



# FLASHPOINT



ROYAL AIR FORCE & DEFENCE FIRE SERVICES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE



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**A PONGO RIDES SHOTGUN FOR THE RAF – RAF BRUNTINGTHORPE -  
MEMORIES OF A RAF FIRE-FIGHTER'S WIFE - RON BROWNS FIRST YEARS  
MK 6 RESTORATION PROJECT - FIRE FIGHTING PROFICIENCY SHIELD**

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## FRONT COVER

Showing some of the workers at *Bell's Asbestos and Engineering Works* acting as mannequins for Bell's asbestos fire suits.



# From the Editor

Well here I am once again editing Flashpoint albeit just this Winter edition, but the process will be touched with certain sadness that I am doing it alone and not with my good friend and 'Wingman' George Edwards. I still miss the phone calls and long chats. Hopefully I'll have some spiritual guidance while he's up there in that great fire section in the sky, feet up having a brew!!



Reading the Spring edition of Flashpoint the letter from Graham Keddedy made me smile, firstly on his comments about getting to grip with technology (well done Graham) and secondly about his love story. I really hope to see your memories in print very soon, but I know by talking to you that that they may be a bit of a delay until you get your eyes sorted out and you can learn to use more than one finger whilst typing!! (Generally I use two and have a flurry of madness and can use more)

To my surprise my old desert buddy Jim Smith who has resisted all my attempts to get a computer has managed to get himself a Tablet and is now hooked on it, unbelievable!!!

Talking about books, I was saddened to hear the loss of Steve Doran a really nice

guy whom I had many chats with but had not seen for a long while. If any member has not read his book "The Diary of an RAF Fireman" I would encourage you to read it if someone will loan you it. I have recreated his introduction in the magazine just to give to a taster. Jim Jones (Taff the Fire) also has produced a book and I am looking

forward to reading it. It was good to see a response from Fred Morris and Michael Allsop about the passing of Phil Cooper, Michael; I passed on your information to Phil's family but have had no response sorry to say.

As Dave Kirk mentioned one of the hardest parts of this job is the obituary page and with the passing of many over the last few months a few legends in our trade is a sad affair.

I went over to the AGM on the Saturday at Nottingham and it was good to catch up with people and have a general natter. On the Sunday there was a visit to the museum at Scampton which was certainly a great success and a first for a lot of members and brought a lot of nostalgia.

You can see the unfolding saga of the association in the Chairmen's and Secretary's comments but I will just touch

on one aspect and that of Flashpoint. I stepped in produce this edition to give the committee time to recruit another editor as I think the magazine is the corner stone of the association. It's how many of our members that don't or cannot get to reunions because of ill health or the distance involved keep up with what is going on in our community and my fear is that with no Flashpoints many members will think what is the point of paying subs and not continue with their membership.

So I make another appeal to someone to take up the role *as I do not want to become the last editor of Flashpoint*. If any of you thinks about doing it please give me a ring first and I will be happy to talk it through with you. I do not want to take on the role as I have other projects on the go and I volunteer at the Museum of RAF Firefighting. If someone takes on the role I would be there in the background for them and support them I have quite a resource at the museum and I know Steve Shirley would support me on the use of archives.

Finally please keep sending me articles for any possible future Flashpoints and I would pass them on to the new editor, let's hope it happens. Thanks to you all that have contacted me and gave me support and offered it in the future just in case I was going to take up the post again.

Steve Harrison

(My contact details are on page 2)

## A letter from your President Dennis McCann BEM

Our Association has had another very successful year which is down to your support and the endless hours of hard work by Committee members over the years. It is hard to believe that it all began with a small group of Firemen getting together at Shoreham Airport in 1995. Since that time we have enjoyed so many good times and met so many colourful characters-we all know who they are: each of us have memories of those people special to us and there are too many to mention.

The one thing we have all enjoyed is seeing our magazine **Flashpoint** drop on our door mat two or three times a year. This has kept all our members in touch even when we have been unable or too poorly to attend reunions and given us many hours of reading: some of us reading it two or three times with a smile when something triggers past memories. The magazine has also been enjoyed by our families- siblings, wives and children. We have reached a point now when this issue which you are reading nearly didn't arrive on your door mat due to the Editor being unable to continue. We were really up that

creek without a paddle which meant no more Flashpoints this year. Unwilling to let that happen our very good friend Steve Harrison who had previously edited the magazine for a long time stepped in for the last time and I can't thank him enough on your behalf.

Now we are truly desperate for someone or a small team of members to take on the production of the magazine. Your ideas are urgently needed and every assistance will be given to the new Editor(s). I cannot envisage how we can keep the Association running without Flashpoint and I wish I could have better news for you.

My wife Pauline and I would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy and Healthy New Year. God Bless You All.

Dennis McCann

1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

# Letters to the Flashpoint editor

## Foam Layers by Dutchy Holland

During 1959-1962 whilst serving at RAF Akrotiri Fire Service, I, and many other Firemen were involved in foam laying projects. The prototype was the brainchild of WO Hammond and his ultimate aim was that it should be built.

The basic design was:

1. Leyland Hippo with a platform built on the back to house Coventry Climax pumps
2. 10x FMB using the old protein foam (Ed's note: For younger readers, this stuff was made

Trial after trial was conducted to ascertain the effect of different conditions, ie. Wind, duration, speed of hippo's, ideal driving positions left and right of centre lines. We used two Hippo's in these trials.

We also experimented with the positioning of the 10x's to get the right configuration for a foam carpet, looking at how long the foam would last and how long a carpet we could get.

We carried out interminable practice runs until all Fire Service and MT personnel were satisfied that we were operationally ready for foam laying.

The first time we used the foam layers in anger was for a Royal Navy Sea Venom. The A/C burnt off fuel whilst we commenced laying the carpet, and when the carpet was laid the A/C was informed to expedite his landing. Fortunately all went as planned, the Sea Venom carried out a wheels up landing on the carpet, landed safely and stayed within the confines of the carpet.

WO Hammond was very pleased and praised all who had taken part in this "first" for Akrotiri.

Dear Sir,

It was with great interest that I read in Flashpoint Spring Edition 2016 on page 16 a very interesting article by 'Dutchy' Holland regarding the making of a new foam laying equipment.

Warrant Officer Hammond contacted the MU hoping to obtain two Hippo fuel bowsers, each which carried 2,500 gallons. As you can see his request was granted and these bowsers then became 'Foam Layers'

I have enclosed a photograph and report from our local newspaper, 'The Sheerness Times Guardian' Isle of Sheppey, Kent. We have no idea how they obtained these, but someone contacted my wife Ann.

Warrant Officer Hammond is in the centre, I am on the left, maybe 'Dutchy' is on the right.

Further to this report, I was on the team when this equipment was tested for the first time on a Royal Navy Sea Venom, with wheels up, landing safely on a carpet of foam.

Also a Russian aircraft, I am not sure what type asked permission to land at Akrotiri, because of a 'wheels up' problem, but it landed at Paphos.

Several weeks later a team of Airframe Fitters/Mechanics from Akrotiri repaired the damage to this aircraft and in preparation for its takeoff I and a crew of five

With a DP2 and Mk5A went to Paphos to give fire cover for the take off.

Another incident occurred when a Javelin FAW.9 XH906 of 25 Squadron flew into the rear of a Canberra of 32 Squadron (WD995) all three of the Canberra crew died and the pilot of the Javelin died of his injuries, he ejected but his parachute failed to deploy as the aircraft was going down.

On another occasion June 16<sup>th</sup> 1962 as we were going of duty from the night shift, we all heard the Victor (XA929) taking off to return to the UK, but it crashed on takeoff. We returned immediately to the Fire Section, kitted up and took every available appliance, including the two Hippos'. We worked three or four days assisting to clear the site. This was the worst incident of my career.

