q-328 under American control during the Second World War. All that remains from Q-328 is a very short section of internal railway and the Fairfax complex, which makes it increasingly important to retrieve the history, development and progress of the Petroleum Depot to its now unique position within the British Army.

4. "For the want of a shoe", could easily be translated to, "For the want of a Jerrican". Without the efficient distribution of fuels and lubricants how would the modern Army run? Therefore, Annexes D and E will document important aspects of the Petroleum trade, including a survey of Europe and beyond and also important historical developments within the British Army.

5. It is sadly inevitable that some history and documentation is not retrievable and beyond living recollection, however, it is hoped that that which follows will go some way to preserving a unique history.

POL DEPOT Q-328 1/1/44 WEST MOORS

1. The installation was originally planned as an ammunition depot, land was acquired from the owner of the "Gundry Enclosure" and building for that purpose started in 1939. In 1943 the depot was handed over to the American forces who developed its facilities and used it for storing both ammunition and POL during the Second World War.
2. Lt John T Kimberley was the Commanding Officer of the American POL operation in West Moors from the beginning of Aug 43 until 6 Jun 44. Lt J T Kimberley of New Haven Connecticut was in command of this organisation from the date of activation to 18 Nov 43.
3. Under his supervision the necessary supplies were obtained for operations in a depot that was incomplete at activation; and personnel assigned to the depot were trained in new skills. He recollects:

"An American engineering unit had preceded us there to build the roads, storage bases, our camp and HQ (500 acre site) ... Our designation for the operation was POL Depot 328, West Moors, and the manpower was supplied by our own gasoline supply companies. These were shifted from time to time, maybe to provide experienced personnel to other POL Depots being activated.

At its peak, the depot stored about 75,000 tons of gasoline in 5 gallon Jerricans plus lubricants and also some diesel in 55 gallon drums. There were 3 fire detachments, plus that of the operation of the railroad and another 9 of our men trained to handle K-9 guard dogs. They patrolled at night.

The Jerricans were unloaded by hand using roller conveyors to get the cans from the wagon to the stacking base. Our lads set something of a record one day when they unloaded and stacked an average of ten tons per man. Later, some time after D-Day, ..., the depot received a presidential unit citation."

On the subject of the bombing he remembers that: "the closest they came was about 50 yards from our HQ area."

4. There was originally one officer and 3 enlisted men assigned directly to the depot and a company of 3 officers and 122 enlisted men assigned for duty. It is noted the depot operated with a largely black work force.
5. The unit moved to the depot before the camp site was finished. The officers lived in officers quarters that were finished but the enlisted men had to live in one of the big ammunition warehouse until the 22 Sep 43. No electricity was available until the 25 Sep 43. Messing facilities for officers and enlisted men had been established prior to occupation of the camp site about one half mile from the warehouse quarters.
6. The depot stored gasoline prior to shipment to France and from Apr 45 was the sole storage and shipping agency for POL products for the "Far Shore".

7. Mr Aubrey Barrow was the deputy Head Ward ARP Verwood and he vividly remembers the conditions and his duties in a Letters page following "Memories of a Village at War" collected by the Evening Women's Institute.

"As I recalled there was no Air Raid Siren. I was one of the wardens with an allocated area to go and blow a whistle to warn people of a "Red" warning ... It was a short sharp blast for a warning and a long blast for "All Clear".

My area was Moorlands Road, Coronation Road, Coopers Lane and Burrow Lane. I remember once blowing for the warning and meeting someone coming back from the village to say that they were blowing the "All Clear" there. A bit pathetic now when you think about it.

Going back to the Railway line, they were not actually trying to bomb the line, but were using it as a guide to the Petroleum Depot at West Moors... One evening there was a big drop of incendiaries on the Common at the top of Stephens lane which set fire to gorse, heather and fir trees which when burning, give off very black smoke. Listening in as we sometimes did, to hear Haw-Haw on the radio, he mentioned that there had been a successful raid on the Depot at West Moors the night before."

8. Capt John J Peterson, of Creston Iowa, relieved Lt Kimberley as Depot Commander on the arrival of the 3877th Gasoline Supply Coy, which had been assigned to the Depot since its activation - and therefore as Troop Commander of the bulk of the troops he provided for their comfort and welfare through close supervision of the quarters, mess and recreation. His continued interest along these lines had a direct reflection in the amount of work produce under adverse conditions of weather and footing - as all work was outside.

9. Difficulties were encountered in the unloading of 5 gallon containers from wagons by the use of roller conveyors to bases. The setting up, tearing down and moving of conveyors was difficult, due to an inability to maintain roads and keep them free from mud, this was caused by a lack of engineering equipment. This problem was compounded by a limited number of enlisted men available for labour. Small detachments from other units were sent in, although often for only a short period of time, thereby necessitating the training of those men in the handling of POL products who were then often transferred once they got to know their job. Despite these obstacles the depot achieved its most important task storing approximately 45,000 tons of POL products in a depot of approximately 65,000 tons capacity.

10. On the 31 Oct 43 in recognition of their hard work 41 enlisted men of the unit received the Good Conduct Medal.

11. Capt Edward J Forticq, of New Orleans, relieved Capt Peterson as Depot Commander. Under his direction attention was concentrated on bringing the camp area into first class condition. This was possible due to the falling off of the unloading schedule.

12. Capt Joseph J McCarthy of New York City assumed command on 13 Mar 44 when Capt Forticq was transferred to SBS. The camp improvement programme was continued, this included a camp for RY Ops personnel which was established at the rear of the camp, thus eliminating a 12 mile round trip formerly necessary. A new building was built to house white personnel assigned to the Depot and likewise bring them closer to the scene of their work.

13. 2Lt Harford O Wilson relieved Capt McCarthy as Depot Commander on the 31 Jul 44 until the appointment of Capt Claude A Smith of Bellingham Washington, who assumed command of the Depot on 4 Sep 44. The outloading programme continued and there was an increase in security.

14. This period also saw a personnel build-up one QM Service Coy and one platoon plus the HQ of a QM Service Coy. Assigned Depot personnel 2 Offrs, one WO and 52 enlisted men. All the outloading was met on schedule and as the programme was at this time decreasing, it was therefore possible to maintain camp cleanliness.

15. Capt C Smith recalled that from the 1 Oct 44 until 31 Dec 44 that, "During most of this time we were very busy, not only in handling stock received from the British but also in the conduct of an outloading programme, which had to do principally with airlifts for the "Far - Shore". This was the continuation of programme started far earlier, for which depot HQ received special commendation in General Order 29, HQ UK Base 5 Nov 44."

16. He continues that from the 1 Jan 45 until the 8 May 45. "During this period our mission has been to supply packaged POL products to the Far Shore. Except for the last month, we worked in conjunction with Depot Q-331. However, that plan was changed and Depot Q-331 was officially closed on the 12 Apr 45. All remaining stock was brought in here and all personnel transferred to this command so that since that date this Depot has carried on as the sole storage and shipping agency for Pol products for the Far Shore.

17. This meant that the Depot absorbed Officers and personnel and numbers increased. Map 2 illustrates the locations of QM installations in Gt Britain.

18. At this time the Depot still had very limited resources, for example there were no loading docks or fork-lift trucks and therefore all the Supplies were man-handled on and off trucks which ran between the stock piles and the railhead. Roller conveyors were only used to supplement other operations as they were insufficient to meet the workload. Although by this time the Depot was able to operate its own motor pool which had 55 vehicles.

19. Until the middle of March a large part of the storage area was gradually filled. Whilst shipping out a large number of wagons the off-loading was heavier so that about 31,000 tons total storage was acquired. On the 14 Mar 45 the Depot started an intensive outloading programme, and by working long hours, 7 days a week, the Americans shipped out a major part of the stock that they had piled up. For more than a month they moved 1,200 to 1,300 tons per day, with a peak of 1,700 tons per day. The outloading was culminated at the end of April. It was then anticipated that the Americans would clean up and then deactivate the installation, however, this plan was changed. It was decided that the installation would ship petrol here in tank cars, to be decanted into empty 5 gallon cans which were being shipped concurrently with the tankers. It was planned that the installation would receive some 40,000 of these cans for filling. Considering the time needed to complete this programme and then to outload and dispose of Depot property and equipment, a tentative date of 1 Aug 45 was set for the closure of the Depot.

PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

The Willy Rau Story

20. Towards the end of the American operations the West Moors installation contained for a short while a Prisoner of War camp for displaced persons. This gives rise to the incredible story of Mr Willy Rau. Mr Rau joined the Panzer Grenadiers in 1939, he was awarded the Russian campaign medal, the Wounded Medal and the Iron Cross Grade II. He was wounded in Stalingrad rescuing 2 soldiers who were also injured when their tank was hit. The following year he fought in the African Campaign and was captured at Benghazi, he was shipped as a POW to America and then back to England to West Moors in 1945.

21. Although he does not talk much about his time in the German Army or as a POW, he does remember that there were about 200 prisoners and that there was minimal security, only dogs and doghandlers, at this time there were no fences. It was only much later that security was increased with more dogs, search lights and fences and this action was taken to protect the fuel. Living conditions were basic and they were quartered in Nissan huts where the Married Quarters on Newmans Close now exists. During this time he worked for the Americans unloading tanks using the roller conveyor belt and any other labouring work. His abiding memory of this time is that the work was made more difficult because of the mud.

22. In 1947, after his release Mr Rau married a local West Moors girl, Vera, and came back to work for the depot. It was at this time that he threw away his Iron Cross, he explained that at the end of the War everyone was tired of hearing and thinking about it, he had made a new start and wanted to make a gesture.

23. At West Moors he worked building roads, concrete bases and the main HQ during the early 1950s. He became a naturalised Briton in 1971 and for 25 years he worked in the Laboratory performing technical duties for the scientific staff. He retired in 1986. In 1982 he was presented with the Imperial Service Member by Lt Col George Gilberry, who commented: "It is certainly very rare. I once knew someone who had the Iron Cross and an MBE, but that's the rarest thing I have come across."

24. The photograph below shows Mr Willy Rau with his medal surrounded by his family.

THE POST WAR YEARS

Fairfax and Flame Thrower

20. The depot Q-328 reverted to British control in Jul 45 and from 1946 the Royal Army Service Corps was in residence as No 1 Petroleum Reserve Depot.

21. Lt John Butler came down from 9 Petroleum Depot based at Bicester and took over West Moors in 1946. Thereafter 9 Petroleum Depot (36 Group) moved here from Waddesdon near Aylesbury and from Jun 46 until Feb 64 West Moors installation became No 1 Petroleum Reserve Depot RASC.

22. There was no Offrs' Mess at that time so he lodged at the Old Rectory, West Moors. His abiding memory at that was that due to rationing they were forced to live on pilchards.

23. The cartoons below depict thanks for an entertainment show, in particular a cartoon by John Butler inscribed "Wot no 9PD" dated 14 Oct 47.

24. It is noted that John Butler came back to West Moors regularly and during this time it functioned purely as a Depot.

25. Lt Col L J Blackiston RASC was the first Camp Comdt from Jun 46 until Jun 47.

26. Sgt S L Lusten was posted to West Moors in Aug 46 until 49. He particularly remembers that conditions were very primitive, for instance there were no roads. At this time there were no real building for accommodation and the men were housed in the Nissan huts used for POW, where Newsman's Close now stands, they had no toilets or washing facilities, instead, they had to use a trough for washing. He also remembers that pay per week, which arrived on a Thursday and collected in front of the Paymaster, was £6.12 the map below illustrates how the camp looked before the extensive development took place.

27. Lt Col A Grieve RASC, commanded from 25 Jun 47 until 01 May 49. During this time major building work began, road, concrete bases and the Head Quarters for which reinforced concrete 18 inches thick was used. The photograph below shows Lt Col Grieve attending a Sgts' Mess Christmas Function in 1948. He is pictured standing in the back row second from the right.

28. During this time there were some notable visitors to the Depot:

29. 13 Jan 48 Maj Gen Symes.

30. 05-18 Mar 48 Brig Ritchie War Office D DST ST2. Who gave his name to Ritchie Place.

31. 18 Aug 48 Brig G A Bond who gave his name to Bond Avenue.

32. All the buildings that form the main Head Quarters and the roads where the Married Quarters are situated carry names of people, although it has not been possible to trace the majority, there exists a building named after Brig G A Simms who it is known retired some time after the Second World War and also a building named after Lt Col A M Mackintosh OBE MC, who saw First World War Service with the East Surreys (1916-1919) and was an ADST in North Africa (1943-1945). After the war he was a TA Officer and General Manager (sales) for Shell Mex in

London. Finally a road was named for Brig G A Bond who died on 15 Dec 87, his obituary appeared in The Daily Telegraph.

33. "Maj-Gen G A Bond was known as the Petrol King on account of his ability to ensure adequate supplies of that essential fuels were always available on the various fronts on which he served. During the 1939-45 War Bond revelled in the RASC's dangerous task of conveying by land, sea, or air large quantities of petroleum and ammunition - often being required to defend these on route and in supply depots with anti-aircraft and other guns."

34. Lt Col J F Waterfield RASC who commanded from the 2 May 49 until the 29 Aug 51. At this time the Officers' Long Petroleum Installation Course begins 1949-50, the course was conducted solely in the laboratory at this time. Annex A contains a full list of all those Officers who have passed the Officers, Petroleum Course.

