MITCHINER LECTURE, 1994

The National Service Era in the RAMC

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May I begin by thanking General Mayes, the Director General of the Army Medical Services, for asking me to give this year's Mitchiner Lecture. Over many years I have at varying intervals sat in the audience at this lecture and looked in some awe at those giving it, and never dreamt that one day I would share their high honour.

May I also thank General George Cowan, the Commandant, for his kind introduction. I had a high regard for his ability from his student days: the Army Medical Services are fortunate in having at this time his organising and clinical skills, both of the highest calibre.

The English are a great race, and the man in whose memory this lecture is given was a very English Englishman. He was a Southerner and not a Northerner, a Londoner, with perhaps some of the characteristics of the Cockney about him.

Philip Mitchiner was born in Croydon in June 1888 and died aged 64 in October 1952. His father was described as a "corn merchant and not wealthy"; he won a scholarship to Reigate School - where the Director General I served under, Sir Norman Talbot, was also a pupil. Interestingly, the Mitchiner family moved to Reigate to allow their scholar son to continue to live at home and not have to become a school boarder.

In an outstanding early career he entered St. Thomas' Hospital Medical School with a science scholarship, won the gold medal on graduating in 1912, passed his English Fellowship in 1913, and graduated MS of London University the next year. In due course he was on the staff of St. Thomas' Hospital, wrote in collaboration a notable surgical text-book, and became the epitome of the volunteer soldier. Service in the ranks, in The Queen's Volunteers from the age of 16 and later in the London University OTC, gave him a consideration for the soldier he never lost.

Commissioned in 1914 in the 5th London General Hospital of the newly formed Territorial Force, he served in the First War and after in Salonika, in the medical sub-unit of London University OTC for 13 years between the wars, was ADMS of the 2nd London Division TA in 1933 (until 1967 the Territorial Army was indeed an Army, with brigades, divisions, and all supporting arms and services), ADMS of the new 1st Anti-Aircraft Division in 1939, later DDMS in Norway in 1940 and then in Northern Command, and finally as Consultant Surgeon to the Middle East in 1944. Mitchiner was what we in

Scotland call a "lad o' pairts", or the French call "homme doué".

Not all aspects of his character and personality were exemplary. Coarseness when teaching students and rudeness towards staff can never be justified. Nor need sarcasm be a vehicle for student instruction, universal as it once was. Nevertheless Mitchiner clearly had a quality of kindness for the less fortunate in life, plus a charisma, which were real, and which remind us of a truth perhaps being ignored at present: a man may have an obvious failing or weakness in one sphere and yet still be capable of giving service of the highest value to others. Such a person can treat his neighbours with charity and kindness more than one whose correctness of character is lacking in those saving graces. So it was with Philip Mitchiner.

I have given this outline of his life to remind us of the sort of person we are to remember this evening. At no time was Major General Mitchiner a professional regular soldier or officer. He was not the first Territorial to achieve General's rank; Luce did this, also in the Middle East, late in the First War. But he was one whose life, including 8 years of war, was given over to 30 years of voluntary enthusiastic service. Our Corps today still needs his like.

In this he was wholly *unlike* the men I invite you to recall this evening. They were the thousands who were involved in the only period in British history when conscription continued in peacetime. Their Era, the National Service Era, is unique for that reason, and I believe it merits recording in the history of our country and our Corps. It also included a critical time for the transition of the RAMC when the changes of the new National Health Service and its new requirements for medical training had to be appreciated, and their implications understood. I hope to show how our Corps handled both the novelties it had to face, and handled them well.

As a social study the National Service Era is of immense interest. Apart from a very few who did not do National Service, either from physical inability at one end of the spectrum to selfish contrivance at the other, the whole of the young male population entered the Armed Forces over a 15 year period. That this unheard-of novelty succeeded was in large measure due to the resilience and cheerful tolerance of the British Tribes - English, Welsh,

Scots, and most Northern Irish, when the young and their parents were recovering from the exhaustion of a World War. Two historical aspects, of significance when the concept of military call-up outwith war was proposed, may be dealt with first.

The first has already been alluded to - the soil, the feelings and attitude of the boys and youths themselves, and their parents. The second was the seed - the passage through parliament of the necessary legislation.

