

# FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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Spring 2013 [www.rafanddfsa.co.uk](http://www.rafanddfsa.co.uk)

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necessary. It's not too arduous, just  
a matter of keeping in touch, and  
promoting the Association when  
able to do so. If you can help, please  
contact a Committee member.**

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## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### Member 588 Clifford Matcham

Asks if anyone remembers him from RAF Swanton  
Morley or RAF Ahlhorn where he was known as  
"Matchie or Ticker" please contact him on 01304  
812161.

# Flashpoint Editorial Spring 2013

Welcome to your spring 2013 edition of Flashpoint. Judging by the positive response we received to the last addition it seems the winter 2012 edition was a popular edition and enjoyed by many. Delighted to say that our Association Honorary President Air Marshal Sir John Sutton KCB has submitted an article for this edition of Flashpoint which were sure you will find interesting.

Sir John has also stated he particularly enjoyed the David McCann article Life as a RAF Fireman's Son featured in the last edition. Sir John has also expressed his intention to visit the Steve Shirley Museum at RAF Scampton. Steve Shirley and his team welcome visitors and why not follow Sir John's intention and arrange a visit. If you have any bits of RAF Fire Service memorabilia why not donate to the Museum.

George and I have both decided to continue co editing Flashpoint unless there is a volunteer desperate to have a go. Due to

our previous statements indicating that we were looking to stand down offers of help came our way One in particular came from Dave Stevenson and rather than encourage Dave to have a go at the editorship



of Flashpoint he suggested he would also be interested in having a go at producing the book chronicling the history of the RAF Fire



Service. That George and I have been working on for a few years. The good news is Dave ably assisted by his wife Dianne has taken the lead role in the book production thereby freeing George and me to concentrate on Flashpoint. Thanks also go to Adrian Tearle for his offer of help we shall keep that in mind Adrian and ever imaginative perhaps we should encourage guest editors and let them have a go at producing an edition. However George and I remain committed to producing

interesting informative and entertaining Flashpoints. The front cover could be said to incorporate all those features additionally Jim Johnson who took the photo shared the same room as George and I during our time together at RAF Stanley in the early 1980's we never thought then that thirty years on we would be working together on a high quality RAF Fire Service Magazine. If you have any suggestions ideas on improving Flashpoint please let us know. Flashpoint is the Association Flagship. Its one

of the ways of attracting new members and like all ex service associations we need new members if we are to survive Flashpoint has a wide and diverse circulation The Chelsea Pensioners Home for instance (thanks to Dave Stevenson) has recently been added to our mailing list. We hope you enjoy your Flashpoint and as ever we send out a request for more stories.

*All the very best for 2013  
George and Steve*

## FRONT COVER

Your Flashpoint editorial team are always looking to include some variety into Flashpoint and this editions front cover is something different. What connection you may ask has the Duke of Gloucester and Rainhill station got to do with the RAF Fire Service, well the photograph was taken by ex RAF Fireman Jim Johnson who in his spare time looks after the gardens at Rain hill station. the Duke of Gloucester BR Class 8 Pacific Locomotive number 71000 steaming through Rainhill Station; the locomotive was rescued from a Welsh scrap yard in 1973 and lovingly restored to its former glory.

Many readers may be aware of Rainhill station but for those unfamiliar here's a little background information. In 1829 Rainhill was the venue for the famous locomotive trials that would decide the type of engine which would operate on the new passenger railway. This new railway would be the first intercity passenger railway not only in Britain but also in the world. The engines which took part and competed for the £500 prize were the Rocket, Novelty, Perseverance, Cycloped

and the Sans Pareil.

The winner was Stephenson's Rocket on the 8th October, carrying a load of 12 tons, 9 cwt and having an average speed of 16 miles per hour. George Stephenson also built the well-known Skew Bridge which was opened in 1830 and carries the Warrington Road (A57) across the railway line near the station. This bridge was the first in the world to cross a railway line at an angle. The bridge is now a listed building.

The original station at Rainhill was called Kendrick's Cross Station after the medieval cross that now stands on the corner of Victoria Street but was originally located on the corner of View Road and Warrington Road. The present station was built in 1870 and is almost certainly the first rebuilt station in the world. The station still retains some of its Victorian charm and is now called Rainhill Station. At the rear of Rainhill Library is a railway coach which houses a museum containing many items of railway history that commemorate the Rainhill Trials of 1829 and the 150th Anniversary Celebrations held in 1979/80. The Museum is open to the public..



# Letters to the Editor

Dear Flashpoint editors

Re Cenotaph Remembrance Parade 11 November 2012

Once again I am pleased to be able to write to Flashpoint and notify you that it was with great pride that I attended the 2012 Cenotaph Parade as part of the RAF & DFSA contingent. We were very ably led on this occasion by one of our younger members Mark Jones who did a very professional job. Brian (Taffy) Jones did his usual job of keeping up the beat our great group again. We have become quite a formidable team and can hold our own with anyone else involved in the Cenotaph parade and I sincerely hope that I shall be able to do so again next year.

Yours Sincerely

*Ray Preston Membership number 804*

*Thanks for your letter Ray and it's very apparent that you enjoy the Cenotaph experience. I have completed two Cenotaph Parades and like you I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. All credit must go to Ron Brown who puts in a lot of time and effort before the Parade distributing tickets and then on the day he is first on Parade and there waiting for us to form up around him. Let's hope next year he can get rid of all the thirty tickets that he manages to obtain.*

*GE (Flashpoint co.ed)*

Hi George, Steve

I attended the remembrance Parade and thoroughly enjoyed it. Afterwards I went back to my hotel in Earls Court, which didn't have a bar!!!! So I strolled back to the corner and went into a fairly full pub and got talking to an Irishman an ex Ulster Defence Man. We had a couple of hours putting the world to Rights" as you do. Then he said I have to go Dave as I am going to meet up with some old friends at the Chelsea Pensioners home, which he followed up with would you like to join me, well never let it be said that I could be disrespectful to these gentlemen we went over there together.



When we arrived at the entrance there was a very stropy civvy gateman on duty who asked where we thought we were going, to which my new found friend answered to the bar, (I mean where else would we be going?) he then said its members only gentlemen, you have to be signed in, do you know anyone who will sign you in? My friend reeled off about six names and said anyone of those will sign us in. He let us pass, we walked into the bar which is huge and magnificent to a round of loud applause from my colleagues friends, sign us in, no chance what are you drinking. To say the least a very enjoyable afternoon

*Dave (Stevie) Stevenson*

*Seems like you had a very memorable day Dave and were sure you'll return next November*

*George & Steve*

## WRVS

Older people's charity, WRVS is launching a manhunt, calling for men to join its ranks in a bid to shed its 'for women only' reputation.

Launched in 1938 as the Women's Voluntary Services, the charity's founder, Lady Reading, attracted over one million women volunteers to lend their support on the home front during the war. Now WRVS supports older people and the charity wants more men to volunteer. Less than a fifth of its 40,000 cohort are men (6,342) despite the research showing an appetite to volunteer – 29 per cent are either currently volunteering or plan to start this year.

More male volunteers are particularly needed to tackle the loneliness experienced by many older men which can have a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing. This follows recent

research by WRVS which found that 190,000 men over the age of 75 suffer from feelings of loneliness.

The charity is now urging the men planning to volunteer this year to consider WRVS and to persuade them to sign up, is hosting a men only Q&A on twitter on 18 February between 12 noon and 2 pm. Men interested are invited to pose questions to a male volunteer using a dedicated hash tag #manhunt.

The Games Makers have influenced many to decide to start volunteering with nearly a quarter of men (24 per cent) saying the role they played during the Olympics had made them think more favourably about volunteering. Others recognise the health benefits of volunteering (34 per cent) with 13 per cent saying it will help them gain invaluable new skills.

David McCullough, WRVS chief

executive, said: "WRVS has had male volunteers since at least 1949 but with an ageing population we now need more men to join the charity to provide practical help and companionship to the older people we support. It is great to see the Olympic legacy has inspired so many men to want to volunteer. We urge all of the men planning to volunteer this year to add WRVS to their wish list of charities to approach."

The charity needs men and women to fill a variety of roles supporting older people including cook, handyman, driver, and companion for its Good Neighbours service.

**To register an interest in volunteering visit [www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk) or call 0845 601 4670.**

# REMEMBRANCE PARADE 2012

This year instead of going to London on the Saturday and staying overnight I drove down to Horsham in Sussex and spent the night with my daughter and travelled up to London Sunday morning by train. My daughter and son in law accompanied me and afterward told me how much they enjoyed the experience as it was the first time they had attended

It was a beautiful morning with the sun shining brightly and not a cloud in the sky when we gathered on Horse Guards Parade and stayed the same all day, by 10:30 all 28 members who were taking part were in attendance the usual members were there but we also had several members who were there for the first time and I would like to thank them for attending. It was about 10:45 when we marched through Admiralty Arch and out on to Whitehall which was a bit later than usual.

We were very ably led this year by Mark Jones who did an excellent job of keeping us in order with loud and clear orders, our contingent was in the fourth and last column of ex service marchers very near the back of the parade the fifth column consisting of civilian groups such as London Transport, Bevin Boys, Salvation Army etc. After the official wreath laying by the Queen and dignitaries the march past began but it was at least half an hour later that we were given the order to Quick March fortunately the weather was so warm that it was pleasant to be able to just stand there and watch the other contingents march past, at last it was our turn and after a smart eyes left as we passed the Cenotaph we marched down Whitehall wheeled right into King Charles Street then right again onto Horse Guards Road where Prince

Edward was taking the salute, this time it was a smart salute from Mark and an eyes right from us we then turned onto Horse Guards Parade for the dismissal.

And so we came to the end of another parade, this was the ninth year I have taken part and the seventh of running it on behalf of the association after taking over from my friend the late Alan Alsop who first started organising the association's participation in 2002.

My thanks to all 28 members who took part this year both old hands and new attendees, members taking part were

Ron Brown	Brian Ford
Mick Durrant	Allan Brooke
John Dicks	Dan Gurney
Ian Langley	Geoff Varley
Roger Bell	Mick Clark
Trevor Hayes	Neil Slade
Mark Jones	Martin Napthine
Dave Tolley	David Frost
Gordon Smith	Bob Feather
Brian Jones	Terry Shand
Victor Golding	Dave Stephenson
Alan Glanville	David Hanley (son of the late John Hanley).
Ian Brooke	Terry Jessop
Howard Harper	Ray Preston

I met up with my daughter afterward and caught the train back to Horsham then drove back to Swindon arriving home at 18:00 after a thoroughly enjoyable week end. Any member who would like to attend next years parade (2013) please let me know as soon as possible to book your ticket.

*Ron Brown Mem No 294*



## Just a Drop of Blood!

I was once, [but am no longer for technical reasons] an experienced blood donor. I donated blood over a 100 times. So what I hear you all say: lots of firemen have been or remain blood donors, but my blood is unusual in that it is B Negative, which occurs in less than one per cent of the population, and as not all of that one per cent are donors, it is a rare group. Now, being a simpatico type of airman, and a fireman to boot, I would always, when asked, front up with a donation. Which has, on occasion has led to some unusual circumstances. I attended an off-Station car crash early one morning, in which the two front-seat passengers were killed [both RNZAF] and the guy in the back was badly injured, so we took him first, as you do. He was one of ours too, a pilot, and badly injured, so off he went in an ambulance while we as a crew got to work removing the other two.