Alan Dawes



## Island man in R.A.F. safety team

THE men in this picture, one of them from Sheppey, are adjusting the jets of the foam-laying equipment at Royal Air Force Akrotiri, Cyprus. The foam is laid on runways to minimise fire risk to damaged aircraft making forced landings.

Senior Aircraftman Alan Dawes (25), of 2, Copland-avenue, Minster, is on the left of the picture.

His attractive wife Ann, her vivacity in no way impaired by a recent bout of 'flu, told me this week "I hope to be with him either this week or next. I've filled in all the forms, and I only have to be told the date of my flight."

Cyprus is Aircraftman Dawes' second overseas posting: he was previously at El Adhem, in North Africa. The

couple, who have a son, Keith, aged 18 months, have been separated since June.

Both Aircraftman Dawes and his wife are local people. His parents used to live in Minster, but moved to Bath.

In the centre of the photograph is Warrant Officer Bernard Hammond, who has been closely concerned with the conception, design and production of the foam laying equipment.

It can lay a 3,000 by 75ft. of foam in 5 minutes, 45 seconds. This would be 3ins. deep.

Before his marriage Mr. Dawes lived with his parents at 16, New-road, Minster. They have now moved to Bath, Somerset.

He has been in Cyprus since September.

## **THE CHAIRMAN'S AND SECRETARY COMMENTS FROM A.G.M. 2016**

### **FLASHPOINT**

THE CHAIRMAN ASKED FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE OVER AS EDITOR OF FLASHPOINT. NO ONE VOLUNTEERED. STEVE HARRISON HAD PREVIOUSLY OFFERED HIS SERVICES TO THE COMMITTEE TO EDIT THE LAST FLASHPOINT OF 2016. AS YOU ARE AWARE, NO FLASHPOINT WAS PRINTED FOR THE SUMMER ISSUE DUE TO THE PREVIOUS EDITOR STANDING DOWN.

**IF NO-ONE VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE ON THIS ROLE, THEN THE FUTURE OF FLASHPOINT AND ALSO THE ASSOCIATION ITSELF, IS IN JEOPARDY. IF ANYONE IS ABLE TO TAKE ON THE EDITOR'S ROLE, PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT YOU WILL BE ABLY SUPPORTED BY STEVE HARRISON.**

### **THE SHOP**

AS THE SHOP NO LONGER HAS ONE PERSON IN CHARGE, THE CHAIRMAN HAS TAKEN STEWARDSHIP OF ALL ITEMS. THANK YOU TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO OFFERED STORAGE OF CERTAIN ITEMS.

ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PURCHASE ITEMS PLEASE CONTACT THE CHAIRMAN.

### **THE CENOTAPH PARADE**

AFTER MANY YEARS OF STERLING WORK, RON BROWN HAS RELINQUISHED HIS POST AS ORGANISER OF THE ANNUAL CENOTAPH PARADE. PAUL MURRAY WAS VOTED AS SUCCESSOR AT THE AGM.

**IN THE UNFORTUNATE EVENT OF THE ASSOCIATION BEING FORCED TO CLOSE, ALL MONIES WILL BE GIVEN TO THE ROYAL AIRFORCE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MEMORIAL FUND. THIS HAS BEEN PASSED BY ALL MEMBERS ATTENDING THE AGM 2016.**

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THIS IS YOUR ASSOCIATION AND IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF MEMBERS WILLING TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER. ITS FAILURE TO CONTINUE WILL BE AS A RESULT OF LACK OF INTEREST AND SUPPORT BY YOU THE MEMBERSHIP. THE COMMITTEE IS HOPEFUL THAT THEIR PLEAS FOR HELP DO NOT FALL ON DEAF EARS.**

## **WEB SITE REPORT**

Things have been a little quieter since the last web report. I have continued to build the vehicles pages for the new web site, and have updated the live site as has been necessary. Uncertainties regarding the future of the Shop and Flashpoint have affected the way the job is being planned. Thanks go to Facebook users who share their memories, but it would be nice to have a few good quality scans of photographs from Members, or personal memories that would add interest to the site.

Our Facebook Page and Group forums

also continue to be a valuable resource for members to catch up with old colleagues, share memories and keep in touch.

A less enjoyable aspect of maintaining the website is updating the Obituary Page. This was particularly sad in September as we had Davey Air's passing on the 13th, and later a spate of three ex WO's during the weekend 24th-26th.

Your input and feedback is always welcome so please if you have anything that would enhance the site in any way, please get in touch with me at [webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@rafanddfsa.co.uk).

*Dave Kirk - Webmaster*

## **Help Required**

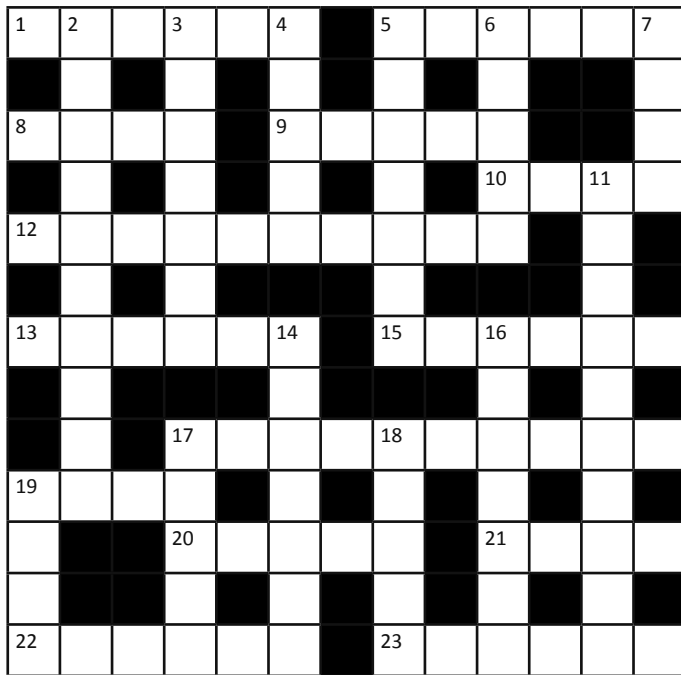
Recently Lisa Turnball posted a request for information on our website about her Father **Jim Cameron** who recently passed away. He served at RAF Leconfield from 1966 to 1968 but his career ended there as he was medically discharged. All they had to go on was his discharge book and the family were not familiar with service life. I have given them details about Swinderby and Catterick for which they were grateful. They don't have a photograph of him in service. So By any chance did anyone serve with Jim, and maybe have a photograph, I know it a long shot but let's hope we have we will have a bit of luck.

*Steve Harrison*

## **RAF NEWTON**

**Anyone served at RAF Newton?** Just as a matter of interest, Rushcliffe Borough Council Planning Site has a planning application for the conversion of the **control tower at Newton to a single dwelling and the fire section and workshop to a domestic use**

# Crossword by Firefly



## Across

1. Fast planes in morning cast overboard? (6)
5. In use condense to short time. (6)
8. See 17Dn
9. For wet hair perhaps or confused rider. (5)
10. See 5 Dn
12. Tartar Cods concocted to foretell future. (5,5)
13. Thrifty Rugby Union in odd 21. (6)
- 15 & 22. A Padre strangely old-fashioned on drill surface. (6,6)
17. US soldier goes back in bandage while deviating.(10)
19. Jason's ship was an endless transport plane. (4)
20. Catch Old Boy, a very rich old boy. (5)
21. Ensign on 15 & 22 perhaps. (4)
22. See 15
23. Crazy went into labour during leave year at first. (6)

## Down

2. Initially European Commission Office fighter for environmental issues. (10)
3. Two eastern kings in air at Far East Air Base. (3,4)
4. Get first aid from edict. (5)
5. & 10ac Agitate rump pup used to extinguish chimney fire. (7,4)
6. Moans about scrap. (5)
7. Discard equipment storage area. (4)
11. Handle Mill strangely on USAF Base. (10)
14. Glib Lee is easy to read. (7)
16. In a fluster? Strangely, the opposite. (7)
- 17 & 8Ac. Sleigh puller in corner of bombing range. (5,4)
18. The Spanish knot perhaps found in 19 (5)
19. Weapons found on a Royal Marine Squadron initially. (4)

Answers on page 21

## Abridged Version of Accounts

### RAF & DFSA Statement of Accounts 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016 for AGM

Bank Statement @ 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2016	£13,405.85
Uncleared credit 3@ £52	<u>52.00</u>
Sub total	13,457.85
Uncleared Debits 1 @	<u>92.88</u>
Sub total	£13,364.97
Savings Account ( 5 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2016)	<u>17,234.46</u>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£30,599.25</b>

### Previous end of year Balances

2016	£23,703.38	2014	£20,081.95	2013	£17,440.20	2012	£15,719.26
2011	£13,067.83	2010	£12,764.00	2009	£14,416.94	2008	££10,347.34

Present Membership 399 paid members, 53 yet to pay by cheque.  
Subs are always due on the 1<sup>st</sup> September every year.

