

INTRODUCTION	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER 1	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EVERY CLOUD	
CHAPTER 2	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
F SQUAD	
CHAPTER 3	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
SWANLEY	
CHAPTER 4	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CONVERSION	
CHAPTER 5	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PROBATION	
CHAPTER 6	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
REAL FIREMAN	
CHAPTER 7	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
NEW ERA	
CHAPTER 8	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
LEADING HAND	
CHAPTER 9	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
SPECIAL SERVICES	
CHAPTER 10	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PROMOTION LADDER	
CHAPTER 11	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
BRIXTON	
CHAPTER 12	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
RAISING MONEY	
CHAPTER 13	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
SENIOR RANK	
CHAPTER 14	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PRESS AND PR	
CHAPTER 15	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
THE LAST RUNG	
APPENDIX I	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
APPENDIX II	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

APPENDIX III ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

GLOSSARY

I left secondary school in 1965. I left it much as I joined it, hopefully a bit wiser but without a worthwhile academic qualification to my name. The school, Samuel Pepys, was a South London secondary modern. Comprehensives were not that common then and this school was the destination for many boys in the local area who had not or could not pass their 11 plus exam. I did eventually get a school certificate when I left at sixteen. This meant that I attended school more than I missed it and managed to get to most classes on time. At school "*spilling and grimmer*" were never my best subjects, probably on a par with my maths. I found French and algebra totally bewildering and algebra still is! I was not much of a sportsman either. I played rugby and hockey because I had to and not because I was any good at them. My only saving grace was that I could swim, and very well. I represented both my school and the local borough of Deptford. This gave me some "street cred" at school with both my peers and some of the teaching staff. It was largely thanks to an extremely enthusiastic physical education teacher that I was introduced into Sub Aqua swimming. I took to it like the proverbial duck to water, soon passing all the snorkelling tests, which qualified me to use the compressed air tanks at the nearby swimming pool where the weekly training took place. The pool was located on the top floor of a three storey health centre in New Cross. Originally built in the early fifties, it was then state of the art but now looked tired, neglected and in need of considerable renovation. The pool training, however, was great and having a twelve feet deep-end helped develop my snorkelling skills. The open water training was even better and was undertaken at various lakes in Kent and Essex and harbours along the south coast. I was soon able to qualify as a diver, third class.

In the fifth form, my last school year, the form master was a Mr Mills. He was a quietly spoken Welshman in his mid-fifties. He had a halo of white wispy hair surrounding his shiny bald head. As a teacher he was okay but thirty years of teaching teenage boys, overloaded with the trials and tribulations of puberty and high on increasing levels of testosterone, had taken its toll on his enthusiasm for teaching. When teaching his own subject, maths, the bright and talented boys were clearly targeted whilst those, like me, were left to our own devices, working from a teach-yourself maths textbook. Mr Mills also doubled up as the school's career master, a task that he probably performed to increase his weekly pay packet rather than for any altruistic reason. He had a simple career philosophy for those boys, who like me, had no natural academic flair; it was simple, "Go to MOLINS boy." He called every pupil "boy." Molins was a large local engineering firm, located in the depths of Deptford near the River Thames. We were convinced that Mr Mills actually worked for Molins as their recruitment officer rather than a teacher, especially given the large number of boys who ended up there as apprentices as soon as they left school.