So it's back to the Fire Section, to the national solution to all things, a cup of tea and a shower, by which time its shift change and I take off down the road, walking the mile or so to a shop to buy a Sunday paper. So there I am, ambling along, when the CO pulls up alongside and I'm invited to hop in. "We're going to the hospital" he tells me, "because the guy you pulled out of the car needs blood, they've run out of his type, and you're the only B Neg we have". So I duly donated, and life moved on.

Some six months later, I was a newly commissioned Pilot Officer, and back on that station for the very first time, and fronting up to the bar in the Officers' Mess, also for the first time, and about to order a beer, when this Flt Lt pilot came over and said: "I believe I owe you a pint", and sure enough it was our back seat passenger!

*Colin Hall*

## Royal Air Force Firefighters Tackle 100ft Blaze Under Heavy Gunfire

In September 2012 A brave team of Royal Air Force fire-fighters fought a 100ft blaze whilst under heavy insurgent gun fire during the night at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. The fortified Camp came under attack by 15 heavily armed insurgents who had breached the perimeter fence. They were intent on causing maximum carnage and fired Rocket Propelled Grenades and AK-47 machine guns towards aircraft, buildings and coalition forces. The insurgents set fire to a bulk fuel storage facility, sending flames soaring over 100ft high. The Royal Air Force fire-fighters were ordered to approach the fire and start fighting the fire and search for casualties. The three fire crews cautiously approached the scene; at this early stage it was unclear exactly what had caused the blaze. As the crews approached the blaze they heard the distinct burst of machine gun fire. Convinced that the sound could have come from the blaze they continued forward. The crew soon realised that they could not get the engines close to the blaze because of multiple obstacles. They quickly rolled out the hoses and began dousing the flames. Within minutes the crews came under attack from the insurgents as rockets exploded close by.

Sergeant Simon Allsopp was the crew commander responsible for controlling the chaotic scene. He said: "One of the crew shouted that he saw a rocket explode nearby and as I looked up I could see another one flying through the air. I yelled at my crew to stop fighting the fire and take whatever cover they could find". Sergeant Allsopp tried to radio for an update but came under heavy small arms fire. "As I tried to contact the HQ a burst of tracer was fired directly over our heads. For a moment it was quite surreal and then out of nowhere the Royal Air Force Regiment Force Protection assets arrived on the scene and immediately engaged the insurgents".

As soon as he realised how close they were to the fire fight Sgt Allsopp gave orders to all his crew to withdraw from the very dangerous situation. As the crews were withdrawing Sgt Allsopp was stopped in his tracks by the cries of "MAN DOWN". A Royal Air Force Regiment Gunner was injured and the fire-fighters provided immediate first aid.



Cpl Parry, one of the fire-fighters who treated the casualty, said: "we only had basic first aid equipment with us so we had to improvise and use whatever we could. I used the sling from my rifle as a tourniquet before we dragged the casualty to safety".

Many of the crew had never tackled a blaze this big before and certainly never whilst under attack from Insurgents. Senior Aircraftsmen Jack Walsh, 21, the youngest member of the crew said: "I was quite excited but also apprehensive as we approached the blaze. I heard over the radio that there might be insurgents on the airfield. When we approached the blaze my training kicked in and all I thought about was putting out the fire. The Sergeant was great and used all his experience to control the situation."

Corporal Rob Wallman-Durrant, in charge of 'Fire Crew Four', said: "We were told to try and

find another way to get closer to the blaze but we were blocked by a huge ditch on one side. Just as we were about to go round the other side, 2 RAF Regiment Force Protection vehicles went screaming past us. I didn't know what they were doing here but was told to stop and join the other fire-fighters".

The fire crews were ordered back to base until the insurgent threat

assets to assess the area. The area was confirmed as being clear of insurgents so Warrant Officer Hollis took control of 52 UK firefighters and their sheer number ensured the remaining flames were extinguished within 2 hours.

Flight Lieutenant Kev Baker said: "The accumulative effort of all firefighters ensured that multiple pieces of mission critical equipment was saved from the blaze. The entire compliment of RAF firefighters at Camp Bastion were involved during this incident and everyone displayed courage and determination in the face of adversity". The incident is now under detailed review. Group Captain Jeff Portlock, Bastion Joint Operating Base Commander said "This was a serious attack on Bastion. The response of the firefighters and Force Protection personnel was highly professional, most effective and extremely courageous. Through their efforts, the spread of the fire was controlled, the insurgents were contained and the damage limited. He added "Bastion was quickly back to full operational capability and we continue to support ISAF operations on the ground throughout the region".

*The congratulations of all members of the RAF Fire Service Association go to all those RAF Fire-fighters who carried out this very difficult task in the most unusual of circumstances well done to you all. Steve Harrison and I were delighted to record this little piece of RAF Fire Service history we were however feeling our age a bit when we noticed that Steve Hollis is now a Warrant Officer; Steve was a fine young SAC during the time at RAF Stanley Fire Section when Steve and I were the not so young Sergeant Fire Crew Chiefs. There must be few greater pleasures in life than watching one of your junior colleagues develop into a good leader and Steve has certainly done that.*

# DAVE KIRK' MUSEUM VISIT



On Saturday November I made a long over-due visit to Scampton to see for myself the Fire Service Museum created there by WO Steve Shirley MBE, assisted by his willing band of hard-working volunteers. It had been nearly eighteen years since I was last on the historic airfield which was my last posting in the RAF. During my time there Steve was Corporal on my crew, and at that time he had his collection on display in the Station Cinema building, long since redundant following the introduction of video recorders.

And so it was on that miserable grey November day, accompanied by my good friend and fellow MOD Fire-fighter from RAF Fylingdales, John Hodgson,

I drove down through the boring misty landscape of East Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire to see for myself the vast collection of vehicles and equipment I'd been reading about on Facebook. As webmaster for the RAF & Defence Fire Services Association, the main purpose of the trip was to gather information and

imagery for the web site where I'm in the process of constructing a few pages dedicated to the Museum, but I was also looking forward to meeting old friends and folk I'd been working with since getting involved with the Association

John and I were met at the main gate and promptly escorted to 2 Hangar where the display was on view. As it happened this was to be the largest visit to the museum to date, and we found Steve's daughter Andrea busily serving up tea and

coffee, which was welcome refreshment coming in from the cold misty airfield. We were then given a full tour of the static displays in Hangar Annex which not only housed RAF and MOD

memorabilia, but included a fantastic collection of trophies and artefacts belonging to the British Fire Services Association, of which Steve is now Vice President. I could not help but be impressed by the professional way the exhibition was presented and how it was made interesting for visitors regardless of

their experience. We were then shown a collection of about a dozen vehicles parked on the Hangar floor spanning a period of over 50 years. All the appliances were in superb condition and it was fascinating to learn about their history and procurement to the museum.

No 2 Hangar also houses a relatively new Station Museum, and after a short lunch break John and I were given a most interesting tour by one of their curators. Exhibits included a Blue Steel stand-off bomb, Lightning history, ejector seats and an excellent tribute to the Dam Busters, who flew from Scampton on their famous raids on the Ruhr valley. Guy Gibson's office was in that very hangar and Nigger's grave is still a visitor attraction below it.

Before leaving, we went to the main storage and workshop hangar where we met more of the diligent volunteers who look after the upkeep of the fleet, and work on the many restoration projects in progress. Seeing the amount of vehicles there, and the sheer size of the task ahead, you cannot help but admire their dedication to the cause. Furthermore, there is still a substantial amount of the collection housed at Manston which will eventually move to Scampton too. I take my hat off to Steve and everyone else who works so hard behind the scenes. Well done one and all!

For anyone that hasn't yet been, I thoroughly recommend a visit to Scampton.



# A BRUSH WITH FAME

Once upon a time.....well, that's how all the good stories start isn't it? A few years ago, alright, quite a few, I was on a crash crew on standby for a display by four Vampires of 75 Sqn RNZAF for the benefit of a group of former RNZAF Spitfire pilots who had been based in England during the war. These wonderful men were provided with seating out in front of the aircraft to be used in the display, which was to start by the four pilots 'scrambling' to the aircraft, something which of course they never did in day to day operations. This was the first mistake of the day. The second mistake was that they did this for the benefit of a TV News crew who were filming the event. This in turn was to provide a unique set of circumstances in that the subsequent crash of one of these aircraft, and the rescue of the pilot was all recorded on film.

They took off as normal, and as was usual for us on the crash crew we were "manned-up" and ready to go. The aerobatic display completed, the four aircraft did their usual run and break to land, taking alternate left and right sides of the runway, the first one touched down, then the second, and we were all watching very closely the third aircraft which appeared to on a slower approach, and we could hear lots of throttle adjustments. Those of you who will remember the Vampire will know that there was no instant power with those old technology engines, throttle adjustments had to be anticipated because it could take quite a few seconds for the power to arrive.

When you have an experienced bunch of four on a crash crew, you develop that instinct for recognising something is out of the ordinary or not quite right. We've probably all seen it happen. Well, in this case the third Vampire was seen to stagger slightly in the air, and in talking about it later we all realised that he'd run into the turbulence of the two aircraft in front, not usually a problem except he was travelling too slowly compared to a normal approach. Sure enough, the nose went up, as the aircraft stalled just above the touchdown piano keys on the runway, and dropped about fifty feet vertically, and stopped! Having witness the incipient stall, we took off the 300 yards or so to the touchdown point, and I clearly recalled crossing the hard standing and onto the grass before the crash alarm sounded. We were a good 20 seconds or so ahead of the Tower. The aircraft had spun around, and the fuel tank behind the pilot had ignited, but we were there so quickly with a full on foam and



dry powder attack, that the flames were subdued in seconds and we moved toward the pilot, and had him out in no time at all. You do what you have to do in such circumstances, it's what we are about, but I do recall that he was severely burned and I was thinking his chances weren't good. On the way back to the section to refuel/refill, we had to pass the Squadron office, and I was waved down by the CO who had, of course, witnessed the whole event. He wanted to know about his pilot but I kept my own counsel and thoughts to myself.

I woke up the next day to the news that the pilot had died overnight from smoke and flame inhalation, so there was nothing we as crew could have done about that. You don't dwell on these things, well I didn't, you simply put it in the back of your mind and move on. The next day however, we had a visit from the older brother of the dead pilot, and we were all surprised to see that he was no less a person than the current New Zealand All Black Captain, one Wilson Whineray [Google him!] and as such the idol of the country! We had a long chat, the four of us on the crew and himself, and he thanked us personally for our efforts, which was nice I thought. He then went to Harvard, and came back to New Zealand and took up a highly successful career, in corporate management.

Meanwhile, many years later, I had finished my air force career, and was well into my second one as Bursar of a well-known Wellington College, and attending a function for Old Boys and I bumped into the now Sir Wilson Whineray. He clearly hadn't recognised me, and you

don't introduce a conversation on how you extracted his brother out the smouldering wreck of his aircraft, so I just let things sleep.

Fast forward to 2011, and I received an e-mail from a sports writer who was writing a book on Sir Wilson Whineray, "A Perfect Gentleman", a biography in fact, and in discussing significant events in his life had mentioned the loss of his younger brother. This writer then did some research on the incident and found my evidence to the Court of Inquiry into the crash, and he now wanted to know if he could include it in his book. I agreed, of course, and the book came out in time for Xmas 2011. Shortly afterwards I received a copy in the mail, signed by Whineray, and with an accompanying letter. It is beautifully handwritten, in real ink, and addressed, "Dear Colin" and signed simply "Wilson", and in he pointed out that he and his two other brothers had never had any doubt about the speed and care given to his younger brother by everyone at the incident, especially the crash crew. Life moves in mysterious ways sometimes! As a further measure of the man, he donated all profits from the book to a Children's Hospital. Sir Wilson Whineray died last year.