35. Lt Col N V Anderson OBE RASC commanded from 30 Aug 51 until 24 May 53.

36. Col R A MacDonald RASC commanded from 25 May 53 until 17 May 56.

37. Lt Col H Woodward RASC commanded from 18 May 56 until 19 Mar 58.

38. The Fairfax Complex, which is the only building that remains from Depot Q-328 under American control, was so named because there was a training installation for petroleum from 1956-57 in Farnborough called Fairfax Barracks, which is now occupied by the Royal Engineers. The training was moved to West Moors in 1958 and the name Fairfax continued.

39. One of the most unusual pieces of equipment trialled at 1PRD was the FTF (Flame Thrower Fuel) Batch Mixer. For some years the Ministry of Supply (ARDE) had undertaken the development of a mobile fuel mixer for the manufacture of flame thrower fuel. One of the problems being the method of safely heating gasoline to the required mixing temperature in all climates. The machine completed Ministry of Supply test trials and in 1957 underwent troop trials at 1PTD West Moors. The machine was capable of mixing 300 gallons of FTF per hour in all but arctic climates. It was operated by 2 trained men, with additional labour being required for the handling of containers.

40. The machine consists of a fuel pump system to feed gasoline or aircraft jet fuels through a metering device to a heating chamber thence into 2 vats in which the fuel and the powder are mixed by a means of an electrically driven stirrer. Arrangements are provided to introduce into this mix a liquid known as a peptizer, which assists in the mixing process and improves the quality of the mixed fuel. A further pump is provided to remove fuel from the vats and discharge it through a feed nozzle to the fuel containers, or direct into fire bombs.

41. There is unique footage of the Flame Thrower in action and below there are photographs that illustrate the handling of the Flame Thrower, safety procedures, problems and risk of injury, such as spots due to the infection of zylenol burns resulting from the splashing of fuel.

42. Lt Col S Hoyle RASC commanded from 20 Mar 58 until 31 Aug 60.

THE MOBILE PETROLEUM LABORATORIES

48. Until 1960 there was only one regular officer in the Laboratory all other staff were National Service. In 1960 with the last of the National Service the RASC lost the Chemical Laboratory Assistant as a recognised trade.

49. At this time there were static laboratories in Singapore, Cyprus and Germany, details of these can be found at Annex D. At West Moors, there were 2 mobile laboratories with propulsion from Bedford trucks, 1 x 10 ton and 1 x 3 ton and there was also a wooden hut called Beckwing Office.

50. In 1948 it was realised that the existing type of mobile laboratory mounted on a 3 ton chassis was not large enough to accommodate all the test apparatus required or the examination and analysis of petroleum products in accordance with the latest specifications also many advances in the field of petroleum technology rendered the present laboratory too limited in both size and equipment.

51. The original laboratory was designed during the 1939-1945 war to carry out only a limited number of specified test on petroleum products and it was considered necessary to produce a laboratory which could undertake all tests for both Army and RAF and which could be equipped on a sufficient scale to operate as a base laboratory when required.

52. In 1949 the War Office commenced on a new design in consultation with Messrs Baird & Tatlock who had constructed the original laboratory. The project was approved in 1950 and it was mutually agreed that the War Office would be responsible for technical development since no appropriate branch existed in the Ministry of Supply for the development of this kind of equipment. It was decided that the new laboratory should be mounted on a 10 ton semi-trailer.

53. The 10 ton mobile laboratory at West Moors was fitted with the following major equipment: air conditioning plant, teak benches complete with sink and water power, gas, compressed air and vacuum points, ice making plant and cold test apparatus. All apparatus and chemicals were stowed away in bench or wall cupboards or are secured to the benches. The laboratory could function on either gas or electrical power. Approximately 6 months of stock replacement stores is carried. There was adequate bench space for 4 or 5 laboratory assistants and the approximate cost of the laboratories at that time was £8,350, which included £3,000 for apparatus. It was also noted that these mobile laboratories could only run one mile to 3 gallons of fuel.

54. Once the mobile laboratories had finished their commission at West Moors they were sold by auction to Fawley Refinery.

1950s and 1960s

55. Lt Col J H B Molyneux RASC commanded from 1 September 1960 until 24 July 1961. Attended Officers' Petroleum Course (OPC) 1951.

56. Lt Col C W Foskett RASC, commanded 25 July 1961 until 31 October 1963. Attended OPC 1951.

57. In 1962 West Moors started building its very own purpose-built laboratory. However, due to bankruptcy, which inevitably involved delays, staff were finally able to move in 1964

58. Lt Col G G Hill, MBE RASC, commanded 1 November 1963 until 17 August 1965.

59. From February 1964 to October 1965 the title of the installation changed to Petroleum Organisation United Kingdom.

60. One important item was needed for the training courses for petroleum operators at the Petroleum Organisation United Kingdom, RASC: a model of a refinery. Don Murphy, Industrial Hygienist at Fawley Refinery, on a course at the unit remembered that a model of Fawley had been built some 12 years ago and now stood in crates.

61. As a result of Mr Murphy's efforts the Petroleum Organisation was given the model of the refinery and it is now the centre-piece of their Exhibition room at West Moors.

62. "The model was built to illustrate the progress and development of the refinery. As each new piece of equipment was built so a miniature version was added to the model. The model covers an area of 250 sq ft and is made of plywood, wire, foam rubber, aluminium paint, brass and paper. It is to scale 1/32 inch to one foot. A 250 ft chimney is reduced to 7 inches and the maintenance building from 800 ft to 2 ft. The model is housed in a special glass and teak case and is floodlit from above. But the model became out of date and has served its purpose. After a short but useful life it was crated and stored.

63. Maj Clifford Gray explained that the model will be used by all trainees next year. It will be seen by Ghanaians, RAF personnel and Territorials."

REDESIGNATED RAOC 15 JULY 1965

64. By the 1960s the character and demands of War had changed and the last time the old fashioned mobile laboratories were used in the field was in 1956 at Suez, where one laboratory was burnt and the other lost. The new characteristics of War moved towards short sharp wars, needing speed and efficiency, the new Portable Testing Kit was developed to match this concept.

65. Mark I was developed by MQAD and the Petroleum Laboratory RAOC manufactured at Endfield Green by Stanhope Ceta to match the Army's specifications. It was trialled in Aden and used in the testing of gasoline and diesel, AVTUR, to check for contamination in order to check that the product was fit for use. However, there was a problem as there were no chemical assistants in the field, so in 1965 it was reintroduced as a regular trade in the Regular Army, because they were unable to use TACLA as there was no Royal Proclamation and they were a reserve force.

66. Mark I was tested in Aden and covered Aden for the final withdrawal. At this time there was utter chaos and Mark I disappeared, it was assumed at the time that it was written off, however, it had served its purpose, it had been trialled in the field in a conflict situation and the feedback from the trials had been good. Mark I finally made an appearance 12-18 months later, by this time it was in pieces.

67. After testing Mark I, Mark II and Mark III quickly followed which were designed to be more soldier proof. For example the legs supporting the Body were on an angle and the body of the kit was made sturdier. Also an electric balance had to be adapted to run off a battery supply or calor gas in order to be independent. The Petroleum School was introducing courses for Reg CLA with 3 grades III, II, and I. By the mid-70s the course was also available to the RAF.

68. Visit of Maj Gen R Man GOC, Aldershot Southern Command 21 February 1962. The photographs below document his visit around the Depot.

47 COMPANY RAOC, WEST MOORS

69. Two Platoons in 47 Company; 35 bulk Operating Platoon and 112 Filling Platoon became part of 10 Ordnance Maintenance Park a unit of Strategic Command. 47 Company then moved to Devizes in the early 1970s, however, the Company HQ and the Bulk Operating Platoon were left at West Moors to become 2 administratively self-supporting petroleum platoons, comprising 108 all ranks.

70. These were 180 Petroleum Bulk Operating Platoon and 280 Petroleum Filling Platoon. The 1 and 2 representing the first and second platoons, the 8 denoted petrol and the O represented the fact that they were Regular Army. At this time there was also a third platoon 160 that drove the vehicles and forklifts.

71. 180 Platoon is geared to the operation and maintenance of Bulk Storage facilities and military pipelines including quality surveillance. 280 Platoon is equipped to hold and pack fuels into cans and to operate refuelling points. It may be equipped for these tasks to light or heavy scales. 120 Ammunition Platoon was under command for training and exercises, at this time it was located and administered locally by BAD Kineton.

72. The first priority of 47 Company was to provide logistic support for Strategic Command in operations and training. It was equipped and trained to meet this commitment within the period of notice laid down by HQ Strategic Command. The Company also provided training assistance for demonstrations to courses and exercises sponsored by the School of Petroleum, RAOC, and also for Ministry of Defence sponsored trials and exercises held in the UK or abroad. Also based at West Moors was a Detachment of 521 Company Royal Pioneer corps which was responsible for manpower for Depot functions and security for the whole barracks, comprising of one officer and 48 soldiers.

73. In the Sgts' /WOs' Mess photograph of 47 RAOC, September 1970, appears Maj M F John OC who, by 1993, was regarded as the "godfather of all petroleum". He attained the rank of Brigadier and sadly died in 1994 following a tragic car accident. What follows below is an account of his career as it appears in a memorial to him in the Brig M F John Suite in the Offrs' Mess at West Moors.

74. "Brig M F John was commissioned from RMA Sandhurst into the RASC in 1956. He attended the Petroleum Course in 1962, beginning his long association with the Petroleum Fraternity, a relationship he greatly valued and maintained throughout his career.

75. His leadership qualities and intelligence marked him out for future senior rank and after transferring to the RAOC in 1965 he went to Staff College. Thereafter, he progressed through a number of demanding and prestigious appointments, C RAOC 2 Armoured Division, GSO 1 DS Nigerian Staff College, Deputy Commander Support BAOR, Chief Logistic Ops AFCENT, Command COD Donnington and, finally , Deputy Director General Ordnance Services; he retired in April 1993.

76. As Deputy Director he had to contend with levels of change and turbulence not encountered in recent times. Options for Change, Drawdown, the Gulf War and Logistic Support Review, anyone would have taxed the most able, together placed enormous demands on the

Department and his staff. He provided outstanding leadership and direction during those difficult days. His formidable skills were severely tested, despite illness and injury he responded with that rare blend of diplomacy, ingenuity, sensitivity and firmness which was his hallmark.

77. Tragically Brig M F John and his son died in a road accident on 7 August 1994.
78. His last visit to the Petroleum Centre was on the 15 July 1994 and the entry in the Visitors' Book makes reference to him as "Late Godfather to the Petroleum Fraternity".
79. Photograph of Brig M F John as a Major.

REDESIGNATED SCHOOL OF PETROLEUM 01 OCTOBER 1965

80. Lt Col W N D Mitchell RAOC Commanded 20 September 1965 until 24 March 1968.
81. A full account is given below of Pte B D Hill of Barry, a 25-year-old soldier servicing with 112 Petroleum Filling Platoon RAOC, at West Moors, Dorset who had been commended by Lt Gen Sir Geoffrey Baker Commanding-in-chief Southern Command, for his "prompt action."
82. An Army landrover and civilian bus were involved in a collision at Affpuddle in Dorset on the 26 September. At the time of the accident, Pte Hill was travelling in the rear of the landrover, which was being used on a radio exercise. The driver was trapped and both he and the front seat passenger were injured. Although badly shaken and suffering from shock, Pte Hill attended to the injured passenger and then consoled the trapped driver and applied first aid to lacerations of his face and neck. The bus was carrying young schoolchildren which he then evacuated. The wiring of the bus and had been exposed in the collision and it was burning. He put out the fire with the bus' fire extinguisher and then, with assistance, disconnected the batteries to minimise further risk.
83. Pte Barry Hill was employed as a driver and petroleum operator and is pictured below sitting on the bumper of his landrover.
84. The photographs below depicts the people involved in the completion of Project Forsdale Mexe Aden 13 April 1967. The Forsdale Fuel Farm was constructed by 482 Port Maint TP RE, 516 SPEC Team RE, DET 112 Petroleum Filling Platoon RASC from November 1964 - February 1965.
85. It was reported in the Bournemouth Evening Echo on Wednesday 11 May 1966, "From West Moors to Aden - all for a floating sausage".
86. "The men belonging to a Strategic Reserve Platoon at West Moors, are carrying out an experimental project launched as a joint effort between the RAOC and RE. The experiment concerns a nylon "fuel barge" with a capacity of 80,000 gallons. It is in fact, a sausage-like container for fuel, known as a dracone, which can be carried in a lorry and launched at sea"
87. The cartoon below, dating from this time, illustrates the method of cleaning whereby the dracones were filled with air. "Bah - Take that and that you big old dracone you".
88. Memories of the exercise in Aden recall that the salt flats in Aden were very unstable, if the trucks strayed outside the tracks they were likely to keel over and sink into the flats. On one memorable occasion a 4 ton truck fell on its side and needed 3 more trucks to come to its aid.

89. The Dhow 5 January 1967 reported the "C-in-C visits tropical out-station." Which is illustrated below by the following excerpt from the press cutting and photographs of his visit. The Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu visited the MEXE tropical out-station, Project Forsdale on Friday 23 December.