It is nowadays forgotten just how exhausted the British were by the end of 1945. They had sold almost all of their overseas financial wealth to keep the war effort going. The children and adults who were in the home base had suffered bombing, and learned the meaning of the blackout, clothes and food rationing, so that those of us in that age range have never got over the feeling that we must always leave a clean plate. Rationing would continue until the mid-fifties, industry would be slow to pick up in spite of the efforts of the post-war Labour government. It was the tiredness of a nation which had held the ring for a century, and by the inexorable law of history, was now about to feel that retirement had much to commend it.

Bombing of the UK base had made everyone tired. Over 66,000 civilians had been killed. For the first time, fear for near relatives was a factor in the breakdown of servicemen all over the world. The appearance of the V1s and V2s to the south in 1944, when all thought that major raids were over, produced large casualties. The V2 was the first Scud missile, which I can remember myself clearly as an explosion out of nowhere; fortunately it had no chemical component. But the threat of gas was real. All of us remembered gas drill from the first days of the war in 1939. And behind it all now, by 1945, was the huge threat of the atomic bomb. Everything just described made the youth tired and thin. A returned prisoner of war from the Far East - where the rations could not have been called substantial - said when he saw his younger brother of 16 years; "Gosh, isn't the boy thin"? Like their elders, the young wanted real peace and they wanted it badly.

Now can we consider the general and particular political background. Mobilization of the Territorial Army and Regular Reserves had been set in motion by the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces Act of 25th May 1939, 2 and 3 George VI. "Whereas a situation has arisen in which it is necessary that His Majesty should be empowered, whenever the service of his reserve and auxiliary Forces is urgently required for ensuring preparedness for the defence of the realm against any external danger; to call out for service such of them as may be needed: Now, therefore, be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same:" . . .

The detailed provisions of the Act, couched also in terms which remind us that continuity is one of the greatest assets our small nation possesses, followed. The original Act was to last for three years in the first instance, but if “an address is presented to His Majesty by each House of Parliament praying that this Act should be continued in force for a further period of one year from the time at which it would otherwise expire, His Majesty may by Order in Council direct that this Act shall continue in force for that further period”.

This particular Act of Parliament was, of course, for the Mitchiners of this world, those reservists who had volunteered and contracted for call-out under the very conditions expressed - by King's proclamation. Later, in the 1939-45 War, conscription was ordered, as always by Act of Parliament, for those who had not so volunteered.

While the end of the Second World War brought to an end the threat of German domination in Europe - at least for a time - it quickly became apparent that the move of the Soviets west was posing the biggest threat to western Europe since the time of Charlemagne, when the Saracens were at their most militant. Their western boundary extended to the Eastern Zone of divided Germany. All the eastern European countries behind were subject to the Poles, for whom Britain and France had gone to war in 1939, were now prisoners of the Russians. Berlin was an isolated island within - the Berlin airlift, another of the Battle Honours of the RAF, saved the city from incorporation.

Soviets had almost reached Denmark and the North Sea, but were foiled by Allied intervention. Their Communist creed, however, now finding open favour in all countries, made no secret of its intention to take over the corrupt world of the west. "We will bury you," said Mr Krushchev.

In all parts of the world its agents were at work. Oxford and Cambridge, always hotbeds of revolutionary causes, had their open cells and traitors already secretly in past. They would not be exposed till many years later. In the Far East, Communism was the victor in China, where the later horrors of the cultural revolution were also to become public in due course. Communists were active in Australia. The march of Communism was irreversible, its proponents declared. Many western socialists were sympathetic.

The new world order was called by Mr. Winston Churchill "The Cold War", and its continuance over the next 40 years would determine all military strategy during that time. Fears were most immediate in Europe and in Malaya, where Chinese Communist guerrillas looked likely to take over the peninsula and beyond. Open warfare would soon break out in Korea.

It was all this which led to the unique period in British history, when conscription would be called for in times of peace and which would last for 15 years. One army would be needed to go to Germany as more than a mere post-war garrison; it would have to guard the eastern boundary

against the Soviet bloc. In the Far East, active operations would also require many troops; the errors of 1941 dared not be repeated.

And so, in 1946, it was clear that a further Act, to be called a National Service Act, had to come before Parliament. The Labour Government, voted into office by a huge majority, was expected by some to sweep away all traditional institutions. But it did not, and was composed of true patriots who had the nation's interests very much at heart. The patriotism of a number, however, did not rate the Armed Forces a high priority.

Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister, posed the difficulties on 4th March 1946. He noted the need to allow demobilization and release of those who had served in the War - only, as he said, 7 or 8 months back - but not at the expense of destroying the efficiency of the Forces. He noted the burden of the occupying Forces needed in Austria, Italy, the Far East, Greece, Palestine, Java, and Persia, as well as Germany. He was aware of instability in a way perhaps not acknowledged by government at present.

"I want to deal with a matter on which I know there is some criticism. While our commitments remain as they are, we must continue to call up young men for the Services. The complaint is that we have not yet decided on the length of that service in the future. I am aware of difficulties for the young, their parents, educational establishments".

When the Army Estimates were debated in 1947, Dr Haden Guest referred to the Medical Services in words which have a present-day ring about them. He spoke of the "acute difficulties of medical manpower in the Services of the Nation". He went on: "If the Services are to function properly, they must have a complete, skilled medical service. That is an inescapable obligation. We also have to remember that the National Health Service is beginning in 1948 and will make great claims. We have to balance the two. Specialists in particular are in short supply, and there was no good professional training available". He saw clearly the small size of the training base and the difficulties this would pose.

Dr Guest had gone around military medical establishments and found poor communication between junior officers and their commanders. The working party of members of Parliament who had visited with him also found that the response to regular recruiting was poor. Less than half the numbers required - and this was for all arms - were coming forward.

By 1947, the National Service Act was to be brought before Parliament. "Be it enacted ..." the preamble was followed by the meat of the Bill.

1 (1) Subject to the provisions of the National Service Acts, 1939 to 1946, and this Act, (which Acts are hereinafter referred to as the National Service Act) every male British Subject who has attained the age of 18 years and has not attained the age of 26 years and is ordinarily resident in Great Britain shall, by virtue of this Act, be

liable to be called upon to serve in the Armed Forces of the Crown for two terms of service, that is to say:-

a) a term of whole-time service, that is to say, service in the regular Forces for a period of twelve months or such shorter period as His Majesty may by order in Council appoint, and

b) a term of part-time service as defined by this Act ...which was in effect to be six years following the last day of his whole-time service. During that time, the reservist was to undergo up to 21 days in any year, or 60 days in the whole period of his part-time service.

Perhaps the most significant point in the whole of this is the statement that service was to be in the Regular Service, that is to say, the man was in effect a one year Regular soldier. He was not in any way different, as far as how and where he must serve was concerned, from his regular comrades. National Servicemen can call themselves, therefore, Regulars on a limited term.

I believe this concept is correct, even though never previously expressed, and gives a clue to the relationship between National Service and longer term Regular which we will examine later. But when the Bill came forward for formal reading, it was a 2-year period which was deemed essential, and not a 1-year. This was because of the demands of garrison duty, said Mr A V Alexander, the Minister. The longer term at once produced antagonism, and the debates in the early part of 1947 are worth reading. The opposition became such that the Government offered to reduce the term to 18 months.

Next, with the enthusiastic backing of the Liberal Party, the Bill's opponents tabled an amendment to reduce the term to 12 months. Later again, as well as the left-wing Labour members, who opposed the Bill on idealistic as well as political and economic grounds, the Liberals in fact wanted it thrown out altogether. Mr Clement Davies, the Liberal leader, said the Bill infringed the personal liberty of the people. "The Liberal Party," he said, "remained true to their convictions ... Would anyone in Moscow be influenced that our young men were being conscripted? This is a challenge I will fight to the end."

Mr Davies went on to remind the Labour Party of their taunts against Mr Neville Chamberlain in 1938 when he sought to introduce a Conscription Bill: "They accused him of going back on his pledge to the people." How little if ever do politicians change.

Among the many speakers in the debates of April 1947 two are worth quoting. Mr James Callaghan, newly elected member for Cardiff South, made strong attacks on the attitude of the Labour Government to the Armed Forces. "We cannot maintain these huge forces that we have today. We cannot continue them for a second longer and they should be drastically cut. There are greater risks in not reducing our Armed Forces than in reducing them. He went on to insist that the Soviet Union would never have it in mind to attack the West.