*Colin Hall*

**The attached photo is of the actual incident, with me out of sight in the smoke!**



# Leaving the Services? Are You Job Ready - Part Two

In my previous article I said that before you leave the Service or contemplate changing employment (if you have already left), it is important that you are properly prepared. I suggested you gather together all your Experiences, Skills and Knowledge/Qualifications in one place, eg on paper or in a Word document on your computer. This information should show you “who you are” and form the basis of any future job search

Here in my follow up article, I want to take the next steps with you, steps towards the goal of your first job post RAF, or to a change of employment. Hopefully by now you have listed all your relevant experiences, skills, experiences and qualifications. Your task now is to put all this information to positive practical use.

Imagine you are going to make a chicken curry (bare with me!). If you have never made one before, these are the steps you would follow. 1) From a recipe book find out what is required. 2) From your larder, fridge/freezer etc, check the contents to see if you have what is required to make the dish. 3) If you don't have something, go out and get it, then, 4) make the curry and serve it up to the satisfaction of others. This plan will work for any other dish you want to produce.

More importantly these 4 steps will also work as a plan for finding your new job.

**Step 1),** the recipe book is the Job Advert<sup>7</sup>. It contains the Essential and the Desirable requirements that a prospective employer is looking for in a new employee, ie you! Most job adverts will state what any applicant must have (essential) if they wish to be considered for the job advertised. Also stated is what would be useful for an applicant to have (desirable).

**Step 2),** your larder etc is of course your personal data bank containing your experiences, skills and knowledge/qualifications. Look in here for the essential and desirable criteria that the employer is asking for. If you have them, go straight to:-

**Step 4)** it's time to make the curry, or in this case complete a CV and/or an application form and forward it to the employer. If you realise that you have something missing, then back to:-

**Step 3),** like a required item for your curry, you may find that before you can successfully apply for some jobs, something else is required. You may need to either upgrade, modify or add

a specialist course before contacting an employer. If that is the case, then take the necessary action to resolve the problem. Do not however waste time studying for unnecessary qualifications or skills. Once you are satisfied you are properly prepared, submit your CV and or application form. Some employers may require both, others only a CV or an application form.

## Curriculum Vitae (CV)

The point about a CV and in fact an application form is that neither will get you a job! Both should be used as bait (just like fishing) to get you an interview, it's the interview that will get you the job. The process is CV/application form – interview – job. If your CV or application form is not good enough, you are very unlikely to be invited for an interview. Let's look at the CV in a little more detail.

Because the CV is bait to get the interview, it is vitally important to get it right. It should be short, ideally one page, but certainly no longer than two pages. It should be to the point, don't waste employer's time. No CV should be the same. Because putting a CV together can be difficult for a lot of people, most have only one that they send out for every vacancy. This is a big no no. Employers and HR departments will see this as laziness.

Every company and job is different in some way and so every CV you produce should be tailored to a particular vacancy. If you have been following my advice, you now have a data bank of information, so just cut and paste what you require to a particular CV.

## Application Form

Some points to remember about application forms. Do not leave spaces, do not assume that because you may have already sent off a CV, that you can either ignore a question (because it is on your CV) or shorten an answer (because it is on your CV), you can't. Someone in the HR department has put the Application Form together and so requires the questions to be answered. If you have a data bank, no problem just cut and paste.

## The Interview

As far as I am concerned, if you have been invited to an interview, you have got the job, (if the process is a level playing field of course!) I realise that is a bold statement and that many readers will disagree, as do many in my Job Seeking talks.

This is my point. All things been equal, the very fact that you have been invited to interview means that the employer, (judging from the information you have already submitted,) believes you can do the job. It is important you keep this in mind because it should give you confidence and influence what you do next.

Now you should be thinking, if I have the job before I get to interview, will I still have it when the interview is finished, ie how can I lose the job? There are a number of ways. If you have told untruths about yourself either on the CV or Application Form you are in trouble. The employer wants to meet you to confirm what you have said on paper. If you have lied and exaggerate you will be found out, that's the reason more than one person is invited. Don't turn up late because you failed to find out the exact interview location? Are you dressed properly for the interview? The employer takes the process seriously, so should you? Have you properly researched exactly what the job is and prepared accordingly? Do you know what you can offer the employer to grow his/her business and so make a meaningful contribution? Have you thought of sensible questions for the interviewer to demonstrate your real interest in the vacancy on offer? Can you show that you can make the transition from a military employer to a civilian one? Can you leave your old rank (and the military jargon) behind? Your new boss is not interested!

One final point, remember, the moment you walk into the building you are being assessed, sometimes the final vote on who actually gets the job goes to the receptionist!

Hopefully now you can see how, when you arrived for interview and having the job in the bag, you lost it at the last hurdle. Don't let it happen to you.

*Good luck*

*Gerry Schofield.*

*After leaving the RAF in 1989 and before he retired full time from his second career in 2008, Gerry Schofield was employed for 20 years as a careers adviser with Careers Scotland in Aberdeenshire. He has worked with adults, both job changers and those under threat of redundancy.*

*Many thanks Gerry for your two very interesting articles*

*Ge. (Flashpoint) co-ed.*

# RAFDFSA Shop

Those of you unable to attend reunions should be aware that we have a range of RAFDFSA and CRASH goods for sale, which are also available by mail order via us and the Association website shown at the bottom of each page. We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the reunions.

Regards and best wishes Allan and Marilyn

Contact details: - Allan and Marilyn Brooke  
20 Chestnut Grove, Farndon, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 3TW  
Tel: 01636 688 680  
No personal callers please.

Email: allana.brooke@ntlworld.com or marilyn.brooke@ntlworld.com

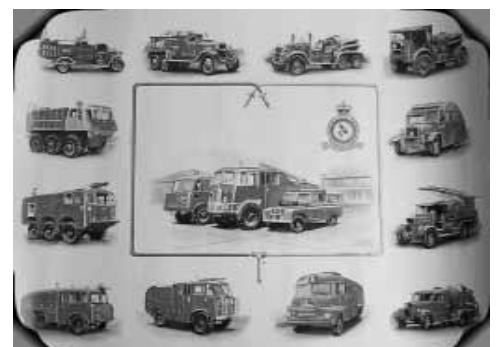
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AMENDMENTS FOR AUTUMN 2012 FLASHPOINT

## RAF & DFSA SHOP PRICE LIST 1.10.12

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NOVELTY TOYS PIN BADGES AND WHITE METAL MODELS AS PRICED	
ASSOCIATION SHIELDS AS PRICED	



# Son's of the Father's

I was one of the many volunteers at the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting (Scampton) in November 2012 when there was a visit of some sixty people. There was a party from North Yorkshire who were ex- fire brigade. It was while I was chatting to one of the visitors that I detected a 'Hull' accent and struck up a dialogue about our respective journeys in life after we left Hull. The visitor remarked that his father was a fire-fighter in Hull during the war; I explained that mine was as well and we went on to talk about the horrific 'shouts' and the days they had to spend on the fireground. He went on to say that some of the incidents had affected his father's health. Strangely enough that had happened to my father as well. (We know it now as Post Traumatic Stress)

He went on to say that one incident that really affected him was when he was called to a communal shelter where about 50/60 people had been killed after it had received a direct hit during a raid in 1941... I stood there in disbelief, my father had attended the same incident and my mother had explained to me that it had affected him as well. As I told the visitor this his jaw dropped and we just stared at each other in amazement!! What a chance meeting, two sons of two wartime fire-fighters had met 71 years after that incident where our fathers had met and to carry out that terrible task of recovering those victims.

Unfortunately we never exchanged names, but we parted company knowing we were both proud of what our fathers did in that war ravaged city.



*My WWII Fire-Fighting Father*

**NOTE:** Hull was the most severely bombed British city or town apart from London during the Second World War, with 86,715 buildings damaged and 95 percent of houses damaged or destroyed. Of a population of approximately 320,000 at the beginning of the war, approximately 152,000 were made homeless as a result of bomb destruction or damage. Much of the city centre was completely destroyed and heavy damage was inflicted on residential areas, industry, the railways and the docks. Despite the damage and heavy casualties, the port continued to function throughout the war. As a testament to that my mother and father were bombed out of five houses!!!!

*(S.H. Co-Ed)*

## Who am I?

1. Born near a sea port on the south coast at the outbreak of WW11
2. Joined the RAF in 1955
3. Enlistment training at Cardington
4. Square bashing at Padgate
5. Fire Training at Sutton upon Hull (WO Newbold "penguin" Smith)
6. Posted to Gutersloh 1956 (detachment to Nordhorn)
7. Posted to Lynham 1958 (Did "Rock" courses) With Dereck Moscrop, Dan Grainger Benny Hullock Jack King John Hanley
8. Posted to Steamer point 1964 Tom Dolman
9. Posted to Brize Norton 1965 (and Fairford) Duggie King Tom Dolman Alf Ashford WO Bill Ross
10. Posted to Seletar 1968 (Exercise Bursatu Padu) Malcolm Bullock Tom Epps WO Jimmy Hill WO Bradley les Stacey
11. Posted to Catterick John Arthur Andy Self Jerry Kelly WO Ron Shearn
12. Posted to Laarbruch Pat Mulready Dan McCann WO Jimmy Hill
13. Posted back to Fairford WO Derek Payne Tom Doleman
14. Demobbed 1977
15. Joined as an AC2 and after twenty two years proudly reached the rank of "Civilian", with the well earned Title of "Mister"

Answer on page 13

## Crime doesn't pay.

Personally I do not condone violence. But I had to laugh when I read in a national newspaper about 71-year-old John Cokeley, who was savagely attacked by a much younger, 6'4" thug. Spineless Mark Pearce, 34, punched John in the face, breaking his glasses and leaving him with a black eye. Not funny, I hear you say!!!! No, not at all - but former undefeated Army regimental boxing champion John had the last laugh after he defended himself with two right hooks. The thug was floored and, after being convicted of causing actual bodily harm, sentenced to six months suspended for two years at Exeter Crown Court. He was also given a 12 month supervision order and ordered to pay £175 costs. Well done John, what a knockout bloke. Reading

that tale reminded me of my recruiting days at the Combined Services Careers Office in Liverpool. The Office was located just a couple of hundred yards from Lime Street Station. There had on occasions been a spate of muggings in the vicinity of Lime Street and we were always on our guard when in the area. One Friday afternoon one of our Royal Marine office colleagues a brute of a Commando built like a brick toilet was rushing to catch the train to his home in Manchester when He was attacked from behind by two miscreants and threatened with serious harm unless he handed over his wallet. These two villains had on this occasion chosen the wrong victim. Apparently the Marine invited them to join him on his journey to Manchester

and advising them if they failed to do so he would first break their arms and then their legs as a precursor to that he broke a finger on each assailant's hand. On arrival at Manchester the Marine made it known to those about him that these two men by now writhing in pain were Scousers and had been mugging passengers leaving Liverpool for Manchester. A rather extreme form of summary justice but those two nerdo wells were never again seen a near Lime Street station.

*GE (Flashpoint Co ed)*

*Just to put the record straight not all Liverpoolians are miscreants the vast majority of us are indeed law abiding citizens*

# A field somewhere in Germany...

I was stationed at Gutersloh 83-86 and I was doing my second to last deployment with the Harriers, having spent one full year as JNCO i/c Harrier Deployment Fire Service. It was the second of the year, usually there were 3 deployments a year, the first always had the code name "Hard Frost" and was very aptly named as it took place in late January or early February. The other two though had very random names that only highly skilled military planners could make up!