90. "An RAF Air/Sea Rescue Launch brought the C-in-C from Aden to the site and he was met by the OC of Project Forsdale, Maj John Hill RE, off-shore in the Project's work boat. From there he proceeded to the pump-raft, about 200 yds off-shore where Capt Frank Webster RAOC and Mr George Goodall (Mexe Experimental Officer), Cpl Peter Chatfield and Pte Michael Thompkins were operating the dracone. The two and a half mile trip gave Sir Michael the opportunity to see for himself the complex system of pipeline and pumps that is necessary in moving vital fuels from a tanker off-shore to an inland air-field.

91. These cartoons refer to the C-in-C's visit by the project's work boat to the Mexe Float off Aden, in particular the first one depicts Maj John Hill, the OC Project Forsdale.

92. An inducement to prolong the visit was provided by a huge 100,000 gallon tank carefully marked RUM and the turning of the valve produced quite a few tots. The C-in-C was delighted with this piece of adaptability, but it is doubtful that the "powers that be" will introduce such a tank in all Petroleum Installations! The photographs below depict the C-in-C's visit.

93. "Although a very small unit, Forsdale was able to show during the visit that it is playing a vital part to the full. Perhaps the only disappointed people were the chowkidars who had to be restrained from searching the C-in-C for matches.

94. Lt Col C W Foskett RAOC commanded from 25 March 1968 until 12 January 1970.

95. From the 2nd to the 22 June 1968 soldiers from West Moors were involved in testing the defence of NATO's Northern flank in a NATO exercise "Polar Express" which took place in Norway.

96. Polar Express tested the deployment of Allied command Europe Mobile Forces in defence of NATO's Northern Flank, forces from Canada, Italy, Norway and UK and USA all took part. The Royal Marine Commandos operating from HMS Bulwark, together with Norwegian troops, acted as the enemy force and on 10 June they made the first full scale assault by helicopter in Europe when, using Royal Naval helicopters, they landed in Norway. They hope to show that daring and unconventional tactics, with the element of surprise, may achieve objectives against greatly superior forces. About 1,100 British Army troops are taking part in the ACE Mobile Force.

97. The following 3 photographs illustrate Troops of the RAOC as they fill fuel cans from portable 10,000 gallon plastic fuel dump in a Norwegian forest by troops of the RAOC. Also, working area under camouflage.

98. Photograph and short biography of Terence Harris involved in the exercise by PR HQ Army Strategic Command, Salisbury, Wilts.

99. Malaya, Singapore, Germany, Denmark and now Norway is the travel record of 23-year-old LCpl Terence Harris, son of Mr and Mrs R Harris of 38, St Swithun's Road, Bridport, since he joined the Army as a REME apprentice in 1960. As a mechanic in 112 Petrol Filling Platoon at

West Moors, Dorset. He as the vital job of maintaining equipment and in the picture he is seen attending to the pump of a 10,000 gallon portable tank used to supply vehicles of a multi-national NATO force during exercise Polar Express, north of the Arctic Circle in Norway. Terence went to Colfox Comprehensive School, Bridport, before joining the Army Apprentices' College at Arborfield, Berks.

100. 1968-1969 were years full of events and incidents as many soldiers from West Moors appeared in the local papers. Here are a selection below:

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 16 NOVEMBER 1968

Theft of £12,000 Matting Alleged

"Suspended prison sentences were passed on three men who admitted being concerned in the theft of 26 tons of aluminium worth over £12,000 from the Ministry of Defence at Hurn this summer.

In the dock at Hampshire Immediate Sessions at Winchester were John Brian Payne (24), plumber of Corbins Avenue, Ferndown; Terence Taymond Read (21), a pipelayer of Hardy's Road, West Moors and SSgt Charles Walter Pringett (33), formerly of the Army School of Petroleum, West Moors and now stationed at Aldershot, all of whom pleaded guilty to conspiracy to steal the matting, together with persons unknown. Read and Pringett were each fined £50 and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment suspended for 3 years, and Payne was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment suspended for 3 years. The deputy chairman, Mr Harold Willis QC, told the defendants that although it was not suggested that they were responsible for stealing all the matting they had clearly taken a substantial amount."

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 3 DECEMBER 1968

Dinner for Army Cadets

"The annual dinner and prize giving of the Bounemouth Area, Army Cadet Force was held at the TA and TVR Centres Wallisdown. The cadets enjoyed a Christmas dinner, cooked and served by the cooks from the School of Petroleum, West Moors, by permission of the Commanding Officer."

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 4 DECEMBER 1968

Woman's Report Led to Soldier's Conviction

"For indecently assaulting a 15-year-old boy, John Anthony Ganley (30) of the Royal Pioneer Corps, formerly stationed at West Moors was At Bournemouth yesterday fined £20. He had pleaded guilty."

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 4 APRIL 1969

Medal Came a Bit Late

"Fireman Alexander Lovie, fire fighter at the School of Petroleum, West Moors, for the past 4 years, stepped up to receive a medal this week. Brig A H Parnaby, the Deputy Director of Ordnance Services, Southern Command handed Fireman Lovie the Fire Brigade Long

Service and Good Conduct medal for 20 years work in the Army Fire Service. But, in fact, the medal was little late. Mr Lovie has been in the job for 22 years. His first 18 were spent at Bulford Camp before he moved to West Moors in 1965. With Brig Parnaby at the presentation was Maj A J G Chambers, Southern Command's Chief Fire Adviser."

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 3 MAY 1969

General Calls at Petrol School

"A General called on the School of Petroleum, West Moors, to inspect installations and see men at work yesterday. Maj-Gen M D Price, Vice Quartermaster-General of the Ministry of Defence (Army) inspected the camp's technical training department with another visiting officer, Col E L Gibbon and Lt Col C W Foskett, camp Commanding Officer and Maj A J Kirk, the camp's Second-in-Command. The only thing to mar the visit was the wet weather. But the field demonstration of pumping and handling fuel in large quantities laid on for the General in the afternoon did not stop for rain. During his visit he also inspected the Petroleum Laboratory."

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO 20 JUNE 1969

Retreating Ceremony at West Moors

"The Band and Bugles of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets, will sound retreat at the School of Petroleum at West Moors at 6.30 pm on Wednesday. Bandmaster J McTomney will direct a variety of music ending with the Sunset Ceremony and the Hymn Abide with Me. The performance is open to the public. There will be seats for 400."

THE 1970s

101. Lt Col P G Walker RAOC commanded from 13 January 1970 until 31 October 1971. Attended the Officer Petroleum Course 1954/5.

102. In 1970 the task of the School involved, training and trials, Petroleum Depot functions and Petroleum Laboratory functions. Instruction was provided at the School for: Training selected RAOC Officer on the Long Petroleum Installation Course and technical petroleum duties. The course lasts 48 weeks and successful candidate are awarded the symbol pi. Time spent on the course is divided between RMCS Shrivenham, West Moors and attachments to civilian industry. Trade training and upgrading of petroleum operators. Petroleum operators are B Class tradesmen and are trained in the practical use and maintenance of petroleum equipments and the nature of the products they handle. Courses at the School are, a basic course of 6 weeks of which there are 2 per year. An Upgrading Course BIII to BII of 7 weeks of which there are 2 per year. Finally, an Upgrading Course BII to BI of 8 weeks of which there is one per year.

103. The School also trains Officers, Officer Cadets and NCOs of the RAF in petroleum duties and trade training and upgrading of T & AVR petroleum operators.

104. In addition to trade training, assistance is give to T & AVR petroleum units in running weekend training and annual camps. Short courses and visits are arranged for all ranks. They are not confined to the RAOC personnel and the aim of such visits is to provide a general knowledge of petroleum products and equipments used in their handing.

105. Petroleum handling equipment is held by the School for training students in bulk installation operations.

106. Training of small items of petroleum equipment are undertaken by the School and technical and administrative backing is provided for larger trials involving the handling of petroleum products.

BOURNEMOUTH ECHO NOV 70

The General Carries the Can

"A miniature jerrican, a symbol of the petroleum handling carried on at West Moors Army Camp, changed hands at the camp yesterday. The hand-over occurred at a ceremony to mark the transfer of command of School of Petroleum from the commander, HQ RAOC training Centre (Brig P N W Besley) to Commander HQ Base Organisation RAOC
(Maj-Gen C D Key).

The Jerrican, which can be used as a paperweight, was especially made out of gun metal for the occasion by Mr Richard Batdorff, a member of the camp's civilian staff. Before handing it to the General, Brigadier Besley spoke of the successful work carried out at the School of Petroleum where "the men get on with the job, sort out their own problems and fight their own battles. Fuel", he said, "was a vital sinew of war and we must never, never, lose the knowledge of handling, control and storage". He had been associated with the camp for months and had always found kindness,

courtesy and tremendous hospitality from the officers, soldiers and civilians. About half the School's complement and most of the civilian staff were at the ceremony. They heard Gen Key say he was no stranger to West Moors. He was now at the camp to assume command of the unit via the Base Organisation. "I have always been impressed with the enthusiasm and professional manner of the military and civilian personnel in the way you have been going about your business," he said. He said it was logical that the School should be included among "Base" Installations which serve units in this country and abroad. The installation at West Moors had a much wider context than Southern Command. "I am delighted to welcome you to the organisation," he said, "and I know I can rely on you to give your enthusiasm and support in the future as you have done in the past."

During his visit Gen Key presented an 18-year long service medal to SSgt A Armstrong of the Territorial and Army volunteer Reserve, who was at West Moors on annual camp. Gen Key toured the camp and installations during a 6 hour visit. Conducting him in his tour was the Camp Commandant, Lt Col P G Walker."

107. Again 1970 seemed an eventful one for West Moors camp making local and national headlines with the story of a young soldier who was unhappy at West Moors and made his protest known by stealing a Fire Tender. Also featured below is the story of the soldier who "nearly blew up the New Forest". This is also the year that West Moors Camp made it into the Guinness Book of Records, the record was having a whole football team sent off the pitch by a referee in the fastest time.

Are Their Faces Red

"Faces were red in the guardhouse today ... almost the colour of the Army fire engine stolen from under the guards' noses this morning. The bright red 3/4 ton 4 x 4 Land-Rover, fully equipped with blue flashing light and ladders was taken from the garage near the guardhouse at the School of Petroleum, West Moors, just after 1.00 am. Men who saw it being driven away assumed it was answering an emergency call outside the camp. But the vehicle didn't return. The police were notified and a check was made of camp personnel. Later the police were told a private soldier was missing, but officers at the camp said that they did not have any conclusive evidence that the two disappearances were linked."

THE SUN NOV 70

"Army camp firemen faced an emergency last night not to deal with bonfire trouble, but to keep a lookout for their missing fire engine, for when it roared out of the camp at West Moors, Dorset, nobody suspected it was not in the line of duty. Morale was shot down in flames after the men discovered there had been no fire. It did not help matters when it was also reported that a 21-year-old also vanished from the camp. Despite a wide-spread hunt by military police, the Army special investigation branch and civil police, the mystery remained unsolved. A baffled Army spokesman said: "We have no positive evidence to link the missing soldier with the lost fire engine."

Unhappy Soldier Took Camp Fire Tender

"Unhappy because he had lost his trade as a vehicles' specialist, on transfer and had been cleaning out pots and pans and cleaning out lavatories. Pte Allan C Thrower (19) RAOC, took a fire tender from West Moors camp, where he was stationed to draw attention to his case. He gave this explanation to Wimborne Magistrates on Friday when he pleaded guilty to taking the vehicle without consent. He was fined £20.

Police Insp E Miller said that when the tender was missed it was found that the Defendant was absent without leave. The matter was reported and the Defendant was eventually arrested when he was seen driving the vehicle in Hornchurch, Essex. He had made a statement of admission.

The Defendant told the Magistrates that he was a trained telex engineer, who had joined the RASC as a vehicles' specialist. On being transferred to the RASC at West Moors the Commanding Officer had promised to do everything possible to have him engaged in his trade. But after two and a half months he was still being kept, "generally mucking around". He did not complain to his Commanding Officer again, as he thought it would do no good.

Capt A G Good, RAOC told the court that as a result of the run-down of the Army in the Far East the need for vehicle specialists had become "over-subscribed." Accordingly those wishing to change their trade were received postings.

In the Defendant's case although he was on other work, he still received a vehicle specialist's pay. The unit had made strong representations concerning the position of these men and they were now being considered at high level. This position had been explained to them, but the Defendant had been away at the time. Although he could have consulted the witness or the CO about his position, he had apparently adopted a drastic way of bringing the matter to attention. He had been dealt with by the Army for having been absent without leave and using petrol while he was away."

How a Frightened Soldier nearly Blew up the New Forest

"A frightened Army cook who had been questioned about setting fire to his barrack room, nearly blew up half of Dorset.

He put a match to a stack of Jerricans holding 30,000 gallons of petrol which were close to vast underground storage tanks containing millions of gallons of petrol, diesel and high octane aircraft fuel. The 300 acre military complex hidden in the New Forest, near Wimborne, Dorset, supplies the whole of NATO. It was only saved because the trail of petrol 19-year-old Guy Stewart laid and lit to the Jerrican drum fizzled out while he was already fleeing to safety. An Army source said, "If that had gone up, the result would have been catastrophic. Part of Dorset would have disappeared."