Mr R A Butler, of the Conservative Opposition, reminded the government of the need to maintain the

in the many and large training depots where all Arms and Services substituted National Servicemen for war-time recruits. The training was similar; the only difference was that the recruit was being trained for a 2 year peace-time career and not for posting to a fighting unit at the end of his 6 weeks. Alongside the NS majority were the minority who had engaged into the long term Army for 20 years.

RAMC soldiers were assembled at "B" Reception Company at Keogh Barracks (renamed from Boyce Barracks in 1948), in batches of 200 every fortnight except before Christmas. The 6 week recruit course was of basic training in drill, weapon training, education, and all things military. After passing out on the "Big Square" before the Commandant of the Depot and Training Establishment the recruit had a further 6 weeks of special-to-Arm training. At the end of this 3 months period, identical for NS and Regulars, the trained RAMC soldier, with his basic special-to-Arm trade qualification, was posted to a unit anywhere from Korea to the Caribbean for the remaining 18 months of his time. Most were nursing orderlies grade 3, but some had skills in laboratory, X-ray, public health trades, and a few became mess waiters. Of those the most famous must be Mr. Matthew Dooley, who remained in Millbank for 40 years after his National Service was over.

Where could he go? The British Army of the National Service time was large. There were still over 1 million in 1948, and even 5 years later, half a million. Training depots were abundant all over the United Kingdom - and particularly in the big garrisons of Aldershot, Catterick, Tidworth and Salisbury Plain, Colchester, Chester, where men drilled on the same square the Romans had used, and London. Infantry depots were in the tribal areas. Because of the very large needs of the NS Army, war-time camps such as Blandford, Ripon, Barnard Castle, Oswestry, Rhyl, Barton Stacey, Hindhead and Yeovil were retained - none of which had been military areas before in peacetime.

The British Army was deployed all over the world. It was in Armies of Occupation in Germany, Austria, and Japan. Internal strife with serious security problems in India, Palestine, and the Far East, and on the border of Germany and Yugoslavia needed an operational level of troops.

By 1949, although Britain had withdrawn from India, Ceylon and Burma following the granting of independence, and from Palestine following the setting up of the State of Israel, there were still garrisons in Malta, Cyprus, Aden, Egypt, the Sudan, Hong Kong, the West Indies, and in East and West Africa. The Trieste British element remained. Active warfare was taking place in Malaya and a real shooting war would shortly break out in Korea. There were troops in France, Belgium, Holland, Eritrea, Cyrenacia, Tripolitania and Somaliland. The British Army was dispersed, in fact, more widely than it had ever been. All these garrisons and stations required medical cover in varying degree.

quest.

Those who had had STC training - and that was all students initially - knew well the rigours of basic infantry training, since the "tough battle training" introduced in 1942-43 had not lightened in the years 1944-45. This meant they were conversant with the lot of the squaddie

between 1400 and 1700 hrs on the day in question at Aldershot railway station, was a third class railway warrant from your home and a list of clothing to be brought. There was also a list of trains from Waterloo Station - on the hour or the half hour - and the assurance that travel by your own car to Queen Elizabeth Barracks Church Crookham, was in order. The latest time of reporting was stated, in block capitals, to be 1800 hrs.

For those who had lived away from home at school or university this was just another move, for those who had remained at home during school or university, a new and worrying experience. Many officer recruits went to their hairdresser to ask for a military style haircut before they left, though in the years concerned the hair of young men in their early twenties was usually short anyway. Even these would not infrequently hear the Sergeant-Major say in their ear on an early parade: "Haircut, Sir".

The electric trains on the Southern Railway, and, after nationalisation, the Southern Region of British Railways, left from Waterloo on the dot of 3 minutes and 30 minutes past the hour. The journey to Aldershot took an hour and ten minutes, the train usually stopping at Surbiton, Esher, Weybridge, West Weybridge, West Byfleet (then an unspoiled village), Woking, Brookwood, Ash Vale - where the Dakota aircraft stood at the side of the parade square at Keogh Barracks, and Aldershot. Three-ton trucks stood in the road beside the station. The bunch of young doctors - aged from 22 to perhaps 24 with a minority up to 28 or 29 - helped one another with the trunks and suitcases.

The trucks set off, and they crouched on the floorboards the ride along the Queen's Avenue, with the Cambridge Hospital on the right at the top of Gun Hill and the Airborne Forces Depot on the left, past barracks after barracks, married quarters after married quarters, to North Camp at the far end. Then via a few turns of the road, to the spiders of the Depot and Training Establishment, the Royal Army Medical Corps, at Crookham.