Anyway, if memory serves, this particular deployment was in June. It was a cloudy day but very warm and due to the high humidity there was little activity in the way of flying. The crew and I, were sitting in the TACR2, Kev Pateman was driver that day and Paul Morris was the Branchman,. Because we had enjoyed a good lunch (field catering was always excellent) and were obliged to wear full crash kit, we had, in the finest traditions of the service, dozed off.

I was woken from my slumber by Kev saying "Can you hear that?", "Hear what?" I said, "Someone is shouting Fire!" said Kev, "Well where is the shout coming from?" was my response, "Over by the hides" he said. I looked across and could see some white smoke coming from Hide 1, "Get over there" I shouted, "Where?" said Kev, "There, where the smoke is!!" and off we went, the hide was around 300 metres from our standby position on the other side of the take off strip. On the way Paul woke up and asked where we were going, there then followed a very brief discussion!

Kev deployed the TACR2 about 10 metres from the right hand side of the hide in line with the entrance, I asked Kev to engage the pump, and asked Paul to run out a line and wait by the vehicle for further instructions whilst I went to have a shufti and see what was occurring. I put my helmet and gauntlets on and went for a look.

On arrival I was stunned by what I saw, the engine was still running on the Harrier and white/grey smoke was pouring out of all the nozzles, there were 2 or 3 lineys lying on the ground coughing and spluttering, and a large number of other bodies running around like headless chickens, better yet, no sign of the pilot anywhere!! I asked the crew chief what had happened. He told me that the Harrier had had a wet start and the excess fuel caught fire (no, I hadn't come



*Typical shot of a Harrier in a 'Hide' whilst on field deployment*

across a Harrier wet start before either!!) It seemed the 'lineys' had been overcome by a combination of BCF fumes and carbon monoxide, the heat and the fact the engine was running had blown the fumes straight into their faces, the pilot, on realizing the jet was on fire had just jumped out and \*\*\*ked off!!.

My first move was to go up the ladder and shut the engine down, next I got down and had a look in the plenum chamber as the smoke and fumes were now clearing, I saw a pool of about 10 litres of fuel in the chamber burning quite well. I decided to have a go with the BCF myself but the lineys had already emptied the 3 closest 10kg BCF's. I shouted to Paul to bring the line over so we could use the AFFF to put it out. 25 litres of AFFF later and it was out.

At this point I heard over the radio the site commander order a Zulu launch ( For those not familiar with this term essentially it means all serviceable aircraft take off) I suspected he was going to order a crash out, which is an emergency evacuation of the site, a very hazardous activity.

The site commander was Sqn Leader Ian Huzzard, who, prior to joining the Harriers had been Red 1 leader of the Red Arrows, and was generally recognized as an outstanding pilot with a very laid back leadership style. He was though, quite eccentric, he would wear his pistol in its holster on its belt around his neck, and you always wondered if he would know how to use it if required. It was his habit to wander round the site in his white plimsolls (For younger readers, plimsolls were a style

of footwear worn by sporty types before trainers were invented)

He was an easy bloke to talk to, and chatting to him a couple of days before this incident he had told me this was his last deployment and that he was retiring from the service. I wondered what a steely eyed fighter pilot who had led the world's greatest aerobatics team would do in retirement. I laughed like a drain when he told me; he was going to set up a shop in Bristol selling picture frames!!!!

Anyway, I got hold of a radio and called him to let him know the fire was out and the safety of the site was not compromised, but he wanted to do the launch anyway. At this point Kev started shouting and waving at me again, my vision was impeded as I was trying to see through the cam net on the hide, so I went out to have a look.

When I got out Kev was pointing across the field, and there was a second Harrier sitting with its nose on the ground having suffered a nose wheel collapse!! I shouted Kev to deploy the second line onto the nose of this second Harrier and ran across to join him. This pilot remembered to turn off his engine and Kev and I assisted him out of the cockpit, and then he ran off!! It turned out that because we had parked close to the metal taxi strip he had decided to come off the strip and taxi across the field to the take off strip without a marshaller and had dropped the nose wheel into a hole.

Someone in Ops had informed FWO (Forward Wing Operations Control) what had happened and I was told that Flt Sgt Mc Greevey? with another fireman was

coming over in the reserve TACR2 so that we could replenish our TACR2 at the Army Fire Station at Sennelager. We had the good sense to take our towels and stuff with us so we could have a shower in the Fire Station when we had finished washing out and refilling the TACR2.

On returning to the site we got the bad news that the engine fire Harrier needed an engine change in the field so we would have to stay until it was fixed, they were able to patch up the nose wheel jet and fly it out. When the exercise ended we waved everyone 'bye bye' and spent an additional 3 days in the field while they fixed it and flew it out. Hence one very grumpy crew at 'endex'!!

A couple of weeks later I was summoned to the WO's office where Mr. Firmager advised me I was to attend the Board of Enquiry to give evidence, he then briefed me on how they worked and what was expected. I said that I had said all I had to say in the 2888 and what else was there? He said that they ask questions which are not answered in the various reports people had put in.

About a week later the call came and off I went feeling very nervous. The Board consisted of 3 Wg Cdrs, 2 pilots and an Engineer. They questioned me about what I had said in the 2888 and if I had anything I wished to add, the answer to that was simple, no. They then asked if I had any recommendations based on my experience that day. I just said that if the first pilot had shut down the engine the lineys would have got the fire out and the second aircraft wouldn't have been damaged.

Both pilots were Junior Pilots and were severely reprimanded and returned to the OCU for further training.

That tour at Gutersloh was the highlight of my 14 years in the service and was topped off when, on my last deployment, I got a flight in a Harrier with Flt Lt Ginge Pearson at the controls and we flew the German leg of the Dambusters raid and bombed the Mohne dam again, only this time we got picked up by German SAM's on the way out. We did a few rollers at Gutersloh, and when we returned to the site I got to fly backwards in a fast jet.

*Adey Tearle  
Member 710*

## STUDENT 'RHAG' DAY!

This story takes place during night flying at RAF Waddington in the mid 80's. The Phantoms were on bolthole from RAF Coningsby. We got the nod from ATC that the OC flying was on the last aircraft and to expect something to go off.

Sure enough he called a practise engagement when about 10 miles out. We manned up and the engagement went well, I was on crash one with (I believe) Tony Faulkner, I checked the wheels then signalled to the crew chief (Pete Tatler) to proceed to the RHAG pits. When they were in position I gave the student pilot the "brakes on" with the wands and called to commence short rewind. Just as the wire was tensing the pilot released the brakes, I checked with Tony who was at the back of the aircraft and he confirmed that the hook had not cleared the wire.

Start again. Brakes on, short rewind, pilot put brakes off before it was clear. By this time Pete Tatler was on the RT wondering what the \*\*\*\* was happening. I told him the pilot kept releasing the brakes early for reasons I didn't understand. I looked up at the Wing Commander in the rear seat who appeared to be enjoying the moment.

I contacted the tower and asked them to tell the pilot that if he didn't keep his brakes on this time I would close him down and have the bloody thing towed

off the runway. The threat worked and we got him off, rewound the RHAG and went back to the section where a mini court martial took place regarding what had happened.

Half an hour later the guy in the control room told me I was required at the front of the section. There stood the OC Flying and the student. I want to explain what happened out there Cpl said the young pilot (He looked about 19!) I told him I couldn't understand why he kept releasing the brakes. He said when he felt the wire tensioning he thought I might damage the aircraft! By this time the Wing Cmdr was staring at his shoes obviously trying not to laugh. I asked him how I could cause any damage by winding him back at 0.0001 mph when he had just engaged at about 130 knots. He said he understood that now, probably the Wing Cmdr had had a quiet word in his ear. I thanked him for explaining and they departed back to the hanger. The crew spent the rest of the night in a discussion regarding the square root of brainpower and it's relation to common sense. A great day at Waddo laughs all-round.

*Mal Ray*

*A nice follow on from Mal's story Expedite! Expedite! Expedite! Which appeared in the last issue of Flashpoint*

## So who am I? Answer

Your Membership Secretary, Good old Brian Ford



# Paul McGhee. A Brief History –RAF Fireman 1965 to 1988

Following on from various jobs in Civvy Street I joined the RAF on the 5 July 1965 at the Derby Road Careers Office in Nottingham. My initial training was carried out at RAF Swinderby where I was introduced to whims of the drill sergeant and his corporal cohort. This was known as ‘Spud’ time, spit, polish, uniform and drill.

Following on from the tortures of initial training I was sent to RAF Catterick for six weeks to learn the trade of fireman. Despite the rumours I heard at Swinderby I really did enjoy the training, it was physical and mentally stimulating compared to the jobs I had in Civvy Street. My first posting was to RAF Whatton in Norfolk, where they operated Varsity and Canberra aircraft and it was the location that would make my training worthwhile when a Canberra crashed on the end of the runway and the crew were forcibly ejected from the aircraft. As the young LAC on the watch and after venting my breakfast I was given a black bag and told to collect any items of personnel kit that was strewn about. I took the plunge in 1966 and married my girlfriend Angela, still together through thick and thin. July 1967 saw me posted to Aden. My only question to the personnel officer was where the hell is Aden? I arrived in Aden in July and full of beans looking forward to a sunny posting. On

arrival things changed rapidly and I and four other ‘green as grass’ SAC’s were escorted to the Red Sea hotel on Maalla Straight where we stayed for a week until we were evacuated when ‘Flossy & NLF’ started lobbing mortar bombs onto the roof. We were quickly despatched to RAF Khormaksar where we were told we would be going to different locations. I was told I was going to a place called Masirah, I thought how exotic, was I in for a shock. What can anyone say about Masirah, sand, sea and little else but probably one of the most enjoyable postings I have had. The lads here tended to make the best of things and used the island and the RAF resources to make it a good posting. Whilst at Masirah I became a coxswain on the Zodiac inflatable rescue craft and used every opportunity to go out on the ocean and have some fun. I made some good friends at Masirah, Steve Harrison, George Edwards Jim Smith and Kevin Smiler Meeson to name just a few. There were also some characters like ‘Bernie the Hatchet’ who made the whole experience more entertaining and much better than watching cricket. I particularly remember a small Arabian lad who I used to go swimming with and taught me how to free dive. We actually recovered loads of booze from one of the ship wrecks dotted around the island. Masirah was also a place where

the lads did a lot of ‘Bundu Bashing’ both on foot and by vehicle. On one occasions we nearly buried a three tonner after driving through a soft ‘waddie’ or inlet of soft sand to the novice. I remember being woken in the early hours one morning with someone shouting in my ear that they required the Zodiac to be on readiness for an immediate launch, sounds like something out of ‘Thunderbirds’ believe me it wasn’t. Apparently there was a ship on fire of the coast that had requested assistance.

When I arrived at the section I was told to take the Zodiac down to Millionaires beach, it was called that because of the white sand. When I got there it was blowing a force eight gale with breakers ranging from 6 to 12 feet. The only way we had of launching the boat was to manually take it over the breakers; we did not have a rocket assisted launch apparatus that they use now. We were definitely a long way from ‘Thunderbirds’ in terms of kit. We tried to launch our little neoprene boat three times, the first time it was completely submerged in the first breaker and had to be bailed out, the second try it turned completely over, talk about Fred Carnos Army. We did manage on the third try only to find ourselves sitting on top of high waves with an engine that would not



*Rhino alongside Daphne, trailer pump detail getting water up to fire fighting detail Note missing front stardboard section*

start. Once we got the seawater out of the system it started ok and we went to look for a black boat on a black night with nothing but fireman's torches to light the way. If this was now Health & Safety would have us in chains.