Stewart, who joined the Army two years ago after going to a special school in Yeovil, Somerset, was jailed for five years yesterday at Winchester Crown Court. He will also be discharged from the Army after being found guilty of attempted arson and admitting 14 charges of theft and burglary and setting fire to his own room.

Mr Michael de Navarro, prosecuting said a scorch mark 124 ft long had been found leading towards the pile of Jerricans. Stewart, he said, his upon his desperate plan when Army investigators started grilling him about the blaze in his room. He started fires in storage huts all over the camp, hoping to trick the authorities into believing the depot was being attacked. Then he dodged armed guards and climbed over a fence into a petrol compound where he poured petrol round 8,400 petrol-filled Jerricans, laid a trail and lit a match. After his arrest, Stewart told investigator, Sgt Stephen Haskins: "I didn't really want a big explosion. I just wanted them to think there was an attack." And he told the jury: "I did it to get the pressure off me, after being caught for the other fire."

108. Lt Col P G Walker RAOC commanded 1 Nov 71 until 22 Feb 73.
109. Lt Col T H Kemp RAOC commanded 23 Feb 73 until 5 Jun 75. Attended the OPC 1965/6.

The Journal, Friday, 24 Aug, 73

"... The exercise code name "Calypso Hop" drew soldiers form their bases in several different parts of 47 Company of 10 Ordnance Support Battalion as far apart as West Moors in Dorset to Devizes in Wiltshire. This was the first time the RAOC as one company had been to Jamaica. During their 6 week stay, the soldiers trekked their way through the jungle on various tactical exercise ..." (and photographs). This exercise was run and organised by Mike Marshall."

110. Lt Col D A Simpson RAOC commanded 6 Jun 75 until 7 Sep 77. Attended the OPC 1967.

THE FIRE 1976

110. The biggest event in this year is still talked about today, this is the year that West Moors camp was threatened by fire. Featured below is the synopsis of the painting by Les Quaintance, the Graphics Officer at the time and a selection of newspaper cuttings which illustrate the alarmist nature of the reporting, some of the facts are inevitably incorrect.

Petroleum Centre Depot Fire Thu 26 Aug 76

A synopsis of the picture of the fire painting.

A wall of flame 60-80 ft high fanned by strong gusting winds approaches the bulk storage area. Lt Col Simpson confers with his officers and SNCOs. The unit cricket team (match abandoned) with other personnel fight the fire with beaters and extinguishers. The civilian Fire Service prepare to lay hoses and give some relief to the military who fought the fire unaided for 45 minutes. The spread of the fire was caused mainly by small animals that were alight running through the gaps in the perimeter fence, thereby setting alight the tinder-like land.

Fri 27 Aug 76. The Sun "Villagers Flee Wall of Flame

"Battle to save huge petrol dump as blaze spreads.

Searing flames sweep through the Dorset forest towards a huge Army petrol dump. Millions of gallons of petrol came close to exploding before fire-fighters checked the blaze.

Families fled from a wall of fire yesterday as it swept down on their homes near a huge Army petrol dump. Hundreds of firemen, police and troops lined up in a human barrier against the five mile ring of flames. The holocaust threatened to engulf millions of gallons of fuel stored at the depot at West Moors, Dorset. A spokesman for the Dorset Fire Brigade, which is hard-pressed because of the drought, said: "The fire got within the perimeter of the dump and we were fighting it only yards from the petrol tanks. But we managed to divert it and we are trying to stop it from destroying houses."

Villagers from West Moors and nearby Three Legged Cross were evacuated and taken to a relief centre in a school near Ferndown. They were later allowed home. Flames also raged near Bournemouth's Hurn Airport. The fire reached the airport's perimeter.

Another forest fire hit Matchams, near Ringwood and killed 19 dogs at a local kennels. Epping Forest firemen were kept busy all day around the Connaught Water area. Buckinghamshire reported a fire in a pine wood alongside Pinewood studios, Iver Heath."

Five thousand villagers were saved from disaster last night after fire threatened to blow up a huge Army petrol dump.

Firemen, police and troops stood their ground as the scrub fire roared towards the dump at West Moors, near Wimborne, Dorset.

Empty fuel cans started exploding in the intense heat. At the last minute the wind changed and the blaze swept away from the dump towards the village of West Moors. Three hundred villagers in the front line were evacuated. And last night it looked as if the fire-fighters were winning the battle to hold the flames. The fuel dump covers 460 acres. Tens of thousands of gallons of petrol are stored there. The troops were playing cricket when they saw a huge cloud of black smoke leap up from a timber yard next to the dump.

Led by their Colonel, the soldiers began tackling the flames and called in police and firemen. As the fire crews fought to stop a 5 ft wall of flame from bridging the gap to the petrol line a senior Army officer said "Pray to God the firemen win."

The flames did blaze a path through the middle of the dump, but miraculously the fuel was not engulfed. Then came the battle to save the village as the fire stormed its way through the surrounding forest. William Francis and his neighbour Michael George were the first to be evacuated. Mr George said later: "We could see the smoke and flames approaching and the police rushed up and called. "Everybody out at once!"

Fires devastated other large areas of Dorset yesterday. At Matchams - scene of Sunday's big forest fire at least 40 dogs died when the Great Dane breeding kennels were destroyed. Earlier a blaze threatened Bournemouth's Hurn Airport. Firemen circled the buildings. but again there was a wind change and the flames swung away."

BOURNEMOUTH EVENING ECHO, FRI 27 AUG 76

"Flame Across Dorset. Was it Arson.

Risk of Death in Seconds.

Fire risk is now so great that people standing in the middle of the field could be burned to death in seconds, Dorset's Fire Chief, Mr Basil Roberts, warned last night. He appealed to the public to stay away from the forests and heathlands until the great blazes are over. "We have always known that people can die in a property fire, today they can also die from fire standing in the middle of a field. Flames can spread across open ground in a matter of seconds. "This is the message we have got to get across, people must stay away until all this is over." I asked Mr Roberts if he thought that the Forest Commission ought to close the forests to the public. "I would like to see them close the forests, but it's impossible," he said. "You look at them. They don't have walls, or fences, or gates. You just can't stop people." Mr Roberts praised hundreds of individuals, voluntary organisations and private firms, who have helped the fire fighting. The police today appealed to people not to go sight-seeing and to keep their children away from the scenes of the fire. Apart from the obvious danger they might find themselves in, the fire-fighting services have enough to do without looking after other people's children."

"How the Word Was Carried"

The flashpoint drama reached its peak at tea-time and motorists were driving to their homes north of the A31.

On the east of the traffic-sodden roads, the sirens were wailing at Hurn Airport as flames threatened the airport itself. A laconic message alerted the command point that flames were approaching West Moors Army Camp. At this point two children were missing. At 5 o'clock the message was flashed to West Moors Camp: "Everyone who can walk or run, evacuate now." The Army had reported the situation "deadly serious." At that point the flames had reached the perimeter of the camp and were travelling very fast. In their path lay thousands of gallons of petrol in store. At that time police reported that 30,000 gallons lay in the path of the fire; later the figure was put at a million. It was a situation where, any minute a tremendous explosion could rip through the area. As smoke filled the skies north of Bournemouth, the reports came in, fire at Rhinefield, fire at Alderholt to Verwood Road, fire at Matchams, fire at Clump Hill, fire on the Heath at Hurn.

In addition to the regular fire-fighting forces, already desperately tired men, marines from the 42 Royal Marine Commando were in action. Soldiers from Bovington were reported on their way. As the leaping flames began to engulf the Army camp reports flashed that police officers and firemen had been trapped by the flames. With the flames threatening the Methanol dump, the message went out: "Evacuate immediately." Then came the reports: "We are running out of water." At twelve minutes past five the police were told that West Moors had not yet been evacuated ... "and the fire is getting out of hand." An Army fire-fighting vehicle ran out of petrol. Shortly before 5.30 pm the word went out: "Keep away from West Moors village." For more than three hours motorists were piled up at the checkpoints, desperately anxious about their families. Then came the good news that the fire which had raged against West Moors fuel dumps had been contained. The Battle was by no means over; the fire overran grease and oil dumps, but the explosive situation was receding. At this time, fire spread into the trees near the Roll-along Caravan site and high tension cables became endangered. Posts were burning. Fire-fighters in West Moors camp reported: "The fire is all around us." Police were told that a 33,000 volt power cable was likely to fall at any moment. Later in the evening with a fallen cable sparking on the road, it was reported that SEB engineers were still on their way from Salisbury. With fires roaring at will on both sides of the road, the A31 remained open and traffic from the closed roads flooded on to it."

"Club proprietor, Mr Gerry Dommett is convinced that the spate of fires locally have been started deliberately. He said he received an anonymous phone call a week last Sunday in which a man threatened to burn the Matchams Country Club which Mr Dommet runs. Speaking after yesterday's fire, Mr Dommett said: "This was not a spark or an outbreak from Sunday's fire, this was completely independent. In the last few weeks there had been 10 or 12 fires on a three-mile stretch of local road alone." He continued: "We have taken all the necessary fire precautions against natural fires but it impossible to take precautions against arson. You cannot call it anything else but arson." And he is convinced that if these fires continue it is only a matter of time before someone is killed.

Fire broke out at Matchams yesterday as a wedding reception was in full swing at the club. Mr & Mrs Martin Curtis, of St Ives Park had been married earlier at Poole Register Office and guests watched as flames leapt around the club. Said Mr Dommett: "We had to get rid of the guests a little prematurely." The reception was to

have continued until 6 o'clock but an hour earlier the guests left, though many of the roads by that time were closed to traffic. The cause of yesterday's fire at Matchams has not been established. A fire service spokesman said that Dorset's Fire Chief Mr Basil Roberts was too busy putting out fires before investigations could even be started. This morning he was at the scene of the fire, concerned that the wind could fan the smouldering ground and restart the fire. At lunchtime today firemen were still damping down in the Matchams area and keeping a sharp eye out for further outbreaks."

BOURNEMOUTH EVENING ECHO FRI 27 AUG 76

"Flames Across Dorset.

Six major forest fires which broke out yesterday afternoon north of Bournemouth swept along a six-mile front of countryside, engulfed homes, threatened the huge million gallon petrol depot at West Moors, killed dogs in kennels and left a blackened horror of devastation

Thank God The Big Bang Never Came!

Three hundred people were evacuated from their homes late last night as fire threatened to blow up huge quantities of petrol at the Army's West Moors depot. The flames, a 100 ft high came within yards of several 30,000 gallon tanks at one of Britain's biggest military petroleum centres. The blaze covered one-and-a-half square miles of forest and scrub-land and caused damage to factories at Three Legged Cross. As villagers waited for the big bang from the Petroleum Centre - which thankfully never came - the Dorset Fire Brigade mounted their biggest operation yet bringing in 200 firemen with 30 engines from up to 40 miles away. They were helped by the Army's own fire service, 220 soldiers and dozens of volunteers. A fleet of ambulances stood by. Police first evacuated families from the 17 Army houses close to the Centre. "They told us to leave immediately," said soldier's wife Mrs Annette Forbes (22). "There are too many tanks over there. If they go up everything goes. We have always thought this was possible."

As the U-shaped blaze, still widely out of control, swept into the West Moors Forest, scores of families from houses in the Moorlands Rise area were taken away in buses and cars. It was the fire in the forest rather than a possible explosion from the depot that threatened their homes. Emergency centres were set up at the village hall and for the second time in five days, at the Ferndown Upper School. All families were allowed to return once the blaze had died down. Dorset Fire Chief, Mr Basil Roberts, took his now customary ride in a helicopter to survey the fire. He said later: "The fire was U-shaped and the central post of the depot lay within the "U". We flew through the middle with the fire on both sides of us." The petrol tanks are surrounded by concrete and stone fire breakers to minimise the risk and Mr Roberts said the design and planning had paid off. "It was a fierce fire, but not a drop of petrol went up. You can judge that for yourself," he said.

Lt Col Davis Simpson, the Centre's Commandant, refused to say how much petrol was stored at West Moors. "We have large quantities," he said. "We had plans for such an

emergency as this. They worked and thank God they did." Soldiers were playing cricket when the flames were spotted and some rushed to fight in their whites.

The cause of the fire is unknown. Chief Supt Frank Pratt, who had 90 officers, including special constables and traffic wardens in West Moors, said investigations were continuing. The blaze started between the petrol depot and Three Legged Cross and was driven by a strong north-east wind. One hundred firemen were there all night and will probably stay throughout the weekend. Though roads in West Moors closed during the big blaze they were open today, several affected by the blaze at Matchams were still closed."

WIMBORNE AND FERNDOWN JOURNAL

"Fire threatens Army Petrol Depot.

"Villagers Leave Their Homes.

Police prepared to evacuate the area as fire swept into the Army petroleum Depot at West Moors on Thursday night and came close to causing a major disaster.

