

‘HAIRIES’

By David Bowie

How the mists of time have been blown away by these fond memories of our old uniform. There were however many of our lot with figures that did no justice to the cut of its particular jib. I was unfortunate to join in Inverness where there were no other APO's to borrow uniform from when I joined so I was forced to wear the ex civil defence "hairies" which gave us our nickname. These days human rights legislation would ensure such torture was not permitted!

Some warped bugger in stores branch thought giving me the trousers of someone 7 ft 8 in and the blouse of a midget was very funny. I was amazed that after two months sweating my balls off and itching in Carby House that I managed to father children. My mother being of the school that was terrified of any of hers being knocked down by a bus wearing dirty kecks, ensured I left home with six pairs of clean white underwear. She could not understand how I returned from the WTC with six pairs of dark blue ones!

That bugger from stores branch had a thing about me 'cos with two days to go on Course No 66, they delivered FULL uniform to us all - including raincoat & liners and that GREATCOAT.

I had come down from Scotland with a suitcase and, of course, a full set of golf clubs. We wondered how we were to get our stuff back home and the train from Euston was full with what looked like a bunch of extras from "The Great Escape " as the only way we could get our gear home was to wear it!

I have a memory of that great Waterguard colleague, Jim Brennand, waving goodbye as the train pulled out of Oxenholme Station, so encumbered by his load that he did not notice the porters buggy until he fell over it with his case bursting open and his gear all over the place . . . but his smile never left his face.

I suspect that the UKBA will, like the Waterguard, have the similar mix of gents, great guys, ‘wankers’ and characters that made our lives so rich back then.

Personally if I had been given the choice, the Riding Officers uniform of the 19th century would have been mine.

Lang may yer lum reek!