We eventually saw the light of the ship. When we started to get close with the high waves my excitement turned to caution if not outright bloody fear about what we were doing and how the bloody hell we were going to do it. 'Abandon All Ye Who Enter Here' was very apt. I remember being on the ship, but have no memory of how we got on board from the Zodiac. I think the sheer terror of being in the dark, in shark infested waters and in the middle of a force eight gale at the time erased any memory to prevent me having a seizure at the time. The only bloody thing that remains is a picture of a rope ladder and our little boat going up and down like an express elevator. I am sure that if we waited for the right wave we could have landed the Zodiac on the deck of the ship without having to disembark, needles to say we didn't have any luggage except what was in our underpants. We stayed on the ship for five days pumping that much water we nearly sank the old girl. Fortunately we pumped it out in time and saved the ship.

I left Masirah after a thirteen month tour, made a lot of very good friends and probably had one of the best tours in the RAF. My next posting was to RAF Oakington. This unit was known as sleepy hollow, the only incident in my eighteen months was a slight mid air collision between a varsity and a Cessna.

The next step of my adventure in the services was a posting to RAF Gutersloh in Germany where I met the 'Master' or Warrant Officer Jack Morrell as he was known in the services. I attended a couple of Lightning crashes during my tour, one of these was just outside the camp and we drove across the Station Warrant Officers prized lawn instead of going round it. I remember the SWO waving his arms at us and the crew chief (Tom Dolman) saying just run him over. The pilot had parachuted down near the electrical sub station at Harsewinkel and had come through all the cables without touching any. The Gutersloh incident that I remember most clearly was a NAAFI fire. When the alert went the only available people were Joe Proctor, John Goupillot and I. Manning



*2008 Re-union Steve Harrison George Edwards Kevin Meeson & Paul McGee, the first time since Masirah that the four of us had been together.*

the vehicle was a German crew who would not go into the fire so us three ended up as the BA Team even though we were not in fire kit. I remember getting up to the first floor and we had opened the doors onto our only thoughts were 'OH S'". From this point I don't remember much except that something happened that took me out of the fire and John Goupillot carried me out leaving poor old Joe to fight the fire by himself for twenty minutes. I woke up in sick quarters later that day and then found out later that due to a medical condition I was unable to wear a BA. Poor old John had got a bollocking from Jack for carrying me out with a BA on his back. The only thing I can say is thank you John. After this tour my next adventure was to be posted to RAF Marham. Enough said. After two years I was asked if I would like to return to Gutersloh which I quickly accepted only to find Jack Morrell was still the W/O in charge but the airfield category had changed and he was expecting five Flight Sergeants as crew chiefs. I spent a few months on the fire section showing people the ropes before I went on Harrier deployment for the rest of my tour. I took over the Harrier Force Fire equipment and ran the section with Flight Sergeant Derek [Gentleman] Maisey as the SNCO. After Gutersloh I returned to Marham where I stayed until 1980 when I got my third stripe and was posted to RAF Cottesmore which was just opening with the Tornado Aircraft and was to be called the Tri-National Training Unit with Air Forces of Germany, UK and Italy. I spent seven years mainly as the Fire Prevention Officer and as Deputy I/C section. In 1987 I was posted to RAF Macrihanish on an eighteen months tour which I chose to do unaccompanied. I was also the Fire Prevention Officer here and Deputy I/C

but also worked closely with the US Naval facility on base, Patrol Squadron 9 of the United States Navy. In 1988 I left the RAF voluntarily and returned to a civilian job. I spent a wonderful 22 years in the RAF, met some great and not so great people, went to some fantastic and not so fantastic places, but in all, an experience not to be missed. Would I do it again? Definitely

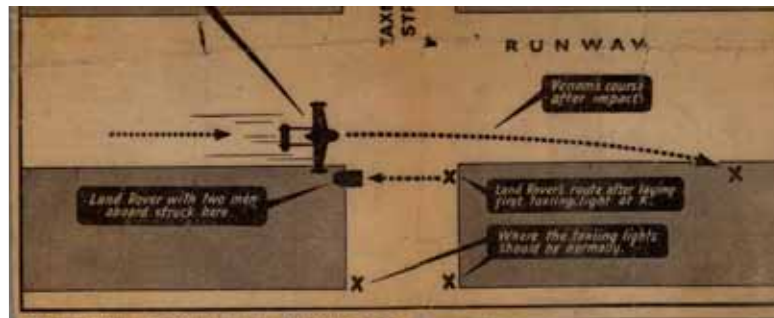
*Thanks Paul for your contribution to Flashpoint obviously; Steve and I found it particularly interesting not only because you were a good friend of ours during our Masirah tour but your mention of the Daphne Incident came at a very appropriate time. 27 March 2013 is the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that eventful day when we youngsters departed those glorious serene and peaceful beaches of Masirah to tackle what for us inexperienced fire fighters was quite a complicated and daunting fire scenario although we don't know that at the time. Just for the record the following RAF Fireman took part in the Daphne Incident*

*FSgt Ditchfield BEM Sgt Farrell Sgt Pepper*

*SAC's Andy Andrews Ian Easter George Edwards Steve Harrison Ian Judge Kevin Meeson Paul McGee Phil Sinnott Jock McVey. Additionally several other station personnel were involved and the two Army lads from the Royal Corp of Transport played a vital role transporting us to and from the SS Daphne and remaining alongside when they weren't ferrying.. Sadly two of our colleagues from the Daphne incident have passed away Gordon Ditchfield and Jock McVey. We who are left from the Daphne incident will always remember Gordon and Jock and may they rest in peace. Steve and George Flashpoint co editors*

# AIRCRAFT INCIDENT AT RAF TENGAH APRIL 1957

In those far off days one of a firemen's duties was to drive the ATC land rover on flare path duties and at Tengah we would spend a month at a time doing this while attached to your normal crew, the duties included laying out and servicing the gooseneck flares and other ATC duties, on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> 1957 April SAC Alan Ledson was detailed for this duty and was carrying out a lighting inspection assisted by the duty electrician J/T Peter Arundel when the Duty Air Traffic Controller instructed him to place glim lamps ( these were small battery operated lights coloured blue or red to indicate obstructions on the taxi way) on the taxi track to indicate to the pilots where to turn off as they couldn't see the exit for their dispersal. Whilst placing these lamps Alan parked close to the runway but unknown to him the controller gave clearance for a 60 sqdn Venom fighter to take off, this aircraft was so close to the side of the runway that its wing was overlapping the grass and as they only had a short wingspan so the wheels must have been



SEEKERS THREE SHUTOUT shows how the Venom struck the Land Rover with its wing, cutting through the windscreen and killing the two airmen instantly.

**Jet hits Land Rover at 100 mph and beheads occupants**  
 A MISTAKE brought death to two Royal Air Force men at Tengah, Singapore, on Tuesday night when the wing of a jet fighter gathering speed to take off sliced across their Land Rover at bonnet height and decapitated them.

right on the edge the result being the wing of the Venom scraped the bonnet of the land rover and decapitated both Alan and Peter, the pilot reported feeling a jolt and thought he had suffered a burst tyre the aircraft slewed off the runway and

**THE MISTAKE:** The Land Rover should not have been at the intersection of the runway and a taxiing track but at a point many yards distant.  
 The two men, who were laying down portable marking lights, had warned the Land Rover to a spot where no lights should have been.  
**Wingtip hit**  
 A court of inquiry opened yesterday to determine the cause of the disaster and if incorrect orders were to blame.  
 As the Venom of No. 60 Squadron swept down the runway at 100 m.p.h. for a night training flight about 8.40 p.m. the edge of its starboard wing and the wingtip cut back over the Land Rover demolishing the windscreen and canopy roof and killing the two occupants.  
 They were Junior Technician P. Arundel, of Hill Yorkshire, and Senior Aircraftman A. Ledson of Alton, Liverpool.  
 The flying officer piloting the Venom, left a jet and thought a tyre had burst. He braked, swung off the runway after half a mile and drove back in the dispersal point.  
 The funeral of the two airmen will take place at Tengah at 9.30 a.m. today.

travelled some distance on the grass finally coming to rest just short of the bomb dump. It was only when the fire crew turned up seconds later and saw the yellow canvas canopy of the land rover hanging off the wing that anyone realised that it was far more serious than a mere burst tyre.

There were many other incidents at Tengah in the two and half years I was there but although several people lost their lives this one was worse for us firemen as it involved one of us and it could have been me as we all had to do this duty.

There are a few photos of the funeral on our web site and if you visit the National Arboretum both their names are on the memorial wall under the year 1957.

During the two minutes silence at the Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph I always think of my mate Alan who was only 19 at the time and had his whole life in front of him. Ron knowing that Alan was a Liverpudlian asked me to make some enquiries through the Liverpool local press and see if we could make contact with any of Alan's relatives with a view to sharing what information we had about Alan. An article was put in the Liverpool Echo and one gentleman did contact Ron and stated that he knew Alan; they were both brought up in a Liverpool Children's home and the gentleman was aware that Alan had no living relatives but we will always remember Alan after all it what happened at Tengah could have happened to any RAF Fireman.

## Obituaries

**William Arthur Wilson** passed away in July 2012. Bill saw extensive war service in Europe.

**John Jolly** passed away November 2012. John joined the RAF in 1955 and joined the MOD Fire Service in 1961 finishing his career as Command Fire Officer at HQSTC High Wycombe and retired in 2000

**Brian West** passed away in 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012 Brian served from 1953 to 1966 and was stationed at Upavon, Tengah, High Wycombe, Marham, Khormaksar and Eastleigh.

**Al Ward** passed away 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 after a long illness.

**Bob McKinstry** no details are known

**Kate Harper.** Wife of our Cambridge and Suffolk Co-ordinator Howard passed away in February Kate's funeral was on Thursday 7th March, at Cambridge Crematorium, West chapel. Donations were given to Cancer Research. Howard and his family were grateful for the support they received.

**Dean** son of Mel and Steve Bowden died in December 2012 and the funeral was in January 2013. After a church collection and a fundraising event by his friends £3184 was handed over to the 'When You Wish Upon A Star Charity.' Steve and his family were overwhelmed and grateful for the support they received

I have just received a letter from the solicitors of Neil McPherson, Member No 969, informing the Association that he died on the 25 April 2012.

Neil, in his will, had bequeathed to the association £100.00. The cheque came via Mrs Hanley and I have acknowledged receipt of the cheque as requested.

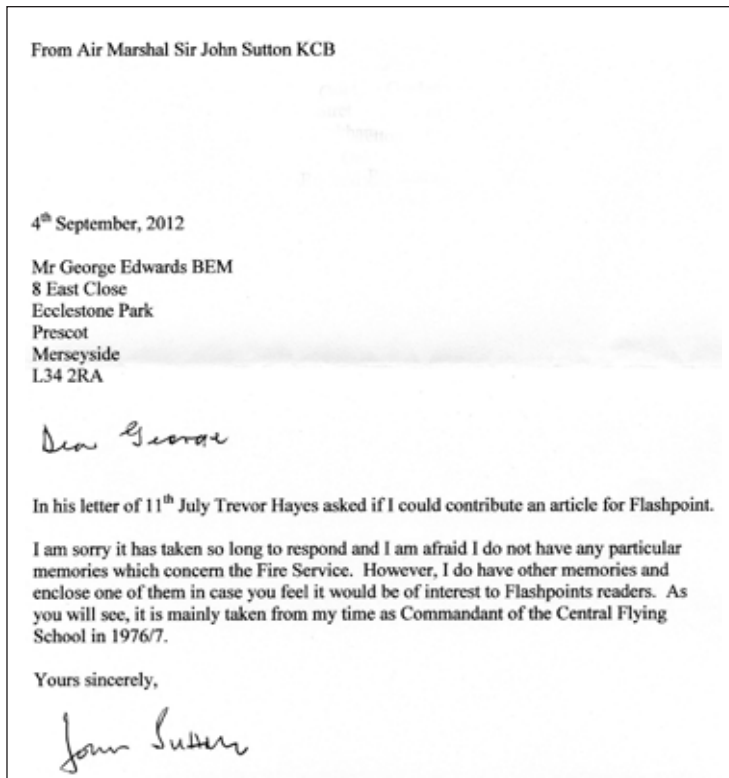
Neil was only a member for just over 3yrs. He joined the Association on the 4th Feb 2009.