### RAF Fire and rescue Service Memorial Fund account 2016

Bank statement 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	£ 315.65
Savings A/c	<u>£ 12,147.81</u>
Sub total	£ 12,463.46

Donation from Michael Blackman	40.00
Donation from a none members memorial service of Bernard HA Walters	<u>295.00</u>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>£12,798.46</b>

Donations each month from members total £100 = £1,200 per year.

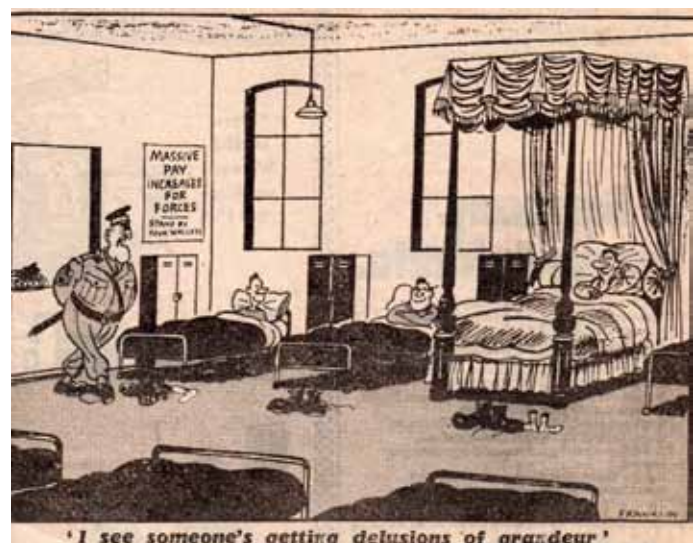
### Previous Years balances

2015	£10,023.91
2014	£ 8,723.88
2013	£ 6,305.82 ( my first bank statement)

Trevor Hayes

If you require to see a full version of accounts please contact Trevor.

## Pay Review Body 1970's (Things in the Attic)



*Looking through all the bits I have kept, this brought back a few memories*

# A PONGO RIDES SHOTGUN FOR THE RAF



Short Sunderland MkV M2824 at Hendon Museum, (She is now indoors)



In 1956 she was serving at Pembroke Dock, with, if I remember correctly, 201 Sqn.

At the time I was serving with the Royal Scots Greys at nearby

Castle Martin tank firing ranges. Along with 3 others, I was lucky in the draw to fly in a Sunderland. The aircraft was moored out in the Milford Haven Bay and we had to get to it with some of the crew in a seaplane tender. Just getting onto the boat was the start of my worries, it was bouncing around in the swell and we had to take a leap of faith to get aboard, after a roughish 15 minutes we then had to do the same again to get into the little door on the aircraft. We were then given life jackets that we found difficult to put on and even more complicated to understand how to use them and the life dinghies and parachutes in an emergency. By now we were wishing that someone else had won the draw. We were told to sit down and hold on ready for take-off and then they closed the watertight doors on us. I recall the takeoff was a bit hairy as we bounced from wave to wave then suddenly almost a deafening silence from the hull as we left the water with now just the roar of

the four massive engines to gain height, it then calmed a bit to a dull roar and we set off on a 6 hour mission, My first flight of any kind!! Without warning the machine guns were tested, we were convinced we were under attack, they thought it was great seeing us Army tank heroes shaking in our boots

It was very exciting to start with as we helped make tea and sandwiches for the crew and had the usual inter service banter, they all talked like sailors with bulkhead, embark and ahoy, still it was a Flying Boat I suppose!!

We played with the guns, visited the cockpit, got a bit air sick and found the pleasure of visiting the foul smelling Elson toilet, they called it the head, designed to make you feel even more sick.

Ultimately it became very boring with nothing but miles of sea to look at, the odd game of cards and the occasional nap in the crew beds. Then as we approached to land back at Milford Haven it all started again, I thought we would fall out of the sky as we slowed right down, we all now knew that feeling with our holiday flights and accept it as the norm but remember this was my first flight and I was a bit scared. Then we hit the water with a crash, half expecting it to burst though the hull, bounced clear

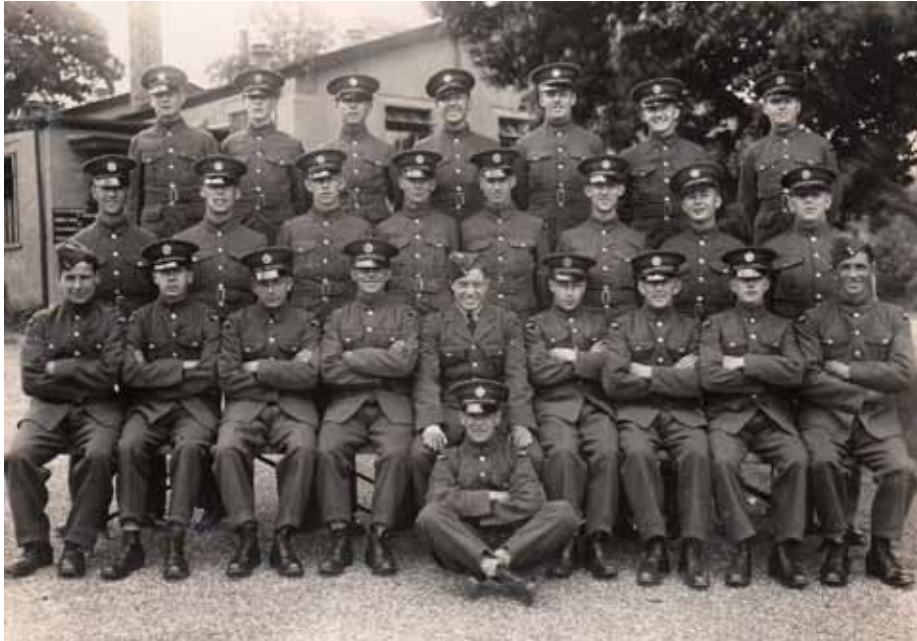
once then settled down and wallowed in the swell to be met by that damned seaplane tender again with all the hassle of getting on and off, it was a relief to be back on dry land. Our troubles were not yet over, we were taken back to our camp by two RAF Police, they were really cocky and had a go at us for being scruffy and that we would never make the grade as Airmen. They had to report to our regimental guardroom with us and they were not so cocky when the guard commander gave them a shakedown before sending them off with a flea in their ears. All in all, it was a once in a lifetime experience, and a flight in a very special aircraft. Last year on a visit to Hendon Museum with the Association it was a real nostalgic treat to see her again after 60 years.

I was convinced that I could still smell that damned toilet, sorry head!!!!

*John Goupillot*

PS: It is interesting to note that 201 Sqn is the only unit affiliated to Guernsey in the Channel Islands where my family originated!! The Sqn was disbanded at Pembroke Dock in 1957 having had Sunderland's for seventeen years. There is a Sqn Museum at St Peter Port in Guernsey.