The 6-week course now beginning was called rather unfortunately "LOFAS" (Lieutenant on First Appointment). Everyone, including Short Service and permanent career Regulars, did the same course. On arrival at Crookham, to live in the spiders, as the hutter living quarters were called, the recruit Lieutenant was issued with two pairs of battledress, two pairs of black leather boots, gaiters and a web belt which had to be polished and blanccoed, a 1939-45 pattern steel helmet and a 1914-18 pattern respirator. The rest of his clothing was bought from his uniform allowance of some £40 - the most expensive item was his officer's hat at £5. Instead of a greatcoat, all M.O.'s bought an officer type raincoat from whichever of the military tailors they favoured. This raincoat made them easily identifiable.

After leading the passing-out parade on the "Big Square" where the soldiers drilled (recruit officers were drilled in private seclusion at Crookham, and for a third of their era by the famous and greatly respected QMS

Except for those whose disability or illness barred them from serving, or those very few who arranged things so that they did not do any service, the notice of call-up always arrived. Enclosed with this legal document, requiring upon pain of severe punishment your reporting

Donegan, MBE, before he became Depot RSM in 1953), no more drill was done. Yet it was remarkable how a group of often unwilling young doctors was transformed at Crookham into a smart and proud squad.

The recruited medical officers had also to take part in a training mess dinner at the Depot Mess proper, Redfields Officers' Mess. Some cynical new officers believed that this dinner was an item in selection for posting - it was believed that the young Lieutenants who drank most and entered into the spirit of the post-dinner games they were forced to take part in, were posted to the most fashionable regiments. The quiet introverts, acutely embarrassed at having to take part in mess games would, it was alleged, find themselves in a military hospital or medical reception station. I am sure there was truth in the belief.

Two weeks of professional training within the gracious atmosphere of Millbank followed. Here lounge suits were worn, the Lieutenants lived three to a room and had a pitcher of hot water brought them to wash and shave in. The quality of instruction was high, most but not all lecturers agreeable, and for the first time the new men began to understand the excellence of military medicine and the great tradition they were following.

Lastly, a further 2 weeks were carried out, this time in the military surroundings of Keogh Officers' Mess at Mytchett, one week at the Army School of Health and the second at the Field Training School. Here hygiene and RAMC skills were taught, the dangers of the "filthy feet of the faecal-feeding fly" emphasised at the School of Health, and some preparation for war at the Field School.

Finally, each was posted - to three sorts of area: home postings (this included the British Army of the Rhine in Germany), the Middle East including Africa or the Far East including Korea. While most who went to Korea volunteered to go, this was not always so. This lecturer, returning from leave in Spring of 1953, discovered he had been on a draft for Korea as a Field Transfusion Officer (perhaps because he had done extra Obstetrics) but had been taken off because he had at that time a single-figure golf handicap and was required for the Corps team.

In the NS era the RAMC, with all other parts of the Army, had its quota of conscripted sportsmen. All the billet orderlies at Crookham were, or seemed to be, footballers of professional standard. They were absent from Friday afternoons to play on Saturdays, and during the week for training. At least one rugby international spent his entire 2 years at the Depot so that he could play for the Corps team.

The RAMC golf hierarchy were a little slow to acknowledge the existence of NSM. They were not permitted to play in Corps competitions until 1951. In 1952 Captain FWG Deighton, a Walker Cup player, led the side beaten in the Army Golf Challenge Cup. Very quickly, the golf team was full of NSM - in 1954 they reached the final of the Army Golf Championships at Royal St George's, and were represented by Captains Shedden Alexander (who became Senior Lecturer in

Surgery at Glasgow Royal Infirmary after a scholarship to train at the Mayo Clinic - and whose language would have impressed even Mitchiner), Norman Bradford, to be recalled later, Hugh Webb (an Oxford Blue, who became Consultant Neurologist and Professor of Neuro-Virology at St Thomas' Hospital), and your lecturer of today. We were well beaten in the final by the Royal Artillery.