*Trevor Hayes (Treasurer)*

This indeed was a kind gesture by Neil.



# AIR MARSHAL SIR JOHN SUTTON MEMORIES



There were a great many enjoyable aspects of that appointment and one of them was meeting those from the early years at the annual CFS Association reunion. Some from those days — such as Dermot Boyle and Frank Whittle - had international renown, but others were less well known but all had amazing stories to tell of their early days. Perhaps the most numerous and extraordinary stories are about d'Arcy Greig, but here I repeat just one. In the 1920's he and John Boothman (later both Schneider Trophy pilots) put on a unique programme of combined aerobatics before some VIP's. As the piece de resistance, Greig, who was flying a de Havilland Cirrus Moth lightplane, began a spectacular falling leaf from a height of about 1000 feet while Boothman performed an inverted falling leaf from 2000 feet, immediately above him. Just as he began rolling out Boothman was horrified to see Greig's Moth dissolve into a cloud of sticks and canvas as it hit the ground. On the airfield there was an awful moment of silence and then from the dark depths of the wreckage came a single, very clear and very rude word. The CFS history goes on to tell us that one officer of high rank, who was hardly noted for his humour, was in favour of an immediate summary of evidence and court martial. But the Commandant of the day - the lovable but fiery Group Captain Holt - shrieked with laughter and offered to find another aircraft if Greig would do it again. At one of the reunions I asked Greig

why he had crashed. "Oh" he said "We had a really good party the night before and I was still pissed". He then told me that the "officer of high rank" was Stuffey Dowding - of Battle of Britain fame much later. Crashes in those days were frequent but rarely serious as pilots were usually unhurt and aircraft quickly repaired. Indeed, Rex Stocken told me that in the 1920's he won a CFS spot landing competition by crashing his aircraft on the spot. He said the wind direction was such that an approach had to be made over the hangars and crashing the aircraft was the only way of stopping it in time.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Dermot Boyle had been an AI instructor at CFS and was Patron of the CFS Association during my time as Commandant. He used to stay with us and told a great many stories about his early days. The one I remember best was after he had left CFS and as a flight lieutenant was posted as adjutant of 601 (Auxiliary) squadron at Hendon. He had taught Sir Philip Sassoon - the squadron C.O. and Secretary of State for Air - to fly. Penny, Sir Dermot's daughter, still has a cigarette box presented to her Father by Sir Philip and engraved "from his worst pupil". Sir Philip had his own Puss Moth at Hendon and one day rang and said "Boylo, bring the Puss Moth down to Trent Park" Sir Philip's country house near Bamet. Sir Dermot described how he flew down and was relieved to land without incident in what turned out to be a quite unsuitable

field with trees all around it. "Glad you've come" said Sir Philip "because the Duchess of York (much later the Queen Mother) is here and may wish to fly after lunch". Sir Dermot said he had a very abstemious lunch and, sure enough, the Duchess did want to fly and they took off together in the Puss Moth. He said he was again greatly relieved to land back in the appalling field without damage to the Duchess, himself or the plane.

He told me that there were three results of that event. The first was almost immediate as an Air Council instruction made clear that flights by members of the Royal Family would in future need Air Council authority. Sir Dermot said you can imagine the scene. The Secretary of State for Air breezes into the Air Council on the Monday morning and says

"The Duchess of York had a splendid flight with Boyle on Sunday" to which an ashen faced Chief of the Air Staff asks "Who is Boyle and which RAF airfield did they fly from?". Sir Dermot said the second result was some years later when he was an Air Commodore and the Duchess was Queen. They were at an air display and in a lull in the proceedings he said to her "I don't know whether you remember Your Majesty, but years ago you and I flew together". The then Queen looked at the sky and said "Do you think, Air Commodore, that the weather is good enough for the acrobatic team to display". The message was clear - what happened years before was not to be mentioned. Some years later Sir Dermot, as Chief of the Air Staff and again at an air display was sat between the Queen and the Queen Mother. Greatly to his surprise the latter leaned across and said to the Queen "I don't know whether you know my dear, but years ago Dermot and I used to fly together all over the place". Dermot said the explanation, as he found out later, was that her husband never knew.

Years later and during my time as Commander in Chief Support Command Hendon was marked out for closure and the Queen Mother, although by then in her late eighties, came for the closing ceremony. The word on the street was that the Queen Mother's first flight had been from Hendon. I knew that wasn't so and I think she knew I knew and so with tongue in cheek I asked her if it was true that her first flight had been from Hendon. "Yes" she said, with a smile and a twinkle "my first flight - with my husband - was from Hendon".

# AMOCO REFINERY FIRE – MILFORD HAVEN – 1983

In 1983 I was stationed at RAF Brawdy in west Wales. The Dyfed Fire Brigade had experienced difficulty in recruiting retained firefighters and had approached MOD for permission to recruit serving RAF Firemen as retained. At this time I, Ron Fillis and Dave Crisp were, I think, the only ones to join the retained.

On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> August 1983 I was on a day off and the Mrs. Tearle at that time and I decided to go shopping in the morning. At around 11.00 my Multitone pager for the retained activated, unfortunately I was too far from the station to respond so cancelled the page and carried on shopping. At 11.30 the pager went again as we were driving home, I said to my wife "Must be a big one that's the second time it's gone off" I cancelled it again.

We arrived home just as the lunchtime news was starting on TV, so while she put the shopping away I entertained the kids and switched the news on. The headline story was a fire at the Amoco refinery in Milford Haven, so that explained the pager going off. The original alarm had been raised at 10.48.

The fire was in tank 11 at the Amoco Refinery at Milford Haven, Dyfed on the South Wales coast. This tank contained over 46,000 tonnes of North Sea crude oil.

The fire was first noticed by a works firefighter who alerted the Refinery Fire Brigade. They responded by sending its 105 foot Hydraulic Platform and its 4,500 gallon capacity Foam Tender. These were manned by 4 works firefighters. Within the next 3 hours there would be 150 firefighters manning 43 appliances. Before the stop message was sent there would be 70 appliances at the scene.

I went straight to Haverfordwest station and called Brigade Control to report on duty, I was instructed to remain on station to direct arriving vehicles from other brigades as all Dyfed were already committed and en route.

When the first refinery fire appliances arrived 4 lines of hose were got to work from hydrants along with a foam line from the Foam Tender to supply the refineries hydraulic platform which was got to work in the South East corner of the site, adjacent to the storage tanks bund wall. The boom on the HP was raised and foam was projected onto the oil tanks top which appeared to be now 50% engulfed in flame. The foam monitor on the HP was capable

of supplying around 5,000 gallons per minute of foam onto the fire. Due to the fire not being seen to spread it was assumed that the foam had sealed the tank, but the tank was still well alight.

In the meantime a predetermined attendance consisting of 5 Pumps, an Emergency Tender and a Control Unit were mobilised. On arrival the message "Large Oil Tank alight" was sent and a "Make Pumps 10" message sent. Nine minutes later at 11.16am a Divisional officer arrived and immediately sent the message "Make Pumps 15" he then sent an informative message informing control that a tank containing 56,000 gallons of crude oil was well alight, and 10 jets were now in use. Shortly afterward he sent another message requesting that large scale foam mobilising need to be started and that other refineries be requested to start their "Mutual Aid Scheme". Pumps were then made to 20 with 5 Hydraulic Platforms required.

At 13.31pm the Chief Officer took over and sent a message to say that a massive cooling operation was in force and that a foam attack wasn't being used as they were waiting for other special appliances from other refineries to arrive before starting the attack. By 3.00pm 26 Pumps and 7 foam tankers were at the scene along with other special appliances and 150 firefighters.

At 14.30 I was ordered to board the next appliance to arrive and travel to the incident with them. We arrived on the fireground at around 14.45. I reported to Incident Control and was sent to man a pump in the water relay which was pumping water from the docks, this water relay was approximately 1.5 miles long. The instructions were to receive water at 50psi and pump at 50psi.

By 16.30 I was relieved of pumping duties and sent to the refinery canteen for refreshments. As I passed the fireground I could see the bund around the tank was well alight and was acting like a gas cooker on a saucepan, heating the base of the tank. The tank lid had buckled and the top of the tank was also well alight.

After my break I was sent onto the fireground to await the arrival of the Mk9 & Mk8 with full crews which had been requested from RAF Brawdy under the Aid to the Civil Powers Act.

The idea was that I would ensure the two Brawdy vehicles received sufficient

constant water.

The fire was estimated to be consuming around 300 tonnes of crude oil per hour, so it was decided to draw off oil from the affected tank and several of those adjacent. It took until midnight to empty the adjacent tanks. Once empty, foam was introduced to these tanks.

It was calculated that a stock of 45,000 gallons of foam would be needed on site before a safe attack on the fire could be commenced. This foam would arrive in various commercial tankers, but when it arrived firefighters were confronted by these tanker having many different and many non standard couplings. Firefighters on site fabricated adaptors from whatever they could find within the vast refinery, and eventually found means of preparing the discharge the foam into fire service tankers.

To fight the fire 40,000 gallons of a 6% foam mix per minute would need to be produced. A trial application of foam was attempted. This was achieved by using a roof monitor from an RAF Foam Tender (Mk9) that had arrived to assist fire fighting. This test proved successful, so senior officers decided to assemble every single bit of foam making equipment on the site ready for a full on attack on the flames. Much of this equipment would be ready should oil spill into the protective bund wall and reduce the risk of this oil catching fire.

After further discussion between senior fire officer and refinery experts it was decided to leave the attack for at least 4 hours due to the oil being drawn from the affected tank still being cool. Also it meant more of the contents could be salvaged. It also gave time for more supplies of bulk foam to arrive. Suddenly, and without any warning a "Boil Over" occurred and many thousands of tonnes of oil flowed into the bund wall and caught fire. Suddenly the fire was to cover an area of about 4 acres. Firefighters ran for cover, many receiving burns to their hands and faces, while many suffered other injuries in the attempt to escape the severe heat. Appliances near to the tanks caught fire and many others had paintwork blistered by the intense heat. Immediately senior officers ensured a roll call was taken, amazingly all persons were accounted for. Ambulances took many of the firefighters for treatment at local hospitals.

The boil over occurred at around 23.45 and lit the sky like it was daylight, my wife told me it lit up Haverfordwest which was 12 miles away. We all turned and ran, only to discover the fireground was on top of a really steep plateau. I vividly remember the images of 100's of firemen with their legs going like the clappers with no ground beneath them, and then all suddenly falling, rolling or running down the hill. There were around 10 RAF Firefighters engaged in firefighting at this time.

The late F/S John Knight was SNCO I/C at Brawdy and as we all ran John stumbled and fell halfway down the hill, and was the only RAF Fireman injured that night when he received flash burns to his back from the fireball that came down the hill.

I saw firemen in front of me leaping the refinery perimeter fence (topped with razor wire) in a single bound. I tried this and my yellow pvc leggings got caught on the wire, so I ended up hanging upside down looking at the fireball coming down the hill toward me. I remember thinking that I had planned to die in bed asleep and not hanging upside down from a fence in Wales!