Army officers said there had been no immediate danger to stored fuel, but a Journal reporter and photographer saw just how close the flames had come. They went inside the area normally restricted to Army personnel and spoke with firemen who at one time were in considerable danger. And at the same time 19 dogs were killed and two cottages and three caravans destroyed as another fire flared just a few miles away near Avenmoor Great Dane kennels in Matchams Lane, Hurn. Both fires broke out almost simultaneously at 4.30 pm. The fires were spread quickly by strong winds and hundreds of firemen, soldiers, Royal Marines and police were called in. West Moors was sealed off and people in areas nearest the fire were moved from their homes in Moorland Rise. Mrs Kelly saw the fire come within a few yards of her house, "we were all afraid of this type of fire here," she said. "If the petrol depot went up all West Moors, Trickets Cross and Ferndown would go with it." Police Chief Supt Frank Pratt said, "At one time I seriously considered evacuating the whole north-east part of the village." The few dozen who were actually moved went to the Village Hall and were given refreshments by community workers. Water tankers kept the fire engines supplied and further supplies were taken from private swimming pools.

Inside the depot flames closely skirted 6 giant fuel containers holding hundreds of thousands of gallons of petrol. In one section, 12 Dorchester firemen stood with their backs to dozens of drums of aviation spirit as flames came within 3 yards. For over an hour they kept the fire at bay. "The worst moment was when the flames leaped over the engines which were forming a break," said one of the firemen. He added: "We knew that if the barrels caught fire we would all be killed". At the height of the outbreak 30 pumps were dotted around the 460 acre site. When it was all over at 1930 hrs, 1.5 square miles lay barren. Dorset's Chief Fire Officer, Mr B Roberts flew over the area in a helicopter and landed for a press conference. He again called for the forest to be closed to the public during the drought. But he said the depot blaze had safely been contained and had not come so close to causing disaster as people thought. The Depot Comdt Col David Simpson, said: "We have a standing plan to cope with fires here involving all the services. Thank God it worked." He denied that if the

flames had reached some of the fuel there would have been large scale devastation throughout the area. On Friday morning firemen were still at the scene watching for fresh outbreaks."

The photographs below illustrate the damage perpetrated by the fire.

THE 1980s AND 1990s

111. Lt Col R M Cannons RAOC commanded 8 Sep 77 until 7 Aug 80. Attended the OPC 1967.

112. The photographs below show the development of improvements to the Jerrican filling area and also the construction and plans for fuel tanks from the 24 May 78 to 28 Feb 79.

113. As can be seen from the plans 6 of the large storage tanks weighing 46 tons were lifted and moved using hovercraft techniques. The tanks needed to be removed because, for the last 20 years they had been standing on earth and sand and to make them more environmentally safe 6 new concrete bases were erected. Before the move took place all the tanks were checked for any signs of decay.

114. The base of each tank was fitted with a rubber skirt which is then filled with air and this allows the tank to float 6 inches above the ground. This method is approved because it is easier and cheaper than dismantling the tanks and then re-erecting them on a new site. Mears Construction Ltd were also involved with the move.

115. Lt Col G K Gilberry RAOC commanded 8 Aug 80 until Feb 84. Attended OPC 1961/2.

116. Lt Col M A Marshall RAOC commanded 4 Feb 84 until 25 Sep 87. Attended OPC 1962/3.

25 Feb 84 Operation Stagecoach

117. This was a weekend exercise for a special HQ, UKL collecting point. West Moors was chosen as a convenient meeting point in the vicinity.

Present were:

Maj Gen R Benlow	Signal Officer in Chief
Maj Gen P A Inge	GOC NE district
Admiral Sir Peter Herbert KCB, OBE	Vice Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel and Logistics)
Col H B Wollnough OBE	Ministry of Defence (MO4)
Maj Gen B L G Kenny CBE	Dir of Army Staff Duties
Maj Gen J Boyne MBE	Vice Adj Gen
Maj Gen C J Rougier	Dir of Army Training
Air Vice Marshall J M D Sutton CBE	Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments)
Maj Gen J C Reilly DSO	Dir of Battle Development
Maj Gen B W Davis CBE	Vice QMG
Maj Gen G M G Swindells	Asst Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence)
Lt Gen Sir James Glover KCB, MBE	Vice Chief of the General Staff

118. Oct 86 visit of Chinese Delegation to West Moors. The Chinese Delegation were here on a UK tour. Whilst at West Moors they saw examples of the fabric fuel tanks, dracones and the (bouncing ball). They were also particularly interested in field rations, which they sampled. The picture depicts a presentation made by the Chinese to Lieutenant Col Mike Marshall.

1 Jul 84 Maj Don Price	Director of Music Royal Engineers
9 Jul 84 Capt Roger Swift	Director of Music RAOC
30 Jun 85 Maj Derek Taylor	Director of Music Welsh Guards
10 Jun 86 Capt David Price	Director Music RAOC Staff Band, Blackdown
18 Aug 86 R Tomlinson	Director of Music The Blues and Royals

119. These entries from the visitors' book shows the visits of Directors of Music. Using West Moors because they used to play in the park at Bournemouth. Lt Col Mike Marshall used to take advantage of this and they played at West Moors as well. For example, on the 18 Aug 86, the (Household Cavalry) Blues and Royals, Beat a Retreat dismounted.

120. Lt Col M E Newman RAOC commanded 25 Sep 87 until Oct 90. Attended OPC 1969.

121. Attached Personnel and Services. There are 2 elements permanently attached but not on the Petroleum Centre establishment:

- a. Detachment of 521 Coy RPC based at Bicester who provide the manpower for the Depot functions and security for the whole barracks.
- b. Army Fire Brigade, who provide a 24 hr service with one modern fire appliance. The photograph shows that originally the Army Fire Service were housed near the Guard Room by the Main Gate. In addition there is No 2 Section of 4 Platoon 91 Ordnance Coy who are detached from their parent unit at Corsham for petroleum training and technical support for the Depot and School.

122. At this time the School had 6 courses to offer, the OPC, the Petroleum Operator RAOC training and upgrading (Regular and TA), All Arms Bulk Refuelling training, REME Degassing/Gas Freeing Course, AAC Fuel Managers and Aircraft Refuelling Instructors' Course and general courses to Ordnance personnel and civilians employed in Fuels Handling. In a typical year, some 420 persons would attend 40-45 separate School sponsored courses whilst another 150+ would attend POL modules of 12 courses sponsored by other organisations and over 700 TA personnel would be given training assistance for 25 weekends of the year. The School also provides: advice on the development of POL handling and storage equipment, Technical expertise in user trials and advice to units on technical POL matters and Sitting Boards of Petroleum Installations.

123. The Depot has the following functions, the demanding and receiving stocks of POL from civilian contractors, RN and RAF Supply Agencies. A range of 140-150 item headings. Maintaining reserve and operating stocks and their quality control. Packing ground fuels into jerricans as required. An average of 330,000 L or 16,000 cans per month. We hold of 2,700 tons (2.7 million litres).

124. Issuing fuels and lubricants up to the following amounts each month.

Bulk	440,000 litres/month
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Packed	330,000 litre/month
Oil and Lubricants	230,000 litres/month

125. The average holding of stock including reusable containers is valued at £6.6 million with annual turnover in excess of £12 million.

126. At this time the Petroleum Laboratory provided: Testing, interpretation of results and advice on the usage, disposal and quality control in accordance with current Joint Service and NATO agreements for: the Petroleum Depot samples some 2,000-3,000 per year and products in use in Service vehicles aircraft and equipment world-wide, less BAOR. It also provides training for servicemen, RAF and Army Department civil servants in Petroleum Technology. Visits are also arranged to Supply Depots and units, giving advice on Quality Control and undertaking Quality Assurance testing.

127. The Petroleum Centre RAOC West Moors was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest during the winter of 1988-1989, because of the wealth of wildlife which represents part of the rapidly disappearing heathland with its flora and fauna. Map 4 shows a plan of the protected land.

128. The Petroleum Centre is situated in typical heathland. A large percentage of the Depot has remained untouched and therefore, contains much of flora and fauna associated with this type of habitat. For example:

a. The flowering plants that give the heathland its name; heathers, such as, Bell heather, Common Heather and Cross-leaved Heather. Other typically heathland plants that occur are, Gorse, Dwarf Gorse, Scots Pine, Birch and a variety of grasses, rushes and sedges, including the very rare, Brown Beaked Sedge. This included in the 190 species of plants are rarities such as Marsh Gentian, Sticky Groundsel, Allseed, Coral necklace (the only site in Dorset) and 9 species of orchid. In wetter areas are large patches of mosses including typical heathland Sphagnum Moss which gives rise to the acidity in the soil. Also occurring in these damp areas is the rare Marsh Clubmoss and the carnivorous plants, such as, Sundews and Bladderwort.

129. This variety provides the food chain for many different animals, also typical of the heathland. They are as follows:

a. Snakes are fairly common, with the Adder and grass snake most commonly seen. The presence of a very smooth snake has also been confirmed.

b. Nearly 100 species of bird have been recorded in the West Moors camp, about 60 of which breed regularly. Included in this list are rarities as Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark, with the highest recorded population of this particular species in Dorset.

b. Larger mammals do not exist in any great numbers, apart from rabbits. There are, however, a few pairs of badger, deer, fox and weasel.

c. Of the insects, the butterflies and dragonflies are probably the most significant. Of the 30 species of butterflies recorded over the years, the uncommon Silver-studded Blue is the most interesting as it abounds in numbers many times

higher than any other similar heathland sites in Dorset. The large number and variety of water sources, mainly acidic, provide the breeding ground for the 25 species of dragon flies observed so far, (the highest number for the county). Several of these are either rare or uncommon and include the Scarce Blue-tailed, the Red-eyed and the small red Damselflies.

d. There are many species of spiders and others which also require investigation. It is known, however, that the largest of British species of spider, the Swamp Raft Spider (*Dolomedes Fimbriatus*), does occur on the Depot.

130. Lt Col I M Ross RAOC commanded 23 Oct 90 until 14 Apr 93. Attended OPC 1968.

131. The last appearance of RAOC Staff Band at West Moors Jun 92 is commemorated by this photograph showing The Beating of the Retreat.

REDESIGNATED ON AMALGAMATION PETROLEUM CENTRE RLC 5 APRIL 1993

132. The Royal Logistic Corps was formed on the 5 Apr 93 from 5 Corps, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Corps of Transport, the Army Catering Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps and the Postal and Courier from the Royal Engineers. Formation parades were held by units world-wide and also at the designated Regimental Headquarters in Deepcut by the Colonel-in-Chief, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal.

133. 93 Petroleum Squadron was formed on the 5 Apr 93 on the formation of the RLC to provide a second field force bulk storage Squadron to meet the shortfall identified during the Falklands and Gulf conflicts.

134. Capt P W Edwards, the Squadron's first officer arrived in Sep 93 and was instrumental in the development of the embryonic unit along with the Squadron's first SSM, WO2 Turner who arrived in May 93. At this time the Squadron's accommodation was in portacabins until Nov 94 when they moved into Bond block. As the Squadron was forming a major constituent part was 4 Platoon (Corsham - part of the old 9 Ordnance Battalion), this element did not arrive at West Moors until they had completed OP GRAPPLE 2 (Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)). Shortly after the return of the unit's first troops to complete a Bosnia tour the top structure of the unit was completed as Maj A C Nixon became the first CO. The troops who had completed OP GRAPPLE 2 were replaced in theatre by a further detachment from 93 Pet Sqn, this heavy operation's commitment was to continue and is still part of the Sqn's role at this time.

135. Capt D A Carter joined the Sqn from the OPC and was immediately sent to Bosnia. As human disaster took place in Rwanda a contingent of 6 Petroleum Operators led by a Sgt Johnson was dispatched to assist the UN on OP GABRIEL, this lasted from Jul to Nov 94. Capt J R C Paterson was posted to the Sqn from the OPC in Nov 94 and immediately deployed with a troop on OP GRAPPLE 5. Capt P W Edwards was to complete his second tour of FRY as he led another West Moors contingent on OP GRAPPLE 6 from April to Nov 95. During this period the Squadron was then tasked to support another UN Operation, this time in Angola - OP CHANTRESS. Maj A C Nixon

and a section of Petroleum Operators deployed leaving only a small rear party at West Moors.

136. During these times of operational activity the Sqn still completed its commitment to the Depot, exercises with 9 Sup Regt and other detachments to BATUS (Canada), Kenya and the Falkland Islands. As the UN handed over to NATO in Bosnia in Dec 95 there was clearly a requirement for more Petroleum Operators to help build a new site at Sipovo to match the other Field Bulk Fuel Installation at Tomislavgrad and Vitez. The Sqn sent 12 soldiers and NCOs to help the unit already there. Maj D Burnham took over command of the Sqn in February 1996 from Maj A C Nixon. WO2 (SSM) S W Sugden became the Sqn's second SSM after SSM Turner's posting in early May 1996. By September 1996, 93 Pet Sqn were preparing to send another troop to Bosnia and elements of SHQ to help draw down forces there in accordance with the Dayton Agreement.

137. The first 2 years of the Sqn's history have been challenging and at times difficult periods for the Sqn as it strove to form up, equip and train itself and reconcile the divergent requirements of the Petroleum Centre and 9 Sup Regt. All this is set against a background of continual operational tours and a major reorganisation of the Petroleum Centre.