The NSM were, by reason of their numbers, by far the largest element in the RAMC during their period. They served everywhere and had their share of decorations in Korea, Malaya, and at Suez. Certain units were wholly staffed by them - except for the Commanding Officer and QM. Occasionally, as at Caterick in 1954-55, they took over the running of the Mess, did away with uniform for dinner nights, and over-did things. Though working hard in Malaya, they distressed General Cantlie on a visit by having large-sized demobilization charts painted on the wall of the hospital Mess.

How did the National Servicemen see themselves with respect to their Regular colleagues and vice versa? And is there evidence that mutual feeling was any different in the RAMC than elsewhere?

The attitude of permanent, life-career members of many teeth arms units towards their NS officers and soldiers - again in the majority at junior rank level - is of interest. It ranges from that of certain regiments of the line who regarded them as certainly less good, less dedicated, and less loyal - as a retired infantry Lieutenant-Colonel said to me recently "the soldiers in Korea did very well even though they were National Service" - to that of other regiments who found no difference at all between volunteers and conscripts.

It was perhaps the feeling of potential disloyalty which caused most trouble, the feeling that the NS group were likely to go "Bolshie". When this happened, it was the shared fault of both elements - the one who wore the uniform but had not joined the regiment, as Major-General Douglas Wimberley put it, and the other who never let the conscripts feel that they really belonged. In one or two units National Service officers were actually put at different tables in the Mess.

This did not happen in our Corps. After having heard many opinions now over many years, I believe this to be so. From the very beginning of publication of the Army Services magazine in 1948, it was made plain that the RAMC and RAMC Associations were open to all the named groups in 1948 being Regulars, Territorials (most of whom had been through the War) and National Service. The inclusion of the last, at that date wholly untried group, is I believe evidence that the RAMC wanted them to be part of the Corps family from the start.

At all levels the conscripts were treated no differently from their Regular colleagues. While a number did undoubtedly sulk their way through their 2 years, the majority agreed that their whole-time service had been a worthwhile period for them. It should not be forgotten - I think it is - that those who did their years of reserve

commitment with the TA also enjoyed themselves. The less enthusiastic remained on the "ordinary reserve",

Those of us who have maintained an active connection with the Corps and for whom the Army is a large part of our life should not forget that the great majority of National Service doctors, once their compulsory years on the Reserve were over, forgot about us. For them, the RAMC ceased to be.

For an illustration of just how little thought the former medical officers gave the Army, the story of Dr. Norman Bradford, just mentioned as Captain Bradford in the RAMC team of 1954, with a handicap then of 4, is a good one.

In 1990, Lieutenant-General Sir James Baird was at St. Andrews for the Open. He had never been at an Open there before and was naturally excited. As Lieutenant-Colonel James Baird he was my foursomes partner at the bottom of the RAMC team for two and a half years, and I must pay tribute to his unchanging friendliness ever since - he was always Jimmy to me, even though rising to become Director General - and earned my sincere affection - anyway, here he was outside the R&A Clubhouse when who should appear but Norman Bradford, then President of the English Golf Union and one of the big men around. "You're Jimmy Baird, aren't you?" asked the cheerful Ulsterman. "Yes," replied the General. "I remember you", went on Dr. Bradford, "you used to play in the RAMC golf team". "Yes, I did," answered the former DG. "How have you been getting on then," went on Norman, "did you stay in?"

The image the National Serviceman would take away with him to civil life, where he might finish anywhere, was more important than many later Regular AMS officers realised. The image he gained while doing his 2 years was also important - several NS Medical officers, elected to convert, either during, or at the end of, their NS time. Had there been no National Service, at least one or two of these could have been denied to the Corps. Some were unhappy for reasons not necessarily connected with the fact that they were in the Active Army for 2 years. These ranged from the Scot who was punished for putting a match to the newspaper of the Adjutant of a Guards Regiment who ignored his "Good Morning" at breakfast to the Welshman of high principle who, at the dizzy height of temporary Major's rank as MO i/c troops on a ship bound for the Far East, on being told that he must issue contraceptives when the ship docked at Malta, not only failed to do so but threw the entire consignment into the Grand Harbour. He was sent to No 2 Training Regiment, RASC at Willems Barracks, Wellington Lines, Aldershot, then a punishment posting.