At this point another retained guy from Haverfordwest saw me hanging there, he was a farmer and could carry a cow under each arm, and he dragged me off the wire and put me over his shoulder and carried on running for about half a mile with me. He eventually put me down and we walked right round the refinery back to the main entrance and reported in to control.

By the time we got back on the fireground we discovered the Mk9 had been picked up and lifted about 5 metres by the blast, all the paintwork on the side facing the tank had burnt off, and every signal lamp lens had melted. We found couplings melted together every 25 mtrs with all those hose burnt away!

Firefighters now were faced with the problem of lack of fire fighting hose. The intense heat and fire by the tanks had melted much of the hose that had been laid in preparation for the attack, other hose had burst. Hose Layers with additional hose were ordered onto the incident. By now many of the original crews were exhausted and being relieved by fresh crews. These crews were warned of the potential of a further "Boil Over". At 2.20am a further "Boil Over" occurred, firefighters were once more withdrawn, and much of the

freshly laid out hose was damaged beyond use. Fires started to appear in the cladding of adjacent oil tanks. These tanks had foam applied to them and these fires were quickly extinguished. Fire crews worked quickly and efficiently, and within ½ hour the damaged hose was replaced and cooling jets replaced and got to work. These cooling jets were kept at work all night, and at 8.00am it was decided to commence a full attack on the fire due to the potential risk of a fire huge "Boil Over"

At 03.30 the Brawdy Station Fire Officer, Flt Lt Ernie Clark, who had been in attendance since the Brawdy vehicles arrived, suggested I leave as I was due on shift at 07.00 so he gave me a lift home. On the way home we stopped off at Withybush

Hospital to see how John Knight was. He was shaken but ok having had his burns treated.

By now 67,000 gallons of bulk foam were available for use at the incident. The first monitor was used to tackle the fire in the bund wall area in order to allow other foam monitors to be got to work as the area cooled. Soon 7 large foam monitors were at work from 3 fire fronts. By mid afternoon the fire appeared to be diminishing in its intensity, even though the blanket of foam was being broken down due to the intense heat. By early evening the fire was under control. The fire in the bund wall was now out and a thick blanket of foam covered the area. Only small pockets of fire remained within the tank.

### Consequences:

- Six firemen sustained mild injuries during the first boilover. One of them was hospitalised.
- The tank TO11 was destroyed, the adjacent tanks were seriously damaged and 17,800 tonnes of crude oil were consumed. The cost of this accident was assessed at about 10 M £ (value in 1983, i.e. about 26 M € in 2007). There were no production losses.
- An evacuation plan was organised but not implemented since very few residents lived in the vicinity or were exposed.
- The thick column of black smoke that rose several hundred metres above the refinery resulted in "soot rains" in the villages and the surroundings.
- It must be noted that the rules in vigour allow three tanks identical to the TO11 to be implanted in the same containment dike. This option was not exercised in the depot.

### European scale of industrial accidents:

By applying the rating rules of the 18 parameters of the scale made official in February 1994 by the Committee of

Competent Authorities of the Member States which oversees the application of the 'SEVESO' directive, the accident can be characterised by the following 4 indices, based on the information available:

Dangerous materials released		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human and social consequences		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental consequences		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic consequences		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The piece from a French report on the fire:

# AMOCO REFINERY FIRE – MILFORD HAVEN – 1983 (CONT)

The application of foam was ordered to continue through the night, and at around 2.00 am on 1st September the fire suddenly flared back up as the foam blanket was broken. Senior Officers fearful of any sudden further flare up decided to use a mobile crane from within the refinery. To this they lashed a foam monitor to the jib. This allowed further foam to be applied to cool the fire and maintain the blanket of foam. This final attack was successful and the fire was extinguished. The application of foam was now continued for several hours in order to ensure the oil and metal of the tanks was cool and no further risks of fire be possible.

At 22.30 hour the Chief Officer sent the stop message informing control that no further appliances or firefighters would be needed.

The incident required 44 pumps. 30 of these pumps came from Dyfed, the remainder from surrounding brigades 14 foam tenders were used along with 66 commercial tankers.

This fire was described at the time as the largest fire on the mainland UK since the blitz, RAF Firefighters were present throughout the operation and made a significant contribution to the entire operation.

*Many thanks to Adrian for recording another outstanding piece of RAF Fire Service history. When Adrian retired from the RAF he obtained employment as the training Officer for SSAFA and was based at the SSAFA HQ in central London. I know from my involvement with SSAFA that Adrian was an extremely well liked and highly respected member of the SSAFA head office team. Have to admit Adrian I bet you found it harder to adjust to the ramified air at SSAFA HQ than the oil polluted air at Milford Haven on the 30th august 1983*

*Ge (coed)*

## Proposed Book! (Chronicling the RAF Fire Service Then and Now)

For a few for years now I have been attempting to put together a collection of stories about RAF Fire-fighters and publishing those stories in a hardback book. With one thing and another little progress has been made although stories have been coming in on a regular basis. Two months ago Dave (Stevie) Stevenson contacted me and asked if he could help produce the book. Dave is a recognised author himself with a very interesting autobiography (A Journey Through my life) on the market. Since Dave's offer of help great progress has been made and at the last count we have put together over 250 pages of fascinating RAF Fire Service stories from forty different contributors; some no longer with us but I'm sure their families would like to see their stories recorded for posterity. There are over thirty pages of awards and commendations some going back to World War Two and more recent incidents like the two major RAF Service incidents in Afghanistan. There is a chapter on the RAF Fire Service in the Falklands and a chapter on the history of Warrant Officer Steve Shirley's Museum complete with high quality photographs. Since Dave volunteered to take the lead role in the production of the book his wife Dianne has also joined the production team and like Dave has done an outstanding job. Other members of the production team include Steve (Silverfox) Harrison Dave Kirk (the Association web master and Steve Davey. We have requested quotes for publication from two of the major military book publishers (Pen& Sword and Woodfield); check out their websites. Although we have enough material to fill a hardback we are still accepting contributions and would particularly

welcome stories from younger members of the trade. If you have a story /anecdote or photo to share please forward to George Edwards at 8 East Close Eccleston Park Prescott Merseyside L34 2RA tel 01514265093 email; [george.edwards46@virgin.net](mailto:george.edwards46@virgin.net)

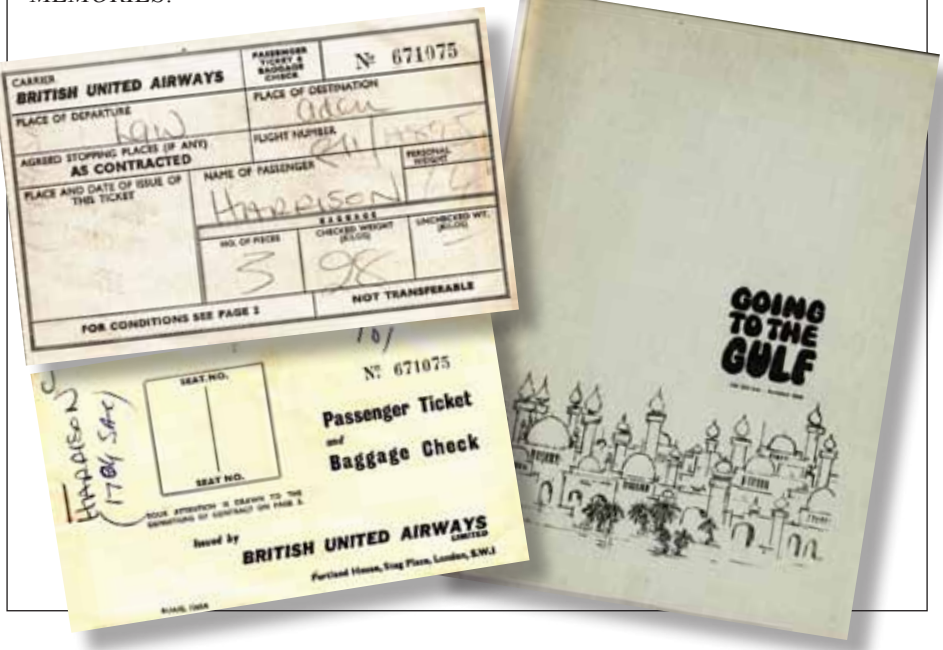
Don't leave it to late we expect to publish later this year in time for Christmas and so don't miss this opportunity to have your story published in a high quality book. If the RAF Police and RAF Regiment can produce their own books isn't it about time the RAF Fire Service did the same? From the Book production team.

## THINGS IN THE ATTIC

Here are a few items that will bring back a few memories for those of a certain age.

I remember going to Masirah in 1967 at the age of nineteen and trooping through Aden and stepping off the aircraft and experiencing heat which before I had only associated with an oven, then spending two weeks in that luxury establishment!!! 'The Red Sea Hotel' while waiting for a flight on 'Yimkin Airways 'to get up country. Aden at this juncture was literally at boiling point while families were been evacuated prior to the withdrawal in November 1967.

*WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN YOUR ATTIC THAT WOULD BRING BACK SOME MEMORIES?*



# John Savage MBE

I was born in Somers Town London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1944. I have been happily married to Jeannie with the light brown grey hair since 1995. I have one son, Alex, aged 40 living and working in London. I joined the RAF in 1961 aged 17½ years and after square bashing at Bridgenorth, was posted to Catterick for trade training some of my contemporaries at Catterick being Cos Costello, Brian Jones and Bill Knapman, all of whom are Association Members. After Catterick a number of us were posted to Binbrook which was just realigning itself to take Lightnings (74 Sqn). Javelins (64 Sqn.) and Canberra (139 Jamaica Sqn.), RAF Binbrook is where I first came across Flt.Sgt. John Arthur (Past Association President) who ran our section with a firm but fair hand. My abiding recollection of John, other than him bawling me out, was his refusal to wear Regiment Flashes. I have often wondered if this prevented John from being promoted. There then followed postings to Aden, 1964-66; with most of my time spent up country at RAF Mukeiras and RAF Beihan. On return to the U.K. I was posted to Wittering with its "V" Bomber Force and Blue Steel Missiles. At about this time I was seconded to RAF St.Pancras (a coal yard at the rear of the Station) to act as part of the Fire Crew for the Trans Atlantic Air Race sponsored by the Daily Mail. The race was from the GPO Tower in London to the Empire State Building in New York. The RAF's involvement was racing a Harrier Jump Jet piloted by Sqd.Leader Lecky Thompson, and you will be pleased to know that we (the RAF) won! I then had various short postings to Leconsfield, Cottishall, and Marham, finally being posted to North Cotes in Lincolnshire.

This was a bloodhound missile site (SAMS) left the RAF in 1970 after nine years where I had made many friends who I still see to this day. It was a wonderful life but not so good if you were married with young children. After leaving the RAF I joined the Metropolitan Police Force (now called Service) and following my training at Hendon was posted to the North East end of London (Shepherdess Walk). After three years I applied for and was accepted into the Special Patrol Group where I am glad to say I served for 11 years. Being in the "Group" I was at the fore of most large operational events in London and surrounding counties, some of which were the riots in Brixton, Southall,

Lewisham and the Notting Hill Festivals. Other notable events are Grunwicks, Spaghetti House Siege, and the Iranian Embassy Siege where Trevor Locke (a great mate of mine) was taken hostage. I was also involved with the operational duties surrounding the wedding of Princess Diana to Prince Charles One of the most scary operations was where we chased five Irish bombers through the West End and into Ballcome Street where they took as hostages residents Mr. and Mrs. Matthews. This was a long drawn out operation and one of my best souvenirs is a photograph of me and my colleagues escorting the bombers on their arrest to Paddington Green Police Station.

