



Left: BAFSVs were introduced in 1946 to combat black market. They were printed in London and ranged through eight denominations from threepence to a pound note.

FEW WILL REGRET THE PASSING OF THE BAFSV, THE SOLDIER'S CURRENCY IN GERMANY FOR A DECADE. ITS DISAPPEARANCE MEANS THE CLOSING OF 17 CASH OFFICES

Goodbye To The BAFSVs

THIS month, Rhine Army says a not very sad farewell to an old friend—the British Armed Forces Special Voucher, which has been the stable currency for troops and their families in Germany for the past 13 years.

In future, every soldier will be paid in German deutschemarks and by 1 March—except in Berlin, where they will continue to be used—the only BAFSVs outside the strong-room in the Command Pay Office at Rhine Army Headquarters will be in the hands of souvenir collectors.

No one will shed any tears at the disappearance of the BAFSV, least of all the Royal Army Pay Corps and unit imprest holders whose accounting systems will be simplified. It will also please the soldier and his family, for they will no longer be encumbered with the wide variety of BAFSV notes—ranging through eight denominations from threepence to a pound—as well as German currency.

Some officers may regret the change, however, for they will not be able to call at the nearest cash office and receive an immediate advance. Instead they will have to apply direct to the Command Cashier and wait for 48 hours for the money to be transferred to their accounts. For foreign currency they will have to deal with a German bank.

But the first and most important effect of the death of the BAFSV will be the closing of 17 cash offices scattered throughout Rhine Army. Units will open their own accounts with local German banks into which the Command Cashier will pay covering amounts of money in deutschemarks each week.

For the 270 members of the Command Pay Office staff at Rhine Army Headquarters, coming off the BAFSV Standard has meant much burning of midnight oil in the past three months. In this time, some £2,000,000 worth of BAFSVs in notes of all denominations has been received from units and cash offices throughout Rhine Army, swelling the total normally held in the strong-room to some £4,000,000, and 24,000,000 marks have been issued in exchange.

Part of this vast hoard of BAFSVs will be destroyed by fire and the rest held in case the vouchers are re-introduced during an emergency.

A man with a fortune in his arms: Captain D. F. de Sevin carries bundles of bank notes valued at £35,000 from the vault at Moench-Gladbach.



Major Coyte and Captain de Sevin make a check of the hundreds of parcels that comprise the £2,000,000 hoard in Rhine Army's heavily-guarded vaults.

It takes two men to open the seven-ton steel door of the strong-room and each knows only the combination of one lock. Major Coyte gives the final turn to the handle that releases the massive pinions.

SOLDIER visited the Command Pay Office recently and took a look inside the strong-room in company with Major C. W. Coyte, the Command Cashier, and his assistant, Captain D. F. de Sevin.

The way in was through a huge, seven-ton, 18-inch thick steel door fitted with two combination locks and getting to the other side was a two-man job. Major Coyte turned the dials of one combination lock and Captain de Sevin operated those on the other, for each knew only his own combination. Neither would have been able to enter without the other.

Inside the main door was another and lighter steel door and behind this a large vault stacked high with boxes and cupboards containing more than £2,000,000 worth of British, German, French, Belgian, Dutch, Italian, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Canadian notes as well as £20,000 worth of insurance stamps and coupons for millions of litres of petrol. Each of a score of boxes held £50,000 in BAFSVs.

SOLDIER picked up a brown paper parcel and was told: "You are holding £25,000 in £5 notes." Opening a cupboard, Major Coyte casually remarked: "And

this little lot is worth £530,000."

"Come and look at the dirty money," said Major Coyte, and walked to a cupboard at the far end of the vault. "They say this is one of the worst smells in the world." He opened the door and an indescribable smell wafted out, stale and nauseating. The term "filthy lucre" took on a literal meaning. "Even we never got used to this stench," said the Major.

Once a month this "dirty money"—usually about £80,000 worth of BAFSVs—is ceremonially destroyed by a Command Secretariat representative, a paymaster and three senior NCOs. They break the seals, count the money and consign the lot to a furnace. Then a man can realise the ambition of a lifetime and light his cigarette with a £5 note! Few members of the destruction party let the opportunity go by.

Rhine Army's treasure house would be an unhealthy place for burglars. Each night a prowler guard watches it, the lights are left burning and the burglar alarm on the outer door is set. At the first note of the alarm the camp gates would be shut, the armed guard turned out and, with the Orderly Officer and cashiers, would race to the vault. **K. E. HENLY**



Once the home of a German shipping magnate, Bredebeck, near ill-famed Belsen, is one of the British Army's finest messes.

SIR WINSTON

TWO miles from the melancholy stretch of heathland that was once Belsen Concentration Camp stands a handsome country house called Bredebeck.

Hitler had a room reserved for him at Bredebeck; Sir Winston Churchill spent a night there and the Duke of Edinburgh dined and danced at the house. Now it accommodates the officers of one of Britain's most famous cavalry regiments—the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars, who claim that it is

the finest officers' mess in the British Army overseas.

Set amid stately trees at the edge of a lake, this elegant building once housed the cream of Hitler's Panzer officers. It was built about 50 years ago and for many years was the country home of Dr. Adolf Kuhling, a German shipping magnate, who was killed when he fell down the marble staircase in the early 1930s.

Frau Kuhling had the marble ripped out and the present wooden staircase installed. Then

SLEPT IN HITLER'S BED

he sold house and land to the German government for 1,300,000 Reichmarks.

In 1935, when Hitler ordered the demolition of 17 villages to establish the German tank ranges at Hohn, Bredebeck became an officers' club. Its first important guest was General Freiherr von Fritsch. He was killed in the Polish campaign in 1939 and an imposing memorial to him stands among the trees near the house.

In 1941 officers who had incurred Hitler's displeasure served

periods of open arrest at Bredebeck, and among them was General Heinz Guderian, who later led the Panzer armies on the Russian and Western fronts.

Another chapter in Bredebeck's varied history opened in 1943, when it became a military hospital. The seriously wounded lay in the elegant Lake Room overlooking the water, where now British cavalry officers have breakfast and tea. The Long Room, where only dinner is served, was the operating theatre and the

present ante-room the main ward.

In 1945 the British Army recognised its merits as an officers' mess. First it served the Rhine Army Training Centre officers, then those of the 5th Royal Tank Regiment. The 4th Queen's Own Hussars moved in in 1952 and retained possession when the Regiment amalgamated with the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars last year to form the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars.

Herr Siegfried Brockmann, captured by the British in Tunisia and

now serving as wine steward at Bredebeck, told **SOLDIER** that Hitler never slept there. "A room was kept prepared for him on the first floor," he says, "but when he came to Hohn he always slept in the house now used by NAAFI. But Sir Winston Churchill slept in the room when he visited the 4th Hussars as Colonel-in-Chief in May, 1947."

At the lake edge still stands the water-mill used in Dr. Kuhling's day to mill the grain from which the local Schnapps was brewed.