# Warrant Officer George "Brad" Bradley 1936-1974-R A F.



## Early Training Days

"Brad" left school in Louth Lincolnshire, in 1936 and went for his initial RAF training.

He trained at Orpington and Uxbridge and whilst at Uxbridge, he became a member of the Olympian Drill Team and as such went on parade for the Coronation of King George VI. He also appeared at the Royal Command Performance at Olympia. During his early days in the RAF, he made the Command teams for football and cricket. He also was a founding member of the RAF Angling association and fought to have the sport officially recognized by the RAF.

His career started off as a rear gunner on Sunderland flying boats. He trained at RAF Waddington for this. In 1939 his aircraft was shot down over the Libyan Desert near Tobruk, he and two surviving crewmen were rescued by some "Desert Rats". He was returned to his unit and eventually joined the troop ship "Dumana" in 1939 and went to Aden, Malta, Gibraltar, Egypt and a host of other places.

Somewhere along the line, he was shot in the foot and transferred briefly to the RAF Regiment, when he served on armoured cars, before ending up back in the UK on light duties, when he met my mother Mollie, who was a WRAF telephonist and in 1942, they married. He was finally deemed unfit for flying duties, so Brad then trained at Sutton on Hull as a Fireman.

In 1943 he was stationed at Tangmere, preparing for the invasion of Europe and went on to take a fire engine onto the

beaches and into France on D-Day.

After time in France and setting up fire section cover, he moved onto a base in Holland, where he had his jaw blown off during an air raid on New Year's Day 1945. He was rescuing the crew of an aircraft when the airfield was bombed! He was initially hospitalised in Holland before being flown to RAF Wroughton Hospital and was transferred shortly after to East Grinstead hospital under the care of Sir Archibald McIndoe, the pioneer of plastic surgery and became one of his "Guinea Pigs".

He went on to a variety of stations at home and abroad and finished his last overseas tour in Gibraltar. During his service he

notched up a total of fifteen medals and over thirty different RAF Stations.

He was stationed at RAF Scampton when I was born in 1961 and I am now a proud volunteer at the Museum of RAF Firefighting at RAF Scampton, re-living my younger days when I was brought up around the RAF Fire Service !

Some of the postings and detachments are as follows: Dates being uncertain for these,

West Raynham, Shawbury, Cranwell, Uxbridge, Calshot, Gosport, Hurn, Catterick, Manston, Lasham, Manby, Belgium, Hong Kong, Iraq, Palestine.

Egypt, 1949-1951. Oakington, 1952-1955. Ceylon, (Negumbo) 1955-1957. Thorney Island, 1958-1959. Church Fenton, 1960-1961. Scampton, 1961-1962. Seletar (Singapore) 1963-1965. Leconfield, 1965-1967. Waddington, 1968-1969. Seletar, 1969-1971. West Drayton, 1971-1972. Gibraltar, 1972-1974. Wyton, 1974-Retirement. Honington 1975-1982 as a Civil Servant.

I would like to thank my sister Carolyn and Brother Mike and other members of the RAF Fire Service, for their help and memories that have been used to compile this article. My sister Carolyn was a nursing sister in the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service. My brother Mike served his 22 years as an Airframe Technician and me (Chris Bradley) served as a "Snowdrop", being a member of the Royal Air Force Police.

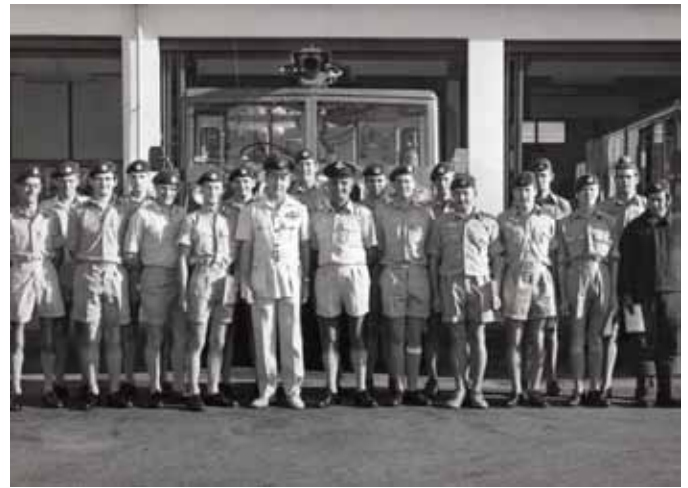
*Chris Bradley*







Meeting two fellow "McIndoe's Guinea Pigs" at Gibraltar 1972



Gibraltar 1973

60

#### APPENDIX A

### SYLLABUS OF COURSE OF INSTRUCTION IN FIRE FIGHTING DUTIES AT CRANWELL

1. *First week.*—(i) The first day of the course will be devoted to a lecture by the Air Ministry Technical Adviser on Fire Services. The subject matter of the lecture will be :—
  - (a) The organisation of the air force fire services.
  - (b) Training of station fire personnel.
  - (c) Fire prevention (including a review of the special fire risks applicable to the air force).
  - (d) Fire fighting and systems of water supply.
  - (e) The care and maintenance of fire appliances and equipment.
 (ii) The instruction for the remainder of the first week will be continued by the fire class instructor. This instruction will consist of the description, the use and the care and maintenance of chemical extinguishers, hydrants, standpipes, couplings, adaptors, breaching pieces, hose, branch-pipes, nozzles, hand pumps, safety belts, fire ladders, fire engines, booster pumps, fire alarms and other fire fighting appliances and equipment.
2. *Second week.*—During the second week practical instruction will be given in the charging and operation of chemical extinguishers; also "Dry" drill with hose and other fire appliances and apparatus will be carried out.
3. *Third week.*—The third week will be devoted to practical drill with all appliances. The drill will include the extinguishing of a "crash" fire, the "crash," consisting of waste material, being first prepared and ignited. Members of the class will act as instructors during the last two weeks of the course.
4. *Fourth week.*—During the last week of the course the whole of the instruction previously imparted will be recapitulated. The fire class instructor will note that only the necessary words of command are given by the members of the class when acting as instructors; he will also correct any discrepancies in the drill or operations carried out by the class.
5. *Indoor lectures.*—In addition to the above, a series of lectures on fire services as in para. 1, and practical instruction in the repair of fire hose, appliances and equipment, will be given by the fire instructor in the fire station or class room.
6. *Examination.*—At the end of the course, each member of the class will be examined in theoretical and practical fire fighting duties by the Air Ministry Technical Adviser on Fire Services. Form 292 showing whether the candidate has passed, or failed to pass the examination, will be issued and distributed in accordance with the instructions contained on the form.
7. *Drill clothing.*—N.C.Os. attending a course of instruction in fire fighting at Cranwell, will wear overalls or part-worn clothing during the time they are under instruction.
8. *First-aid lectures by a Medical Officer.*—Six lectures on "First Aid to the Injured" will be given to the class during the course. The time and date of the lectures will be arranged to suit the medical officer.

## RAF Cranwell Training

In carrying out a project at the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting I came across references to RAF Cranwell in a 1932 (1941 reprint) of an AP957. It was the syllabus for a course of instruction, it has been reproduced once before in an RAF Catterick Fire Magazine and I thought it interesting as little is known of our history during that period.