On leaving the SPG in 1983 was posted to Newham Division where I spent the rest of my service as a Community and Borough Information Officer until my retirement aged 60 in 2004. Among the happy memories of my time in Newham was when I was recommended to receive the MBE for services to the Metropolitan Police and Community in 2002. It was a great honour made even more special as this was presented by H.M. Queen Elizabeth herself. My other great memory, again concerns H.M. Queen Elizabeth, is that I was asked to act as Toastmaster for a lunch she attended at West Ham Football Club (my other great love) to open the Bobby Moore Stand – what a great day! I retired from the Police in 2004 after 35 years service and I have been asked on

many occasions why I did not ever take promotion.

All I can say is that my time in the Police was a very happy one and I was content with my lot. After leaving the Police, I retired to Hunstanton in Norfolk where after a few months I became very bored. My wife saw an advert in the local paper for a part time Chauffeur/Attendant to the Mayor of the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. I was accepted and before long it became more than a part time post I was also invited to be Staff Bearer to the Mayor, mainly concerned with ceremonial events. I have also been appointed Town Crier for Kings Lynn and although have only carried out a few functions, I look forward to many more in the future. Finally, my hobbies include watching sport and a liking for History. I also act as Toastmaster for Weddings, Masonic Ladies Night's and Dinners which I enjoy immensely (including the dinners). It's been a joy belonging to our Association. I have met many old colleagues and made many new friends. I look forward to our Reunions as I seem to meet someone from my distant past each time I have attended. Long may the Association reign and I wish it well in the future.

*Many thanks John for your very interesting story and all being well we look forward to seeing you at the October reunion*

*Steve and George*



*A great shot of the BFSA Room at the Museum of RAF Fire-Fighting (courtesy of Steve Pearson)*

# Robert William Gurney

I was born in Coventry December 1940; from 1961 I became known as Dan Gurney. I joined 8F Squadron ATC 1954-58, No 181 then joined 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire regiment T.A. No 23680398

Joined the RAF as AC2 3528103 Gurney. R.W on August 19<sup>th</sup> 1959. And was posted to RAF Cardington recruit reception training centre, and then on to RAF Bridgenorth recruit training, because of my T.A. training I applied for flying from D squadron to B squadron. This decision unwittingly absolved me from RAF Regiment training at RAF Catterick!

My instructors on my initial fire training course were: corporal Paddy Walsh, Sgt Mick Maddern and Sgt Concannon. The W.O. i/c of the fire training school was W.O Newbold, a pretty fierce some man! I also remember W.O. Ross and Flt Sgt Gibson. The accommodation was very basic, Seco huts (sectional concrete). All the huts were linked to central ablutions, coal fire stoves for heating and the heating of our water supply. We were detailed to keep the fires burning, quite odd that, as we were being trained to put them out!

One person I will always remember from Catterick was W.O. Danny Gourd; he was i/c the RAF Regiment Colour Squadron. One morning I was walking down the road from the fire hangar to our huts (the piggeries!) I noticed some gunners taking part in a three inch mortar drill. I stopped to watch and was smiling at their efforts; Danny Gourd asked me if I could do better/fall in! I fell in and to his astonishment I took over the loaders position putting rounds of mortar bombs down a "slipper barrel". He asked me how I knew **how** to do this. I replied that less than eight weeks previously I'd been a member of a T.A mortar platoon, firing mortars on Jugger Hows range (now Filingdales Radar establishment).

Despite his entreaties I carried on to complete my training at Catterick as a fireman, in December 1959.

My posting was to RAF Lyneham I was accompanied by Bob Lunn from Northern Ireland.

The day we arrived we were unaware that the night before a Sea Vixen diverted from Yeovilton Fleet air arm station crashed in bad weather, both crew members were killed.



*Dan Gurney far right along with comrades L to R Ron Brown, Brian Ford, Mike Clapton and Alan Gichrist.*

We were allocated to transit accommodation about a mile from the mess, fire section and the NAAFI.

The next morning we were rudely awakened by the RAF Police and put on snow clearing duties, our equipment was a shovel and a broom. We shovelled and swept snow from the main gate up the main road, around the hangars and squadron headquarters of 99 and 511 Britannia squadrons and 216 Comet squadron, talk about the gulags, they had it easy.

Eventually we reported to the fire section next to the guardroom, we were met by Jack Slater, a leading fireman in the air ministry fire service and fireman Prior Haskin. Jack ran the administration of the fire section. We were then interviewed by W.O Frank Waite.

Bob Lunn and I spent about a week on days trying to look busy. I started on A crew led by Cpl Bert Beasley the crash line consisted of a Mk6, Mk5A, DP2, and a DP2 on domestic but committed to crash duties. We also had an Austin 1 ton truck and a 200 gallon paraffin bowser for refilling gooseneck flares. We were also responsible for glim lamps, powered by lead acid accumulators. The glims were laid by a two man crew and each morning were serviced and the accumulators (acc's) returned to the battery shop for

recharging. The flare path firemen were easily recognised by their aertex denims caused by acid burns.

The goosenecks were positioned on 07/25 runways, they were lit before twilight and were refuelled during the night before being extinguished at first light. The official way of doing this was to slide a barrel and snuffle plate up the neck of the gooseneck. In practise the gooseneck was picked up and placed next to the exhaust of the Austin, the driver pressed down hard on the "loud pedal" and blew out the flame. The flare path team worked really hard, we got very dirty from the lamp black from the goosenecks, we had about 150 glims, each aircraft had a glim placed on every exposed: nose, tail and wing tip. We also had to turn outwards 45 degrees Sodium lighting and pylon lighting by hand. If Bomber Command paid a visit the goosenecks had to be extinguished because ventral wing fuel tanks could be ignited. Eventually I was officially "ont crew". I was put on rescue duty on the back of a Mk6. We wore Wellies (polished) sea boot socks, a steel wartime helmet with attached asbestos cape with glass observation inserts. The ensembles were topped with Fearnought white suits, the jackets were known as smoking jackets!

I was keen on learning to drive and Cpl Brian Hill took me out driving in his

own car. Sgt Ted Lewis took me out in an Austin one tonner around the Wiltshire countryside, his usual instructions were: gee up loft, whoa loft!

I applied for a driving course at RAF Weeton in July 1961, on arrival I discovered I was on a B class course for light vehicles. I explained that this was of no use to me as a fireman. My course was adjusted to a two month course, driving Bedford three tonners, Land Rovers and Dual Purpose 2 (DP2) fire tender mock ups.

On completion of this course I was posted to pool flight, where we did long and short distance duties throughout Lancashire. One Sunday morning before I returned the Station tannoy sounded asking for all qualified heavy drivers to report to M.T. On arrival we were informed that a rail

crash had occurred at Kirkham/Wesham near Blackpool, I drove a three tonner carrying stretchers, first aid kits, blankets etc to the scene, this occurred August/September 1961?

On my return to Lyneham I was arrested for being AWOL, I explained that I had been on a longer driving course. After checks with RAF Weeton I was exonerated of being absent. Back at Lyneham I became proficient at driving the Mk 5, Mk5a and DP2.

It was quite a shock to learn that RAF Lyneham fire service was going to be civilianised in late 1961. We had three W/O's in rapid succession, after WO Waite W/O Hamilton, W/O GH Jones (later AMFS) and W/O George Bartlett ex RAF Regiment. My Cpl was Brian Ford; I

served at Lyneham until 1964. After a lot of thought I decided to leave after my five year enlistment. The main reason I left was because a lot of RAF Regiment, gunners re-mustered to fireman and by seniority denied promotion to us "new uns" When I was demobbed in July

I started at RAF Lyneham in the Air Ministry Fire Service, later the Air Force Fire Department July 1964 one day after demob from the RAF. I retired from the Defence Force Fire Service in February 2000.

*Thanks for your tale Dan and for those who haven't yet paraded with the Association at the Cenotaph Dan is one of our regulars on parade*

## THE MINT

This brief tale of life as a RAF recruit was written by probably the most famous and illustrious of all the thousands of RAF recruits who underwent RAF recruit training and that man was none other than Aircraftsman 352087 Ross, better known as Lawrence of Arabia who completed his RAF recruit training at RAF Uxbridge in the 1920's. This remarkable study of RAF life is taken from his book, entitled **The Mint**; its well worth a trip to your local library and seeing if they have it stock.

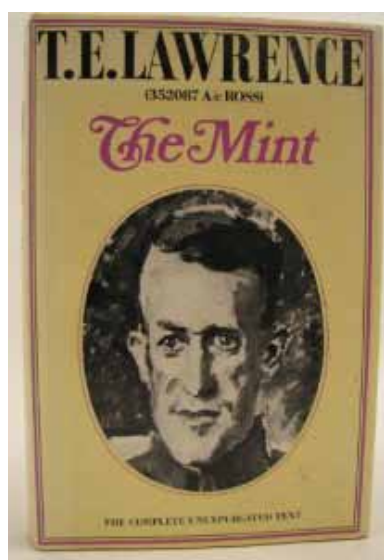
"Our hut is a fair microcosm of unemployed England; not of unemployable England, for the strict RAF standards refuse the last levels of the social structure. Yet a man's enlisting is his acknowledgement of defeat by life. Amongst a hundred serving men you will not find one whole and happy. Each has a lesion, a hurt open or concealed, in his late history. Some of us here had no money or no trade and were too proud to join the ranks of labours unskilled. Some faltered at their jobs and lost them. The heartbreak of seeking work had driven many into the feeble satisfaction of "getting in". Some have blacked their character and dodge shame or the Police Court. Others have tangled with women or ejected by women and are revenging the ill – usage of society upon their smarting selves. Yet aloud we all claim achievement, moneyed relatives, a colourful past. We include lads and their shady equivalent the hard case. Also the soft and the silly the

vain the old soldier who is lost without the nails of service; the fallen officer sharply contemptuous of our raw company, yet trying to be well fellow and not proud. The dressy artisans, the Glasgow blacksmith, the axed Davenport apprentice and The Great Western Railway machinist who rejected all kindness and swilled beer solitarily. There were chauffeurs, van men, dapper handed clerks, photographers, mechanics, broken men and bright lads from school. We are tossed through the day haphazardly from hand to hand like the golden balls of a juggler; and with some apprehension of the balls lest we be dropped suddenly and bruised. Bruised not broken and that makes part of the sorrow. We can be half killed, but not killed; punished but not capitally. There is no thrill of a real danger to graze and avoid only the certainty of minor accident and no way of escape- from a self built prison. However tired the day has left me, I cannot sleep a whole night away: not once since my enlistment. The dark hours march by me and I lie half indifferent to them, not particularly wanting to sleep, but still less

wanting to think consecutively, to attend to the hut sounds: for our hut persists in being a main intruder upon what should be mental piece. After midnight my head jars at every vibration across the still air: fellow's dream vocally of girls, muttering their pet names aloud: or shortly moan "Don't, don't" (the day long complainant grumble of the service man is his night habit too: mutely he begs always for pity, having no self defence).

They sigh and fart, amid the piano janglings of their wire beds and reveille shatters the end of the night like a last exasperation, just when I have sunk into the custom of lying still. In the morning our sergeants are waiting always wanting to spread blind terror have transformed us civilians into very frightened troops in a few days. We recruits are counselled always the road of least

resistance to dodge everything earned or unearned – except our pay. At the end of every exhortation we remind one another that we are Airmen in the Royal Air Force."





*RAF MARHAM 2012 by permission of Steve Pearson*



*RAF ODIHAM 2012 by permission of Shep Plissken*