THE DORSET FIRE BRIGADE

137. Lt Col P J Taylorson RLC 26 Feb 94. Attended OPC 1976.

138. One of the most recent developments at West Moors is the Dorset Fire Brigade Training Wing opened formally on 6 Mar 96. The project began with the change in fire status which negated the requirement for the Defence Fire Service to be located on site. This left a serviceable fire station unused, whilst the Dorset Fire Brigade (DFB) needed a Training Wing. By bringing the DFB to the old site of the Depot DFS the Dorset taxpayer was saved £2.5 million. The result was, the Fire Service gained an excellent training facility that allows fire-fighters to train on real petroleum fires, and in return the Army has all its fire training provided courtesy of the Dorset Fire Brigade on their new facilities. Present at the opening ceremony was Earl Howe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence.

Colour photographs depicting the opening of the DFB, with a demonstration of fire-fighting.

1 May 1996 Baseline The ABSDA Newsletter Issue 8

ABSDA "Blazes a Trail" in Fire Protection.

"On Fri 14 July 1995, new ground was broken with the signing of a partnership agreement between the Petroleum Centre RLC and the DFB (the brainchild of the Petroleum Centre's CO Lt Col P J Taylorson). The partnership was fully cemented on the 6 March 1996 with an opening ceremony. It was a well attended affair, opening with a spectacular demonstration of fire-fighting. Earl Howe, Parliamentary Under-secretary of State was present and graced the day by giving the opening address. This partnership is the first time military and civilian fire fighting facilities have been combined. As background, the initiative was brought about by the change in status of the fire cover required by the Centre and consequent closure of the DDS Station at West Moors, resulting in considerable financial savings to the Ministry. As a benefit to the Home Office, the partnership expands DFB's local training facilities, enabling students to gain first-hand experience of tackling petroleum fires as well as access to a pollution area and lecture facilities. Without this partnership, the DFB would have had to consider the building of a new training centre costing about £2.5 million pounds. It would take at least 4 years to construct this and therefore the partnership represents a considerable saving to Dorset taxpayers".

"The initiative bodes well for the Centre's future relationship with local Government and at the same time ultimately benefits the local community, increasing safety standards all round. In a recent letter of gratitude to CE ABSDA, Earl Howe wrote, "It is, I believe, a considerable fillip that ABSDA has been seen to blaze a trail in this important area." He praised all those concerned, "Please pass on my thanks to all those involved in making the day a success, especially those soldiers who took part in an excellent demonstration of fire-fighting skills."

Wednesday 20 March 1996

Evening Echo: Fighting Fires for Real - Civilian and Military firemen join forces for the first time at new training Centre in West Moors.

A joyrider spins out of control forcing another car to smash into a truck before crashing the stolen vehicle. As flames begin to engulf the truck the offender jumps from his car and runs away just moments before a huge explosion - leaving behind him casualties trapped in the wreckage. Within minutes, firefighters are on the scene, water hoses are reeled out, the flames quickly extinguished and special hydraulic cutting equipment is expertly used to the top of the car to release the injured passengers with minimal movement.

It is a scenario all too familiar to Dorset's firefighters. But this was, in fact, a training exercise giving fire crews a chance to experience real flames, the effects of smoke and to speed up their rescue skills. Unusually, Dorset's firefighters were assisted by military personnel and the whole realistic display was watched by an audience of dignitaries, county councillors, Army representatives, officers from Dorset Fire Brigade and Christchurch MP Diana Maddock. Guest of honour was the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Earl Howe who was invited to officially open the Brigade's new Training Ground at the Army Training Ground at the Army Petroleum Centre at West Moors. It was an historic occasion because its the first time military and civilian fire-fighting facilities have been combined. It means Dorset's firefighters will have some of the best first-hand training experience in the UK. The link-up makes financial sense. The Fire Brigade desperately needed to expand its limited training facilities and the Army already had the perfect site where its own personnel are trained in fire-fighting skills in case of a disaster at the Centre, which holds some 31 million litres of fuel.

Financially, it has saved Dorset County Council the £2.5m required to build a new training ground. And the Army gains from the expert training offered by the experienced fire brigade staff. "Previously, we have not been able to give our crews the opportunity for real live fire training which we can now do here," said training centre Commander Malcolm Lucas. "We will run a variety of courses and training is ongoing in the brigade. For retained personnel we will run a 3 month course covering the basic training, the use of breathing apparatus and real fire training."

Opening the training ground Earl Howe said: "What we have just seen at the hot fire training area was very impressive and provides a graphic demonstration of the first-class training that the MOD and Dorset Fire Brigade students will have."

Cllr Margarate Hogarth, Chairman of Dorset County Council's Public Protection Committee said: "It was only 12 months ago that we first mooted the idea of combined facility with the Army and it has resulted in this excellent facility. We were aware for some time that training facilities for Dorset Fire Brigade were not good enough and when we send men out on dangerous projects it is essential that they are well trained."

Dorset's Chief Fire Officer Kenneth Knight said: "Ministerial approval is very welcome as is the change to demonstrate the excellence of our Fire Brigade in Dorset. This is a valuable deal. It saves the people of Dorset millions of pounds which would have been necessary to build a new training centre from scratch.

After the opening ceremony Earl Howe sent his regards to Brig K J W Goad ADC Chief Executive of ABSDA.

"I very much enjoyed taking part in the opening of the Dorset Fire Brigade Training Centre yesterday. It is, I believe, a considerable fillip that ABSDA has been seen to blaze a trail in this important area.

I take a keen personal interest in the success of initiatives such as this and I wish to restate my thanks to all those who have worked hard to get this collaborative venture up and running.

The fact that it has taken only 12 months from concept to completion is a testament to what can be achieved when there is a will.

Please pass on my thanks to all those who made the day such a success, especially the soldiers who took part in an excellent demonstration of fire-fighting skills."

THE SCHOOL OF PETROLEUM

139. In 1995 a total of 27 courses were run in the School of Petroleum (SOP), of the 253 students which passed through a total of 245 have passed, resulting in a pass rate of 96.8%, in addition to the courses on offer training assistance was provided to All Arms Unit Safety

Officers' Courses with lectures on hazards associated with petroleum products. RLC Troop Commanders Course, 2 day petroleum modules held at West Moors. Commonwealth and Foreign Ordnance Officers' Course a 4 day petroleum module held at West Moors and RLC TA Troop Commanders Course, a one day petroleum module held at West Moors. The School has also hosted TA Training Weekends throughout the year for the 2 Independent and one Specialist Petroleum Squadrons. An additional petroleum Operators Course is currently being run for drivers to meet a shortfall in the trade for operational commitments.

140. Following the introduction of Pollution Control Absorbents and Equipment, pollution training for course personnel is now being carried out in-house by School Staff without the need to buy in expertise from outside.

141. The role of the School in 1996 compared to the role of the School in 1970. The School's function has been consolidated to one of training and teaching, omitting Petroleum Depot functions and Petroleum Laboratory functions and also the Petroleum Inspectorate.

142. In 1995-96 there were 11 types of courses available, which were as follows:

- a. **Officers' Petroleum Course**: The course has been running since 1949/50 and the aim of the course was to fill petroleum and petroleum related appointments. The course in the modern day is broken down into 3 phases, academic, laboratory, military theory and practical, and an individual project. The course receives instruction not only from the School itself, but also educational visits, such as British Pipeline Agency Visit, civilian industry such as, Esso based Fawley and Abingdon and visits to other Armed Services.
- b. **Advanced Petroleum SNCO Course**. The B1 course should have given all information needed, however, it may have been completed too early in the career, or by the time the rank of SNCO has been reached much may have been forgotten or out of date. Many aspects of the SNCO Pet Op appointment which are only relevant to SNCOs and can only be appreciated by SNCOs because of their experience in Service and the levels of responsibility and the type of position.
- c. **B1 Petroleum Operators Course**. This course lasts for 6 weeks, those who pass the course are technically qualified to become SNCO, however, to achieve this it has to be proven regimentally through leadership and supervisory qualities. Standards on this course are high because it is the least mandatory course between their position and WO1.
- d. **B2 Petroleum Operator TA**. This course is 10 days' duration and is unique in that there is no Regular equivalent.
- e. **B3 Petroleum Operator**. This is a 9 week course, containing learning objectives which are then tested.
- f. **B3 Petroleum Operator TA**. A 2 week course, in some respects this course is harder for the TA as they have to remember what they have learned without the benefit of putting what they have learned into practice.

- g. **RE Fitters' Course.** This course is 10 days in length and covers the awareness of fuel aspects of the Army, fire, Service fuels and lubricants, UBRE/TTF, multi-product pumping. The course finishes with an exam.
- h. **AAC Anti Fuel Manager - (Relicensing).** Course one week's duration, with 2 days relicensing. This involves, fire safety, quality control and quality surveillance, Service fuels and lubricants, helicopter refuelling and bulk fuel vehicles.
- i. **AAC Refueller Instructor (Relicensing).** This course is 3 weeks' duration.
- j. **REME Degassing Course (Relicensing).** The course lasts for one week, with 2 relicensing.
- k. **UBRE/TTF COURSE.** Two weeks' duration.

CONCLUSION

143. The Petroleum Centre is part of the Army Base Storage and Distribution Agency (ABSDA). It is an integral part of the Army Supply Chain dedicated to meeting the requirements of front line troops all over Europe. The base which covers 180 hectares, receives, stores and issues bulk and packed fuels, oils and lubricants with a capacity to hold 31 million litres. In addition, some 71,000 filled Jerricans are held as a mobilisation reserve and in excess of 200,000 cans are processed each year.

144. Today the Depot is the Army's only such establishment. It is responsible for the resupply Petroleum products to the Army in both peace and war and a host of support, training and research functions. Continuous modernisation has resulted in little being recognisable from the war years - except for a very short section of the internal railway line at the site of the Fairfax complex, where aspects of technical training now takes place.

145. In summary the Petroleum Centre is now barely recognisable from its humble beginnings as POL Depot Q-328 in the Second World War. It is now a highly developed modern facility, for example it has recently disbanded manual accounts and now uses GLOBAL and RAFSITS. Furthermore, with the closure of RAF Carlisle the Depot now handles all the RAF stock. The Depot also boasts the School of Petroleum, 93 Squadron RLC, a part of the 9 Supply Regiment, the Petroleum Laboratories and the Petroleum Inspectorate as unique and important functions provided to the British Army from West Moors, as the sole storage and distribution installation for petroleum products.

ANNEX A TO
HQPC WM
DATED AUG 96

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt Col L J Blackiston RASC	Jun 46 - Jun 47
Lt Col A Grieve RASC	25 Jun 47 - 01 May 49
Lt Col J F Waterfield RASC	02 May 49 - 29 Aug 51
Lt Col N V Anderson OBE RASC	30 Aug 51 - 24 May 53
Lt Col R A MacDonald RASC	25 May 53 - 17 May 56
Lt Col H Woodward RASC	18 May 56 - 19 Mar 58
Lt Col S Hoyle RASC	20 Mar 58 - 31 Aug 1960
Lt Col J H B Molyneux RASC	01 Sep 60 - 24 Jul 61
Lt Col C W Foskett RASC	25 Jul 61 - 31 Oct 63
Lt Col G G Hill MBE RASC	01 Nov 63 - 17 Aug 65
Lt Col W D N Mitchell RAOC	20 Sep 65 - 24 Mar 68
Lt Col C W Foskett RAOC	25 Mar 68 - 12 Jan 70
Lt Col P G Walker RAOC	13 Jan 70 - 31 Oct 71
Lt Col P G Walker RAOC	01 Nov 71 - 22 Feb 73
Lt Col T H Kemp RAOC	23 Feb 73 - 05 Jun 75
Lt Col D A Simpson RAOC	06 Jun 75 - 07 Sep 77
Lt Col R M Cannons RAOC	08 Sep 77 - 07 Aug 80
Lt Col G K Gilberry RAOC	08 Aug 80 - 03 Feb 84
Lt Col M A Marshall	04 Feb 84 - 25 Sep 87
Lt Col M E Newman RAOC	25 Sep 87 - 22 Oct 90
Lt Col I M Ross RAOC	23 Oct 90 - 04 Apr 93
Lt Col I M Ross RLC	05 Apr 93 - 25 Feb 94
Lt Col P J Taylorson RLC	26 Feb 94 -

ANNEX B TO
HQPC WM
DATED AUG 96

OFFICERS' LONG PETROLEUM INSTALLATION COURSE

No 1 1949/50

Maj D Findlay	RASC
Maj A L G F Souter	RASC
Capt S H Bullough	RASC
Capt Townsend	RASC

No 2 1951

Maj H C Holliness	RASC
Maj J H B Molyneux	RASC
Maj C W Foskett	RASC
Maj A G Kanetkar	IASC
Capt F L Thompson	RAASC
Capt Abdul Jabbar	RPASC
Capt S D Blackburn	RASC
Lt D Watson	RASC

No 3 1952

Maj R H Webber	RASC
Maj D Anderson	RASC
Capt R G Twiss	RASC
Capt M Warton	RASC
Capt F A Swain	
Capt V Kuppuswami	ASC

No 4 1952/53

Capt V A Bartollo	RASC
Capt A D Burley	RASC
Capt V G Harvard	RASC
Capt M C Hughes	RASC