Steve Harrison (625)

#### CHAPTER II.—FIRE PERSONNEL

15. *Fire fighting classes.*—Classes for the instruction of N.C.Os. in fire prevention, fire fighting and the maintenance of fire fighting appliances and equipment, are held at frequent intervals (usually each alternate month) at Cranwell (see para. 390 K.R. and A.C.I.). The duration of each class is one month, and the syllabus of training is laid down at Appendix A. It is important that personnel detailed to attend fire fighting classes, should be available at Cranwell on the morning that the course is due to commence, and should have with them overalls or part-worn clothing for use during the time they are under instruction.
16. *Fire instructors.*—N.C.Os. who pass the examination held at the end of each period of instruction, are given a certificate to the effect that they have duly qualified as fire instructors. They will undertake the training of station personnel in fire preventive and fire fighting duties, make themselves thoroughly conversant with the positions of all fire hydrants and control valves on the station, and be able to proceed, readily, direct to any hydrant or valve at any time, including the hours of darkness. During their tour of duty, they will visit as many buildings as circumstances permit, in order to ascertain that fire precautions are being observed, and that the fire appliances installed therein are in proper working order. Should anything be observed that

# From Fire-Fighter to First Aider

Steve served as an RAF Firefighter and Crew Commander for nearly 16 years, and served all over the world, including tours of Kuwait, the Falkland Islands and the Ascension Islands. He sustained a life changing injury while on duty, when there was an explosion in a simulator where he was observing newly trained fire fighters practising their techniques. Steve was thrown into the air and landed hard on his back, causing his neck to hyper-extend. After several medical tests a prolapsed disc was also discovered. Although Steve had surgery to try and correct this, it proved unsuccessful and he was medically retired from the Force in July 2005.

Steve had always been a pragmatic person and so, used to doing physical jobs he started up a new career, however the injury again became a problem and this also ended. He was applying for lots of jobs, but his medical past was becoming an issue, as well as his inability to do the physically demanding jobs that he had done for many years. It was at this point that Steve got in touch with the Royal Air Forces Association, a service he had always been aware of since his Forces days.

A visit from a local welfare volunteer, Jan put Steve's mind at ease about asking for help, as in Steve's words she 'made me

feel that I wasn't a burden.' Steve received assistance from the Association for him to undertake a First Aid instructor course, as well as four mannequins to aid in his future teaching. The money and training meant the world to Steve, as it developed a new career and skills that Steve could draw on from his fire fighting experience.

Steve says that without the support of the Association he has no idea where he would be, the constant application for jobs was becoming 'soul destroying'. He was getting positive feedback on his experience but his applications were being rejected. For all of those in a similar position to Steve, he says the advice he would give is, "swallow your pride and don't be afraid to ask for help."

Steve places a great deal of credit on the Midlands welfare team, especially Jan, as he says just talking to them and knowing that they heard him and cared about his situation was a relief. Steve is not completely up to where he would like to be, but feels there is a light at the end of the tunnel, he just hopes, "it's not someone with a torch," typical fire-fighter humour!

*You may notice that Steve's surname is omitted from the article at Steve's request. It's pleasing that after his career in the RAF that he was able to continue with*

*another worthwhile occupation and I am sure all members wish him all the best.*

## Editor

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## Ex RAF Fire-Fighters son Carl Bell requires help

*I placed this in a previous Flashpoint and had no response and thought with new members joining it was worth trying again to help Carl who would dearly love to get some photographs of his Dad.*

Carl is a volunteer at the Museum of RAF Fire Fighting and wants your help with memories of his late father. Another volunteer Gareth Jordan some time ago was trying to get information about his late father Gary Jordan, and it turned out that association member Terry Wright was one of his mates in Malta. Gareth found out that Terry only lived just 5 miles away from his mum. Let's hope Carl has the same luck.

Here is Carl's message:

"I wanted to see if anyone could help me out, I am looking for pictures of my Dad

that may have been taken through his service life as an RAF Fireman, he joined up when he was 16 and did 25 years service, coming out in '91. Unfortunately a lot of the photos we had of him were water damaged, his name was Colin 'Dinger' Bell and he sadly passed away suddenly in 2001, also any memories would be great, thank you." Carl

Colin served at AFCENT, Odiham, Wildenrath, Scampton, Bishops Court and Rudloe Manor.

Any information can be passed on to Steve Harrison; contact details on contacts page.



# RAF BRUNTINGTHORPE

*Reading this article in an Airfield Review magazine this extract was I thought it was a great little part of our aviation history, I also wondered if there was ever a dedicated fire section for this unit considering its tight security, but I suspect the incumbent Fire Section would have covered it. Bruntingthorpe was opened in November 1942 and was home to 29 OCU flying Vickers Wellington.*

In 1943, following the earlier construction of a government financed factory for Power Jets Ltd, (Frank Whittle's company) at Whetstone, some six miles south of Leicester, a Whittle Flight was established at Bruntingthorpe, as part of the Power Jets Unit, controlled by Wing Commander A E Louks, Production Overseer in the Ministry of Aircraft Production. A hanger on the North West side of the airfield was allocated to the flight, and workshop units were built. For security reasons it was located just outside the perimeter track, on the opposite side of the airfield to the main workshop area.

The flight's 36 RAF personnel, though, did live in the normal accommodation area, as

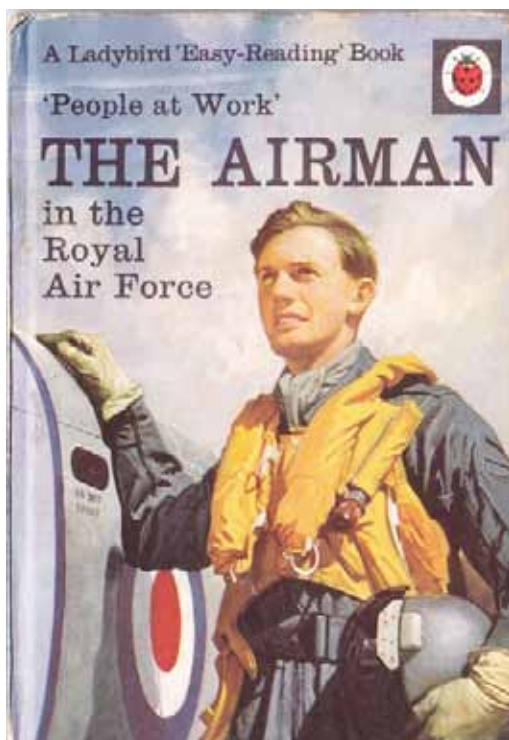
there were no suitable facilities near the hanger. Though not all the aircraft were present all the time, the flight consisted of:

1. Vickers Wellington Mk II, W5389, fitted with wider Mk IV wings, supercharged Roll Royce Merlin 62 engines and various jet engines in the tail.
2. Avro Lancaster Mk III, ND784, converted to a Mk VI, this being a trails aircraft for various marks of Armstrong Siddeley's first jet engine the ASX. The engine was partially in the front end of the bomb bay, but was mostly positioned underneath it.
3. Gloster Meteor F1, EE215 – the first fitted with guns – was powered initially by two Roll Royce B.23 engines. These were later replaced with afterburner versions of the Whittle 2/700 with which increased the speed from 420 to 460 mph.
4. Gloster Meteor F1, EE221, powered by two Whittle 2/700 engines.
5. Gloster Meteor F3, EE291

The flight consisted of 2 and 38 other personnel 34 whom were in the, most of these being technicians provided by the air force, though there were also a few civilians. The purpose was to test and evaluate jet engines, for the gas turbine world was a very young one, and data about optimum operating heights, jet pipe temperatures at altitude, the effect of searingly hot temperatures and high pressures on different metals, and the ability of turbine blades to withstand temperature variations etc, was minimal. Whittle would naturally have been a fairly frequent visitor, and on 19 October 1954 flew one of the two remaining Meteors, despite not being cleared to do so. Meteor EE291 had sadly crashed in may 1954 in a field near Blaby church, during a demonstration flight near the Whetstone factory. The pilot, Squadron Leader Alan O Moffet DFC, was killed. He was the chief test pilot.

Extract from an article entitled "Bruntingthorpe Airfield" 65 Years of Development (Part 1) by Geoffrey Poole

Many of us I am sure spent our pocket money on Lady Bird books cast your minds back and do you remember seeing this. Someone posted it Facebook and I thought it worth reproducing. As the regards the wording no doubt they will be a few raised eyebrows from members older than me!!!