It is true that many, while aware of the tradition they were sharing and of the excellence of the administration, were critical of medical and especially of surgical technical ability they saw in some career specialists they came into contact with. Equally, they were quick to commend good technique and obvious experience when

they saw it. As in all walks of life, the feeling they took with them was dependent upon the individuals they met. The group of medical officers who had the hardest time were those in the training depots, especially those in the large Corps like Royal Engineers, Royal Signals and Royal Army Service Corps. During its peak years National Service meant the arrival of thousands of youth every two weeks throughout the year. These young doctors had to medically examine, inoculate, educate and doctor large numbers week after week for 2 years. They had often had anxious decisions to make; the bulk of recruits who ran into medical or psychological trouble did so during their 6-week basic training. Sadly, from this group came those whose resentment and anti-army jibe persisted throughout their lives.

But all, I think, felt themselves "in the same bracket" if one can use this expression, as their Regular colleagues especially those of similar age. All had gone through the same system; all shared the same day by day difficulties or dangers. In this there was never the tension which has arisen from time to time between officers of what is still called "The Active Army" and those in the Territorial Army who have known only weekends and annual camps.

We who were National Service officers did not need to have the "One Army" concept given to us; we were in the Army - even those who didn't like it all that much - we remain **at one** with Regulars because of our common knowledge and that fellow-feeling. So I can say to any younger medical officers here this evening who undoubtedly wonder what funny people called National Servicemen were like: we really **do** share your ethos and understand it in a way someone who never went through the Depot, Millbank - now Sandhurst, of course, but we learned much the same at Crookham - cannot. We are not just another sort of "Reservist" and I hope our Corps will never think that is what we were.

In the years of the National Service Era, there were 223,000 NSM in the Army compared with 181,000 soldiers on a Regular engagement. By 1960, when the last NS intakes were called, there were 79,000 left. National Service ended when the Malayan Campaign was won, but of the last intakes some were required to serve for 2 years.

It was plain by the later 1950's, however, that change would have to be made to anticipate the end of the Era. The NSM had brought in all the medical graduates of the nation but this input of skill and ability would also stop. There could well be a backlash of lack of interest which could given the all-volunteer Army a major task to increase its strength to the required figure of 165,000 by the end of 1962. On the other hand, enough NSM ability and drive had decided to stay on that there was good nucleus available for the next years and longer.

Well before the end of the National Service Era, however, the man who many considered the greatest post-war Director General, Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Drummond, began to realise that to maintain the Regular

of London for joint chairs of surgery and medicine.

In 1962 the two schemes to encourage young doctors to join the Corps were introduced – the medical cadetship scheme and the “New Deal”. They were announced in the House of Commons on 8th March, 1962 by the Secretary of State for War, Mr John Profumo. Basically, these two offers allowed undergraduates if accepted for a commission to have the last 3 or 4 years of their university fees paid, and they themselves paid as Second Lieutenants on probation. When they graduated, they became Short Service or Regular officers; the majority chose Short Service. They had to serve at least 5 years.

As far as graduate entry was concerned, medical and dental officers (aged 25) were Captain on entry could expect promotion to Major after about 5 years (previously been 7, and remained 7 for TA), (aged 30); and to Lieutenant-Colonel after 13 years (aged 36). Most, it was stated, would be promoted to full Colonel's rank after 23 years (aged 48). It was a very good package.

The National Servicemen held the fort for 15 important years in the 20th century. They swelled the ranks of the British Army at a time when our nation, because of its tiny population, could not otherwise have produced the numbers necessary to garrison the West and deter the East. They did everything asked of them and some merit your acknowledgement; they were in no way a collection of the disaffected and unhelpful. The very last of them left in 1963; some had been obliged to serve more than 2 years, but a good number, myself among them, elected to lengthen their time by 6 months.

The full-time element in the RAMC used them well, with few exceptions, so that the former National Servicemen retained a respect for the RAMC which those of them who rose high in the National Health Service put to good use on a number of important occasions. We are now dying out, but this is our legacy.

And in their unique Era, the full-time element on the RAMC with great sense made the transition not just from war to peace, but to a vital change, and a change for the better, in its clinical training and standards. We former NSM, in our turn, respect you for doing this well.

For those of you who went through the National Service system, I hope this talk has brought back to you the past and your early days at Crookham and Keogh. I hope it may have recalled for you some of the fun. For those of you who came later - and indeed even for those of you whose connection with the Corps ended before 1948 - I hope it has been an account of an Era of some interest. For nothing like it ever happened before and we can be reasonably sure nothing like it will ever happen again.