No 5 1953/4

Maj K S Pickard	RASC
Maj J E Pern	RASC
Maj H H Cail	RASC
Maj A D Gregory	RASC
Maj R H Sandes	RASC
Maj G N Sapru	IASC
Capt J R Teatum	RASC
Capt N V Prior	RASC
Capt P V P Wills	RASC
Capt V G Leclercq	RASC
Capt J M Butler	RASC
Capt P V Stanton	RAASC
Lt P Whitehead	RASC

No 6 1954/5

Maj C J Ridley	RASC
Capt P G Walker	RASC
Capt D A M Phipps	RASC
Capt R H B Atckinson	RASC
Capt J D Aitken	RASC
Capt D J C Wickes	RASC
Capt J S Messervy	RASC
Capt W E Willies	RASC
Lt W N Allan	RASC
Lt J ATurner	RASC
Lt V Richards	RASC

No 7 1956

Maj R V Poultner	RASC
Maj T K Batty	RASC
Capt J D Lofts	RASC
Capt D W Olliffe	RASC
Capt J N Mottram	RASC
Capt A F Nieve	RASC
Capt S J Dark	RASC
Capt T Tracey	RASC
Capt R E L Jenkins	RASC
Capt E A Wiles	RASC
Lt P R Cooke	RASC

No 8 1957

Maj A M H Blair	RASC
Maj G N Drury	RASC
Capt W K Ronald	RASC
Capt P J L Driscoll	RASC
Capt A R Newcombe	RASC
Capt G Shorrock	RASC
Capt J S Fairweather	RASC
Capt R N Jackson	RASC
Capt R J Dance	RASC

No 9 1958

Maj P de L Bainbridge	RASC
Maj J D Elliott	RASC
Maj J E Andrews	RASC
Capt M P Dann	RASC
Capt P R M Lawson	RASC
Capt D Hainsworth	RASC
Capt R H Slade	RASC
Capt C J K Underhill	RASC
Capt S B Ball	RASC
Lt G Broome	RASC

No 10 1958/9

Capt P L Morgan	RASC
Capt B D Underwood	RASC
Capt G M J Hopper	RASC
Capt N M Easden	RASC
Lt M B Bunce	RASC
Lt B Zakariya	Jordanian

No 11 1959/60

Capt J A Baillie	RASC
Capt B T C Smith	RASC
Capt D H Saunders	RASC
Capt R Ellis	RASC
Capt W M Young	RASC
Lt K I Mentzel	RASC

No 12 1960/61

Maj N M Turner	RAASC
Capt R J L Bogan	RASC
Capt T M Cosgrove	RASC
Capt B V Williss	RASC
Capt G D Carey	RASC
Capt C E Van-Orton	RASC

No 13 1961/62

Capt E R Adams	RASC
Capt R H Dickinson	RASC
Capt G K Gilberry	RASC
Capt A J Muston	RASC
Capt R L Smith	RASC
Lt I A McKinnon	RASC

No 14 1962/63

Capt M F John	RASC
Capt R B L Boulton	RASC
Capt M A Marshall	RASC
Capt G D Chapman	RASC
Capt R Embly	RASC
Lt T D Yeats	RASC

No 15 1963/64

Capt F N Webster	RAOC
Capt P J Warren	RAOC
Capt S H Portmen	RAOC
Capt E B Jeffrey	RAOC
Capt M J Ball	RAASC
Capt Yaacob Bin Haji Saleh	MSC

No 17 1965/66

Maj P N Gomez	RAOC
Maj J Kemp	RAOC
Maj N Kumar	IASC

Capt R D Bracken RAOC

No 18 1967

Maj R G Emmett	RAOC
Maj D A Simpson	RAOC
Capt J T Underwood	RAOC
Capt R M Cannons	RAOC
Lt M D Clarke	RAOC
Capt B A Malligan	RAASC

No 19 1968

Lt W H Jackson	RAOC
Lt C D Green	RAOC
Lt D B Waddell	RAOC
2Lt I M Ross	RAOC
Capt A J Good	RAOC
Capt P A J Flanagan	RAASC

No 20 1969

Capt A Norman Bailey	RAOC
Capt M E Newman	RAOC
Lt M J Harris	RAOC
2Lt P D T C Pash	RAOC
Capt J D Cambridge	RAASC

No 21 1970

Capt I F Sharp	RAOC
Lt A P Haden	RAOC
Lt R B P Smith	RAOC
Lt M N Roberts	RAOC
Capt P K Roper	RAASC
Lt J M Young	RNZASC

No 22 1971

Capt P A Barker	RAASC
Lt R K V Bensaid	RAOC
Lt R C Grey	RAOC
Lt P M Brice	RAOC

No 23 1972

Capt G F Edney	RAAOC
Lt D A Wright	RAOC
Lt C J M Graham	RAOC
Lt G W Harris	RAOC
Lt A J Postance	RAOC
Lt D J Randall	RAOC

No 24 1973

Capt Kime	RAOC
Capt Gilson	RAOC
Capt Turner	RAOC
Lt Norris	RAOC
Lt Foxton	RAOC
Lt Gee	RAOC

No 25 1974

Capt R G Ginn	RAOC
Capt Abu Zarim	MSC
Lt C C Burrow	RAOC
Lt R S Coward	RAOC
Lt D J G Davies-Pellow	RAOC
Lt R G Medley	RAOC

No 26 1975

Capt D A W Hardwick	RAOC
Capt N S Nalepa	RAOC
Lt N C Smith	RAOC
Lt L M Wood	RAOC
Capt D B Yahya	Malaysia

No 27 1976

Capt D J P Griffiths	RAOC
Capt C M Cann	RAOC
Capt P J Taylorson	RAOC
Capt A D Kemp	RAOC

Capt P K Dollman	RAAOC
Lt P M Claughton	RAOC
Capt Mohd Saini Bin Samat	MASC
Lt (Air) Monlis Bin Abdul Manaf	RMAF

No 28 1977

Capt K D G Mortimer	RAOC
Capt C J O'Leary	RAOC
Lt P A Ball	RAOC
Lt R Elliott	RAOC
Lt M H Lewington	RAOC
Capt M C Braithwaite	RAAOC
Flt Lt Mexon	RAOC
Capt Paneerselvan Parambalam	Malaya (A)
Capt Mohammad Noor Bin Hamid	Malaya (N)

No 29 1978

Capt N J McNally	RAOC
Capt R G Simonds	RAOC
Lt S N Addy	RAOC
Lr V C M Frazer	RAOC
Capt D N W Mukundi	Kenya Army

No 30 1979

Capt C E M Hannaway	RAOC
Capt C Lloyd	RAOC
Lt C N P Emmett	RAOC
Lt P C Harris	RAOC
Lt (Air) Zulkifly Bun Hussin	R Malay Air Force
Capt Lim Sue Yan	Malaysian Army

No 31 1980

Capt C A Hewitt	RAOC
Capt P G Osborne	RAOC
Capt C W Boyd	RAAOC
Flt Lt K B Contessa	RAAF
Lt R S D Ward	RAOC

No 32 1981

Capt M Randall	WRAC
Capt J F G Wilberforce	RAOC
Capt M A Fenwick	RAOC
Lt T Couch	RAOC
Lt D G F Ingston-Jones	RAOC
Capt Qasid Moh'd Saleh	Jordan
Lt Tawfig Moh'd Suleiman	Jordan
Lt Nik Rahimi Bin Moh'd Nawi	Malaysian Army
Capt P J Haddad	RAAOC
Fg Off D J Richardson	RAAF

No 33 1982

Capt N P Lloyd	RAOC
Capt R Ellis	RAOC
Capt P C Crossman	RAOC
Capt Emran Bin Yvsoff	Malaysia
Lt W L Hutton	RAOC
Flg Off J C Nibbs	RAAF

No 34 1983

Capt C H W Bamford	RAOC
Lt I J Sturges	RAOC
Lt C I Walker	RAOC
Capt Yoon Kok Chuan	Malaysia
Flt Lt P O'Neill	RAAF

No 35 1984

Capt Lacis	RAOC
Capt Gooding	RAAOC
Capt Parry	RAOC
Lt Ling	RAOC
Lt Galt	RAOC

2Lt Carson

RNZAOC

No 36 1985

Lt Selling	RAOC
Capt Lillystone	RAOC
Lt Crosby	RAOC
Capt Morgan	RAOC
Capt Gosney	RAOC
Capt Hawketts	RAAOC

No 37 1986

Flt R L Hodge	RAAF
Flt Lt N Arnold	RAF
Lt W Mead	RAOC
Lt M P J Kendrick	RAOC
Lt J D Bevan	RAOC
Lt C Blong	RAOC
Lt C A Hewitt	RAOC

No 38 1987

Lt T G France	RAOC
Capt J P Simpson	RAOC
Capt N P Challis	RAOC
Lt D Burnham	RAOC
Capt R F Greathead	RAOC
Capt R M Emmerson	RAAOC
2Lt S W Bruce	RNZAOC

No 39 1988

Lt D C M Zintek	CF (Canadian Forces Land)
Capt M E Hobday	RAOC
Lt A J Goodman	RLC
Flt Lt S A Smith	RAAF
Capt A C Nixon	RAOC

No 40 1989

Capt L C Johnson	RAAOC
Capt P R Couser	RAOC
Capt M J S Urch	RAOC
Lt S C Steele	RAOC
Flg Off N F Atkinson	RAF
Capt P A Harrold	RAOC

No 41 1990

Capt A N Clydesdale	RAOC
Lt J A Sheehy	RAOC
Lt M R Holmes	RAOC
Capt N E Bolton	RAOC
Flt Lt K L Kwok	RAAF
Flg Off M L Large	RAF
Capt H V Duffy	RNZAOC
Flt Off C S Webster	RAF

No 42 1991

Capt D M McKeon	RAAOC
Lt T I M Lishman	RAOC
Capt J Barnsley	RAOC
Lt C J Casson	RAOC
Flg Off K L Merrison	RAF
Lt P W Edwards	RAOC
Flg Off R A Sutton	RAF

No 43 1992

Lt A J Dixon	RAOC
Flg Off J Saddington	RAF
Capt M O Cooper	RAOC
Capt G E Vaughan	RAOC
Flt Lt R J Hale	RAF
Capt M C G Batiste	RAAOC

No 44 1993

Capt D A Carter	RAOC (RLC)
Capt C A Glasgow	RAOC (RLC)
Flt Lt D McGovern	RAAF

Lt M Rivers	RAAOC
Lt R A Schofield	RAOC (RLC)
Flg Off G R Jones	RAF
Flg Off D G Harrop	RAF
2Lt J P Donnachie	RAOC (RLC)

No 45 1994

Lt Edwards	RLC
Capt Loftus	RLC
Lt Maddison	RLC
Capt Paterson RLC	
Capt Peak	RLC
Capt Grey	RAAOC
Flg Off Dorsett	RAF
Flt Lt Davidson	RAF

No 46 1995

Capt Williams	RAAOC
Lt Alford	RLC
Capt Bell	RLC
Lt McManhon	RLC
Capt Moore	RLC
Lt Nanovo	RLC
Flt LT Bullers	RAF
Flt Lt Heaton	RAF
Flg Off Sawyer	RAF

No 47 1996

Capt E Enracht Mooney	RLC
Capt L J Lewis	RLC
Capt C A Roberts	RLC
Lt I R O Bowers	RLC
Lt K P Dodgson	RLC
Lt J R Timmis	RLC
Capt A Lynn	RAAOC
Flt Lt S L Tricker	RAF

Flt Lt C R Turner

RAF

ANNEX C TO
HQPC WM
DATED AUG 96

WO1 NOMINAL ROLE

ANNEX D TO
HQPC WM
DATED AUG 96

4 PETROLEUM DEPOT - Schaferhof Nienber/Weser BAR 32

1. After the bombing of the underground oil depot by the US 8th Air Force on the 5 Aug 44, as this picture illustrates, it is evident that in at least 7 places the craters have greater depth than others, which is probably due to penetration of the underground tanks. Almost all the roads in the target area are pitted with craters. It is remarkable that during the bombing only one person was killed and that within 10 days the depot was operational. What follows below is an account of Schaferhof Nienber/Weser as No 4 Petroleum Depot RASC.

2. The tanks are zeppelin in shape and constructed of riveted steel plates set in a reinforced concrete shell, as can be seen in a picture of a bomb damaged tank illustrated in the book. During a bombing raid carried out by 120 planes of the American Air Force 8 large and 6 small tanks were destroyed. One tank caught fire and burned for 12 hours. The tanks are sunk to a depth of up to 50 ft and provide an excellent storage, since the temperature is always low (50-60F) and shows very little variation winter or summer. The large tanks are 150 ft long by 35 ft in diameter. The pumps which serve each of these tanks are also sunk underground.

3. The main entrance to No 4 Petroleum Depot RASC was once the entrance to "Wirtschaftliche Forschungsgesellschaft GmbH Aussentelle Nienberg - Weser". Under German control this was a state run organisation whose chief function was the supply of petroleum products to the German Army and Air Forces. Synthetic base gasolines were sent by rail and barge from the factory for blending and storage in underground tanks. Lubricating oils were also blended and stored in bulk.

4. As 4 Petroleum Depot the role of the installation was storage of bulk and packed POL and container filling. Six grades of POL are handled, 70 MT Gas, 80 MT Gas, Dieso, Kero and, 100/130 AV Gas, together with a full complement of Lubricants and Greases. The great advantage of Nienberg was the variety of means of delivering and receiving POL, such as road, rail and barges, which were moored off at Hamburg and Bremen.