## A Dream Come True

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1958 I boarded the train to RAF Cardington to fulfil my dream and join the Royal Air Force as a Fireman. After completing all the procedures at Cardington it was then on to RAF Bridgenorth for my 'Square Bashing' then at last to RAF Sutton on Hull, my journey there took me past Goole and along the Humber Estuary in the winter "what have I let myself in for" I thought. It was a hard place to do drill in thick ice but at 17½ it was no problem after Bridgenorth.

I finished at the top off my course and was awarded a gold and silver wired blazer badge which I still have, and so it was off to RAF Weeton near Blackpool for my driver training.

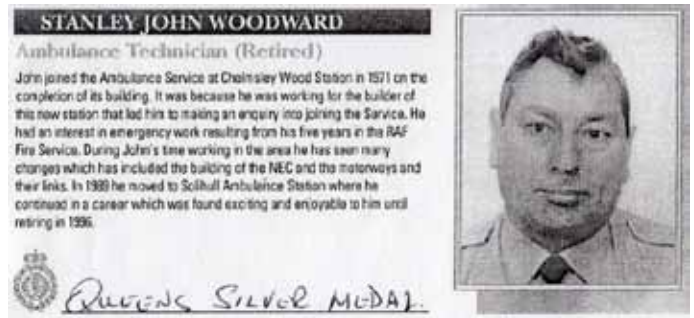
My next journey was on to my first posting at RAF Bovingdon Hertfordshire with the Americans as an SAC driver under Warrant Officer 'Dan Dare', it was quiet place with not much going on, still after five months I was on the move to RAF Aird Uig a early warning radar unit on the isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. I arrived there with two stripes on my arm, not bad for one years' service! It was a small unit we had Bedford Domestic truck, Sgt Fitzgerald was in charge with four SAC's and myself which made up the section. I stayed there for two years then moved to RAF Church Fenton in Yorkshire which was No7 Flying Training School, flying Jet Provost and found myself I/c 'C' Crew. Sgt Dixon was in charge of the Section and was an easy going bloke. We had a satellite station at RAF Elvington about 10 miles away,

and half the aircraft flew at RAF Church Fenton the rest at Elvington. Nothing untoward happened in my two years apart from the Leeds Air Display being transferred to Fenton due to developments at Leeds, this was 11<sup>th</sup> June 1962. I saw a lot of strange aircraft that day an as I/c Crew I kept my fingers crossed that the day went well!

On discharge from the RAF in September 1963 I worked for a small building firm driving a variety of vehicles and building civic buildings schools, clinics etc. We built an ambulance station at Chemsley Wood a new town outside Birmingham, whilst clearing the remnants and bits and pieces from the site I mentioned to



John at RAF Bovingdon 1959



the Station Superintendent "A job like ambulance work would suit me" Well bless my soul he was ex RAF Regiment, he said "There is always room for ex RAF in my Station" he called the Chief Officer who happened to ex RAF flying type who loved firemen and the job was min.

I had a long and very interesting career serving 25 years on the front line leaving the NHS I worked for a private company retiring in 2011

John Woodward (Member113)

More information about Aird Uig can be found on the web. <http://www.ceuig.co.uk/places/villages/aird-uig/raf-aird-uig/>

The radar station was in operation until 1964, when it was replaced by a radio communications surveillance system. The domestic camp was adjacent to the village of Aird Uig and a few hundred metres south of the radar station; it too was closed in 1964. The buildings remained unused for many years until the site was sold in 1977; it has been resold several times subsequently. Individuals now own the buildings and have transformed them into homes, restaurants and guesthouses. The Headquarters and NAAFI shop building is now the Gallan Head Hotel & Restaurant

## Oxford Diecast TACR2

If you did not know Oxford have a released a 1:76 scale model of a Winterised Camouflaged TACR2 it can be bought off a few websites the cost is £9.95 onwards.

Various schemes and liveries were applied to these uniquely designed vehicles during their service; this model features an olive green and black camouflage scheme of an example housed in the Museum of RAF Firefighting at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire.

Registered with a military number plate 51 AG 49, the Land Rover carries many emergency vehicle features including roof ladders and roof hose reel, side hose detail, blue roof beacon and spotlight, rear floodlight and front hazard lights.

The rear is moulded to give a roller shutter effect. Inside, the seating is light tan in contrast to the dark grey dashboard and steering wheel.



# Memories of a RAF Fire-Fighter's Wife - PART ONE

When I met my husband Tom (Paddy) Lilburn in 1957 he was serving at RAF Sutton-on-Hull, the RAF School of Fire-fighting. After he had completed his training he was posted to RAF Rufforth, near York, we were still seeing each other during this time and we eventually married on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1959 during a blizzard – yes we had a truly white wedding. We had to get married at this time as the previous date in June had to be changed as he was posted to RAF Woomera, Australia, the only way he could get off this posting was to get married early, which we did.

Our first rented accommodation was in Acomb a suburb of York. At first we lived in a house but the eccentric landlady drove us mad so we moved into a converted railway carriage. It had all the home comforts, bedroom, sitting room and bathroom.



*Converted Railway Carriage*

We were still at Rufforth and it was not too far from my parents which was important to me as I was only 19 years and one week old when we married. From there we were posted to RAF Church Fenton, south of York and our first child was due on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1960 during a blizzard, but two months before that Tom received the news that he was posted to Singapore. The posting was deferred and our daughter Julie was born on the due date. However when she was six months old Tom received another posting notice this time an unaccompanied tour to RAF Sharjah in the Persian Gulf. He embarked on the troop ship HMS Oxfordshire and after 2 weeks he arrived in Aden before going 'Up country' to Sharjah. Being newly married and having a young daughter he wanted to have his family with him and he managed to get an exchange with another lad and was kept at Steamer Point.

I stayed with my parents until my flight tickets and instructions arrived. I did not want to go by ship as I do not like water, it terrifies me so that is why I requested to

fly (which also terrified me) but I thought it would be over and done with far quicker than by troop ship. Like many people of my generation I had never been outside of Yorkshire apart from a holiday in Blackpool with my parents when I was 14 so my mother went with me to London to help with the baby and luggage. We stayed at the Union Jack Hotel for a night and the next morning I had to report to a Place in Bond Street, we arrived at 10.30 and there were lots of other wives and babies waiting to be transported to Stanstead airport, when we arrived there it was early afternoon and we all went into the NAFFI and was duly fed by Army staff.

At Stanstead airport we were all hustled along like cattle as we had been all day. We finally boarded the aircraft which was a Britannia and then my nerves kicked in! I was seated half way down the plane which had a rope crib above and the seat had their backs to the pilot. It was about 22.30 when we took off; there was a serviceman who sat next to me and a service wife at the other side of me when we got airborne, she said "Oh look out of the window it looks like wonderland" I had a quick look and I shivered and slumped back into my seat. Julie was only ten months old and would not settle and I think everyone on the flight had a hold of her at sometime as I was very sick throughout the flight.

It was the 1<sup>st</sup> December when we landed in Aden after 14 hours in the air and it was an eye opener! Firstly when the doors opened it was as if we had walked into a furnace, it was 75degrees Fahrenheit and of course the baby and I still had our warm clothes on and all she did was scream. An airman carried her out of the departures for me and I saw my husband Tom there and beckoned to him to get our daughter whom he had not seen for four months and of course he did not recognise her as she was only a tiny baby when he left.

We got a taxi to our apartment and in my eyes, the journey; albeit a short one was like walking into a biblical scene what with the white buildings and everything else.