5. Transportation by barge has not been used since the occupation and all Bulk Petroleum is sent to the Installation by rail, in a train of about 600 tons. Diesel locomotives as seen above, are operated by the unit for the depot shunting, since they present a low fire risk.

6. One of the Installation's main commitments was filling from bulk to packed fuels using jerricans as the chief containers. New Jerricans were supplied under contract from German factories and can be seen here being unloaded. They are stacked separately in batches of approximately 3000 jerricans and from each of those batches 10% are given a

mechanical and chemical test. If the jerricans tested are found to be below specification then the whole consignment is then rejected.

7. A full account is given of managing and handling bulk and packed POL, with full health and safety as well as detailed accounts of operations. For example, in each rail car before discharge commences each rail tank car is weighed on the weigh bridge and the seals are checked. A sample is taken by the Petroleum Laboratory and the specific gravity and the temperature of the product is recorded. Discharge hoses are then coupled up and the manhole covers are opened ready for discharge. All personnel engaged in this type of work were equipped with non-spark boots.

8. Health and safety are stressed at all times; as illustrated by the photograph below as the jerricans are conveyed to the filling shed by means of a roller conveyor which has a guide rail for easy handling. This is also shown in the photograph of the washing room, firstly each jerrican is washed on 5 point washing machines, it is flushed out under pressure with the product it is to contain. In the background the air conditioning system can be seen, the vapour leaden air is pumped out and clean air is pumped in, which is also pre-heated in winter by steam pipes. Secondly, all men in the photograph are wearing good overalls as protective clothing.

9. The rate of filling the Jerricans, which are fed on an endless belt system, was 28 jerricans per minute. In this way 13,440 Jerricans are filled with 268,800 litres of Gasoline in one working day. The operation was entirely automatic by a machine that was specifically constructed for the German Army by Messrs Tagenberg of Deusseldorf, which as you can see by the photograph has similar characteristics to the mobile automatic rotary jerrican Filling machine, more commonly known as the "Cow".

10. The German machine was installed on a revolving platform. The spirit flows from a balance tank at the top of the machine into the 24 cylindrical measuring columns, each containing 20 litres. During the first half of the operation the measuring columns are filled. The filling of the Jerrican is completed during the second half of the revolution. Valves and filling nozzles are opened and closed by means of trip operated switches. When the jerrican has been filled a trip device closes the nozzle and the jerrican is pushed from the filling machine on to a conveyor. The filling caps are closed and each jerrican is stencilled with the filling date and batch number and the identification clip is attached. The entire filling machine is driven by a motor the speed of which can be adjusted to regulate output. Again, in the background of the picture you can see a fire hydrant.

11. A CO² automatic fusible link is installed in the filling shed. Links throughout the building are set at 90°C to actuate this plant in case of fire; whereupon a battery of 36 cylinders discharge and flood the building with CO². The cylinders were examined periodically to check the contents and ensure that no leakage has taken place.

12. The jerricans now filled emerge from the filing shed, they are then transported by means of roller conveyor to the railway siding. They are inspected on route to ensure that the closures are tight. the jerricans are then stacked into open rail cars, because of the fire risk it is not permitted to load low flash point fuels into box cars. The jerricans are stacked

upright, 1024 jerricans per rail car, ready for dispatch to a Petroleum Reserve Depot, or Divisions and Districts. As there are no issues to consumption of the packed stock sent to the Petroleum Reserve Depot, turnover is effected by returning the jerricans to this

Installation, so that the contents may be decanted and returned to Bulk, for issue of consumption in bulk form. The policy is to turn over all packed gasoline every 6 months. In the decanting shed (picture available) approximately 15000 jerricans can be decanted in an 8 hour day. The average monthly decanting amounts to 25000 tons of MT gasoline, which is, of course, replaced by newly filled stock. In addition to jerrican filling this unit fills drums for the RAF with AV GAS and AVTUR. The filling shed (picture supplied) has an output of 400 drums per day. The drums are filled by weight, the necessary adjustment being made to allow for the different specific gravity of the products filled. As can be seen by the photograph the filling shed is spotlessly clean and the operator is wearing overalls and protective footwear.

13. As most of the machinery in the Installation was powered by electricity, the picture would not be complete without reference to the Power Station. It was used in the event of a breakdown of the Nienberg Power Station. A diesel driven motor of 590 hp, the generator could be operated to produce 400 volts 722 amps. The diesel engine is similar to those used in U-boats. Heat is provided in the filling shed by means of an underground boiler house, this was previously oil fired but was converted to for the sake of economy. Further fuel economy is effected by the use of water filters, which prevent the furring of the boiler walls.

14. In 1969-71 CO Cail closed Nienberg down and between 1975-76 it was handed back to the Germans. It is unknown whether it is still used as its original use.

15. From Nienburg operations were moved to Belgium, because this was felt to be more convenient and was more static. Which in turn was moved to Warendorf and also Arsbech in the 1970s, it became 6PRD, Packed Reserve Depot and was responsible for aviation fuel.

16. Warendorf boasted an Automatic Jerrican Filling Machine built by the Germans, however, it was only operational if the jerricans were perfect, ie new. If any can was slightly dented the whole system would shut down and it was often large manpower to find the faulty can. The British Army would not accept it and the Germans threatened to sue. We won the court case; the German Engineer who was responsible committed suicide.

17. The Petroleum laboratories at Warendorf were co-located with 4PD from Nienberg, they were responsible for the implementation of STANAG 38149, for issues and receipts and also clearing the tankers out. The Petroleum Inspectorate was started in 1978, with between 6-9 personnel; responsible for product quality they covered the 9 Supply depots including Berlin and the 432 POL stores which turned over their stock every 6 months.

18. On the 5 Aug 93 just 4 months after the formation of the RLC, the Executive Committee of the Army Board directed that the 4 RLC Installations to be transferred from the Top Level Budget of the Commander-in-Chief British Army to the Top Level Budget of the QMG. The 3 units concerned were 3 Base Ammunition Depot Bracht; 12 Sup Regt Wulfen; 14 Sup Regt Dulmen and 122 Petroleum Sqn Warendorf.

19. From that time it was decided to transfer the units, a further decision was made to close the Petroleum Depot at Warendorf and to relocate 122 Petroleum Squadron. Warendorf was, therefore, not to be transferred to the QMG's Top Level budget and remained with HQ UK Comd (Germany), for closure action to be affected by them.

20. The photograph below illustrates the dismantling and closure of Warendorf.

21. The Global view in the 1960s was a small Packed Depot in Cyprus which also contained a small petroleum laboratory which was largely autonomous reporting back to Episcopi. It was responsible for the RAF, the Army at Dekahlia, Aden and North Africa. It was not solely confined to POL but was also responsible for testing paints and adhesives.

22. In Singapore a small Reserve Depot and Petroleum Laboratory that again was not solely responsible in the Far East. Again the laboratory was not only responsible for POL but also tested paints, adhesives and textiles. At this time there was also a 1 x 3 ton and a 1 x 10 ton mobile laboratory in Korea, only the 3 ton mobile laboratory saw active service.

PLUTO

1. The POL Committee was one of the most active and efficient of the many committees set up to tackle some particular aspect of war production. The Minister, Geoffrey Lloyd, seated experienced men as his advisers on the POL Committee, who were all drawn from the great Oil Companies, the provision of jerricans was only one of this Committee's tasks.

2. The most spectacular, and later, the the most publicised achievement of this committee was the union of Tombola and Hais known by its acrostic code name, PLUTO, Pipeline Under The Ocean. Tombola was a steel cable, wound onto a large drum, for which a special ship was needed; Hais was a flexible hollow cable of unusual type.

3. Experiments with the underwater pipe-line were carried out in the British Channel and after some difficulties at the beginning, principally in making watertight connections between pipeline and shore station the system proved to be completely effective. In full working order, PLUTO was to pump 1,000,000 gallons a day across the Channel. What follows below is an account of the history of the war production of jerricans and PLUTO.

"Mulberry the Return in Triumph" Michael Harrison

"In July 1942, Mounbatten, deeply concerned at the persisting inefficiency of the petrol supply system, expressed his anxiety to Wehner. The principal cause of Moutbatten's anxiety was not so much the continuing "archaism" of the petrol delivery system - though that was cause of anxiety enough - as that the Petroleum Committee appeared to be unable to force new views and new methods on the War Office. To be precise: upon Sir James Grigg, the Secretary of State at War.

Without an adequate supply of fuel, the invading armies would not have been able to advance more than a few hundred yards into France; they would not have been able to get across the Channel. Mountbatten, then realising that, upon a sufficiency of fuel delivered to the invading armies - the whole success of the operation depended, arranged, immediately after his appointment as Chief of Combined Operations, for the setting up of an independent organisation solely concerned with the question of transporting petrol to the invading forces.

As a legacy from the days when "Carless, Capel and Leonard had invented the trade name "Petrol", for refined petroleum spirit, the flimsy tinned-iron had survived as the only petrol container issued by the QMG. Fragile in themselves, these "tins" were rendered even more vulnerable to the dangers of long distance transport by the lack of timber framing which would have prevented the upper layers of tins crushing the lower. In a ship's hold the weight of thousands of tins crushed other thousands to a flat sheet of metal. The losses were as high as 40% of a vital war material which had to be imported through seas already taking a grievous toll of imports.

Early in 1942, Mountbatten approached Geoffrey Lloyd, the Minister of Fuel, and laid before the Minister the fears with which the then existing petrol arrangements filled the CCO.

"Then Wehner explained the advantages of the "jerrican" ... For the "jerrican", a marvel of psychologically evolved design (for one thing, it is impossible to leave the cap unscrewed by accident) was invented in America and pinched by the Germans and taken up again by the Americans. Now here was Harold Wehner, pleading that the British Government order a crash programme to replace the flimsy tinned iron-plate with the strong steel jerrican. The delicacy of the situation lay in the fact that a firm in which Harold Wehner had an interest amongst those which had the necessary facilities for pressing out the steel jerricans. This fact had caused Wehner to hesitate but not to draw back. If his intentions were to be misunderstood, that was better than that his intentions should never be to achieve the hoped for result.

Grigg listened. He had already made up his mind - which meant that he intended to do nothing, "I expect you're right. You may be. I can't say. but, in any case, its no concern of my Department ..."

"No concern of your Department!" Wehner gasped. "No concern of the War Office that our armies are going short of essential fuel supplies for their mechanised transport and our armoured vehicles! You';; find," said Wehner, "that its very much the concern of your Department when questions are asked in the House. Its you who'll have to stand up and answer those questions."

For the records, we may say that James Grigg saw to it Harold Wehner suffered for his outspoken language. The upshot of that interview, as they say was this, Grigg had now set his face against the change-over from flimsy, leaky petrol tins of the traditional type to Wehner's jerricans. Mountbatten and Wehner realised that they would have to make other arrangements if the invasion was going to have its fair share of petrol.

Wehner was at a meeting representing the Combined Operations Headquarters. "I let both the QMG and the Air Ministry chap say their say. They both went cheerfully to work to demolish my arguments and brush away my complaints. Then when they'd both sat down, well pleased with themselves at having argued so well for the flimsy tin cans and against the German-American jerricans, I asked Ralph Metcalf, the Deputy Director of Sea Transport to come in.

"Metcalf didn't say much. He didn't have to. He just opened his briefcase, took out some photographs and passed them around the table. They were photographs of the ships' holds, showing the appalling wastage and damage due to the flimsy petrol tins."

"The consequence was that the Findlater Stewart committee was to set up to mass-produce jerricans.""

16 Oct 94 D-Day Nears for Gas Pipe to Continent - Paul Rogers

PLUTO laid 4 underwater petrol pipes, each with an inside diameter of 3 inches, running from the Isle of Wight to Cherbourg in France shortly after the invasion. It followed later with 17 more from Dungeness to the liberated Calais. But the lines were abandoned after the war and while telephones, electricity and rail lines now tie Britain to the Continent, no new pipeline has been built.

03 Jun 94 The Times Getting Fuel Across: PLUTO

With every mile that the Allied armies advanced, so the demand for petrol increased. However, Operation PLUTO ensured there was no shortage of supplies.

From 12 Aug 44 to 8 May 45, about 120 million gallons of petroleum were pumped to the Allied armies in Europe via the "PLUTO" pipelines under the Channel. A total of 21 pipelines were laid: four along the 70 mile route from the Isle of Wight to Cherbourg and 17 along a 31-mile stretch between Dungeness and Boulogne.

Two types of piping were used. The first, Hais pipe, was similar to a 3 inch electric cable, with the core removed. The second Hammel pipe was made of 3 inch diameter steel cable rolled onto floating drums HMS Conundrums.

On the longer crossing the line was laid in 10 hours while the shorter one took just 5 hours to lay. Because of the need for secrecy all the installation work was carried out at night. Even the pumping stations were camouflaged. One was set in an old Napoleonic fort, another in an amusement arcade and still others were built inside seaside bungalows.

The photographs below detail the retrieval of the Tombola pipeline which is wound onto a large drum using a special ship.

COL.HISTORY2(Fw)