When we got to the apartment what a strange world!! Fans on the ceilings in every room, oh what had I let myself in for! Tom put the suitcase on the floor whilst we had a cuppa and I was horrified to see a line of BLACK ANTS coming across the floor and into my suitcase. Tom jumped up and opened it and to my horror the NHS bottle of orange juice I had packed had broken, what a mess. To cap it all I spent my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 4<sup>th</sup> January suffering with "Aden Gut."

We had been there for about two weeks my daughter just wore a terry nappy because of the heat (no disposables in those days) I had made a two cups of coffee for Tom and myself put his on the coffee table and went back into the kitchen. All of a sudden I heard a scream and Tom shouting for me, my daughter had pulled the hot coffee all over her and we could not remove the nappy pin as it was too hot and when we managed to remove it she was badly scalded, so we had to make a trip to Chapel Hill Hospital. They took her off us and told us to come the following day. Worried sick we could not wait, but when we saw her she was in a cot, naked with her arms in tubes to stop her scratching herself. She had settled down but it was horrible to see. There was a lighted hearted moment among all this, we were sat between two cots and there was a baby boy in the next cot and all of a sudden he felt the urge to pee and I got soaked. On the third day we went up to the hospital and we found our daughter was not on the same ward. When I questioned the nurse she said "Oh we had to move her as we think she has got gastroenteritis" I said "She couldn't have as she was teething and was always that way when another tooth was on its



*Our Balcony in the El Baz Building*



### *El Baz Building*

way” They still kept her in isolation for three days and discovered she hadn’t had it. I was upset because they had put her in with babies that did have it and could have caught it. Finally she was allowed out after one and half weeks, much to our delight. Being away from home and not having Mum to reassure me was awful. The next problem I had with her and had to take her to the MO was that she had a bad cough and was teething. He told me that I should shower her every hour and gave her some medication. I thought about this and remembered my Mother saying I cut my teeth with Bronchitis and she had to keep me warm. I did not give her the cold showers and she got better. Years later I discovered that the Mother of a Son in the flat above ours had been given the same advice and followed it out and her son, to her horror developed pneumonia. We met when we were both housed in the same street in Laarbruch in 1965.

In 1961 Iraq laid claim to Kuwait and that it was part of its territories this led to political tension and the armed forces of the UK were put on alert. It was quite terrifying and Tom was sent ‘Up Country’ and all the gun boats which were in Aden Harbour were made ready for the off. My mother wrote to me saying that a lot of service personnel had been sent to an unknown destination. Well I said that is here because you could see them all walking around with their lily white knees showing. It was quite scary for about two weeks and then Iraq backed down.

Our apartment was in El Baz Buildings, Maalla, between Maala Straight and RAF

Khormaksar, right opposite the Petroleum Pier. I got a job on RAF Steamer Point in the typing Office, the firemen used to bring their reports in for me to type I did not stay there long as I got a job with the Aden Government Veterinary Department at Khomaksar which I enjoyed. The Arabs used to go up country and would come and ask us if we would like any bananas or coconuts etc. I have never tasted coconuts like it, just melted in your mouth, after eating them I cannot stand eating them here, they are stale. He would also bring a stork of bananas. One day when I arrived at the Office (we had drivers to take us to work and bring us home in Land Rovers) there was an envelope on my desk with “Norma” on it. I opened it and to my horror lots of live locusts fell out of it, I ran off screaming as I hate creepy crawlies.

We used to like to go down to Tawahi in an evening when the emigration ships were in harbour and we used to stand at the counters and listen to the traders and what price they would give an English person who was on their way to Australia and the banter with them saying this is so and so. This was so another day we could go and get it cheaper. In the end they got to recognise us and they would not us have us in their shops. This spoilt our entertainment as there was no

television! The other entertainment was the cinema which was open air and whilst sitting watching the film, you could see Arabs walking up the mountains with their torches. Thank goodness it didn’t rain whilst we were watching films; mind you we only had a small shower the whole two years we were there. I remember the first film we went to see was Psycho by Alfred Hitchcock and when the murder in the bathroom was taking place lots of you men were collapsing on the floor, and I guess there were a few females also, but I do not know as I kept my eyes shut, but my Husband told me.

The SS Canberra called at Aden on its maiden voyage to Australia in 1961 and broke down. The poor immigrants were stuck on that ship for three to four days before they managed to fix it; they had no electricity for air conditioning, nothing. We would see them down Maala sat on the side with their collar studs and braces on, just about collapsing in the heat. Yes it was hot, about 90 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit then with about 90% humidity, so different to the UK.

The heat had reduced me to 6 stones and I was that skinny I could not find clothes to fit me so I had to make my own clothes. If we were going out to the Shalama in Khormaksar of an evening I would set to and make myself a new dress in the afternoon. It was a posh place and the men had to wear dickie bows and cummerbunds to get in. An Arab used to call at the door with rolls of material for me to choose from. One day he arrived and I was speaking to him but he didn’t have what I wanted, Tom was behind me and the Arab started calling me names, he had made a big mistake as at that time Tom could speak good Arabic, Tom got hold of him, rolls of material and all and threw him



*Steamer Point Port*

down the stairs. I don't know why but he never returned!

Tom came home one day and put a large fish on the kitchen table, a barracuda, he had bought this off an Arab down on Elephant Bay. I asked him what had to be done with it, and he replied that it needed filleting and then skinning and cutting up and frying. I said well I will do the frying and you can do the rest. To be honest I am not a fish lover, but I have never tasted such lovely fish, it was very meaty, oh it was great.

At the Fire Section the firemen decided to build a bar, they made an excellent job of it and called it "The Exclusive Club" and apparently it was still standing until Aden acquired its independence which was in 1968. We had many a good evening there, one time when we went for an evening out at the club unbeknown to me Tom had consumed a bottle of rum and god knows what else. When we were leaving which was past midnight we went outside to call a taxi and when they stopped and reversed up to us, Tom would just look at his watch and say "have you got the time Johnny" This went on for a couple of hours and in the end one of the SOBER! Firemen came out and said to me "I'll call a taxi for you and if that fails we will take you home in a fire truck" Thank goodness we got a taxi. When we got into the flat Tom went into the bathroom and after so long I heard a loud bang! I ran to the bathroom and peeped through the keyhole and there he was laid flat on the floor with his feet crossed on the toilet seat. I did not go in I just went to the fridge and got a jug of freezing cold water, went back to the bathroom and threw it all over him. Needless to say he was not amused, but he did get up. We went to bed, by this time it would be about 3.30am and if I had to put him back to bed once I must have put him back five times, in the end I gave up and left him on the floor. In the morning when he got up all he could say "Why didn't you put me back to bed" Those were the days!

A further incident was when Tom had been out with the lads and was coming home in a taxi and he was taking off the comedian Freddie Frinton, if anyone remembers this comedian he used to play drunk and had a broken cigarette in his mouth, Tom was sat in the back of the taxi and said to the driver "Have you got a light Johnny" with that the driver turned round and the cigarette Tom had in his mouth (already lit)



*Father Christmas, arriving by Bedford Domestic: HOW ELSE!!*

went straight in the drivers ear! Needless to say he stopped and Tom had to walk the rest of the way home. His response to me was "Do you know the Arabs have no sense of humour"

Tom had purchased me a Vedette which was a big American type car which was made in France, and had a V8 engine. I had only passed my test just before I went to Aden, so you can imagine when I got in that car to set off all you could see was a cloud of dust, or should I say a sand storm. All the Arabs knew when I was going out. I was told that I had to go to the Police Station at Khomaksar and get my local driving licence; when I got there I was nearly arrested for driving without one. When I explained I did not know about needing one as I thought my British one was ok they told me to go up to Crater Pass and get my licence, from which they gave me my Aden and international driving licences. We eventually sold the car to another fireman, whose wife was heavily pregnant and whilst Tom was at work they asked if I would like to go along with them. So I did leaving our daughter with my Ayer, she was a nice Somali girl. Whilst going between the flats a little boy ran in front of the car and finished under the car, I was sat in the back and got out quickly, managed to get to the boy and said "Do not move him until we get an ambulance" and this man next to me said

"that's the trouble I am his father" I just about collapsed, I will never forget that, it was just like running over a boulder. As far as I knew the boy was fine after medical treatment.

The heat and humidity of Aden did not help with your health. At one point our daughter Julie had a lot of boils on her and I had to call the MO out. At the same time my husband Tom had pains in his stomach. The Medical Officer (MO) was coming to see her and I said to Tom "Let the MO have a check of you" to which he replied "I'm fine, if he comes in our bedroom I'll walk out the door" I knew he meant it

While at work the next day, I got a telephone call from a hospital specialist informing me that he had Tom on the operating table with a burst appendix. Oh my god I thought, fortunately enough he survived, as the survival rate was not good in that climate. I went to see him the day after the operation and they would not let me see him but told me to come back later in the day. When I returned I was told he had a collapsed lung and was quite ill. When Tom had got himself together, he told me that the specialist had said to him "You have to give up smoking" to which he replied "Can't you operate" MEN!

During the hot season I also had boils, about 35 in total. One time while dressmaking I had pricked my thumb with a pin and in

the centre of it the nerves had peaked through and it looked like an onion which was going off when they rise up in the middle, so I had to go to Sick Quarters where they had been treating me for all my boils and get a penicillin jab. They tried to deal with this thing on my thumb with a scalpel, which of course made me yell, so he said I will give you a jab now until it freezes a bit. I got the jab and the next thing I knew was when I woke up and they were wrapping my thumb up. I had those boils for at least six months and I still have the scars, at one point I thought I was growing another breast in between what I already had!

I remember that we went to an Open Day at Khomaksar and on our way walking down to the airfield we noticed that some Hunter aircraft were flying and diving from a height when all of a sudden there was a large plume of smoke and one had not been able to climb out and crashed, killing himself and others in the audience, it was not nice. A report states that they were in

the process of carrying out a flypast which would result in a sonic boom and the three aircraft were to pass the control tower at the same time at 250 feet. The pilot, Flying Officer Blackgrove of 8 Squadron was buried at Ma'alla cemetery.

It was at Khomaksar that we first saw the Vulcan Bomber that had just come into service, it arrived on time all in white with a black nose and we knew it as the Queen of the Arabian Skies. A Marvel to see, quite an experience! I have loved the Vulcan ever since.

When Tom was on 24 hour shifts I would take Julie to see Tom and take his Lunch for him on the local bus to Steamer Point. The Conductor was always chuffed to see Julie as they all love kids. The bus ran from Khormaksar to Steamer Point, and along the Maala Straight the Conductor would get the driver to stop near a shop, run out and bring back a big Ice Cream for Julie". Very kind I thought. The buses were like old coaches from this Country but only

had a Windscreen in them and no other windows - very air conditioned

During 1962 I became pregnant with our second child which was planned as we were to be home later that year, in time for Christmas. When I was six months in September they gave us our papers and dates for flying home early, was I glad to get out of there. Our Son Nicholas was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1963 during a Snow Storm also. Tom was posted to Scampton where the Vulcan's were based. When I got home my mother was shocked to see me so skinny a mere 6 stone and six months pregnant but after all the lovely fresh bread, pastries, roasts, sprouts etc which I could not get enough of. So a week before our son Nicky was born he weighed in at 9.Lbs 4ozs how was that for good home cooking?

*Norma Lilburn.*

***Part two Scampton and Germany will follow soon.***

## FROM THE ARCHIVES - MARK 6 DRIVER ASSESSMENTS

Has he done the 6 driving course at Catterick or St Athan?  
 Has he qualified on the tactical course at Catterick?  
 Has he learned to dodge trams in Blackpool?  
 Has he learned to frighten local drivers by having the feet of his crew on the dash in the right and left hand seats?  
 Has he been seen showing off to the local talent driving on the prom at Blackpool?  
 Is he able to stand the truck on its two back wheels when climbing Castle Hills at Catterick?  
 Has he qualified in frightening a camouflaged regiment Rock hiding in the long grass at Catterick?  
 Has he qualified in driving the truck too fast into the burning area and burning the paint off the front?

Would he know how to overcome a false neutral without breaking a leg?  
 Would he be able to toggle up without losing the count of 20 in each gear?  
 Would he know how to unscrew bits in the cab, including the steering wheel when getting bored on standby?  
 Would he be able to get off Station Parades by saying "sorry Sir, I'm a 6 driver"?  
 After becoming a Prima Dona 6 driver would he be able to avoid sulking if he had to drive a DP one day?  
 Could he live with himself if the other Mk6 or even the old Mk5 beat him to a crash?  
 Would he be able to produce foam through the monitor faster than any other 6 driver?  
 Would he be able to convince the WO that

someone else broke his precious truck?  
 Does he still ask others if they were 6 drivers and tell the glory stories to those that weren't?  
 If the answer to all those questions is yes, get him a push bike with stabilisers!!!!

The Blackpool trams are now segregated on the promenade but in the 1950/60s the trams used some of the streets as well. The tracks were in the middle of the road and passengers had to cross the line of traffic to alight making it difficult to overtake on the inside, especially in a Mk6!!

Note; the trams had the right of way and would always take it!

*John Goupillot*





# Ron Browns First Years

I joined the RAF on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1955 at Reading recruiting office, from there to Cardington for kitting out and swearing in etc. We were there for about a week or so then caught a troop train from a station just off the camp to Meols station on the Wirral to start our square bashing at RAF West Kirby. Eight weeks later after a week's leave I went to RAF Sutton on Hull for my fire course which was 247 the Corporal being 'Rocky Rich' a well know character to our older members. It was not pleasant to do pump drills etc when you had to use a crash axe to break the ice on the static water tanks before you could do hose drill, it was there that I learned that if you urinate on your hands in freezing weather it does warm them up, just remember to wash them before eating

On completion of fire training I was lucky enough to go to RAF Weeton near Blackpool for the driving course, we started off on Landrovers at first on the Inskip airfield before being allowed on the open road, I passed the driving test in an Austin Gas Truck then did a week's familiarisation driving on the newest fire truck in the RAF at the time, the Mk5.

It was then time for our postings, and when my name was called I was told that I was going to Singapore, off to RAF Innsworth for my tropical kit then two weeks embarkation leave, after that it was off to Liverpool to embark on the Troopship 'Empire Clyde'

We set sail in late June 1956 for our cruise? Down through the Bay of Biscay through Gibraltar Straits and into the Mediterranean, our first port of call was Malta where we stopped for about 12 hours to disembark the men who would be stationed there, unfortunately I didn't get ashore as I was working, yes we all had jobs on board, mine was in the galley washing tins. From Malta we sailed to

Port Said in Egypt where once again all troops for the area disembarked, we then went through the Suez Canal, incidentally we were the last troop ship to go through the canal before the Egyptians started sinking ships prior to the war there. Our next port of call was Steamer Point in Aden, where I did manage to get ashore but what a grotty place to spend a tour.

From Aden it was across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon or Sri Lanka as it is known now, we were allowed ashore in Colombo which compared to Aden was like a paradise, that was our last stop before Singapore where we arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup> August. On arrival there was a mail call, there were two letters from my girlfriend the first professed undying love and the second a week later was a 'Dear John' saying she couldn't wait 2½ years for me. Before disembarking we were told where we were going and my posting was to RAF Tengah, I didn't know it then but I was lucky as Tengah was an operational station, Changi being Transport and Seletar was Maintenance. On arrival at Tengah the lads said anyone who gets a 'Dear John' puts it up on the notice board so I got mine out and pinned it up, it's not a record I am proud of but I doubt if it will ever be equalled let alone beaten. The fire vehicles we had when I first arrived were Mk5, 1945 Monitor, Austin Gas Truck, OYC Bedford Water Bowser and a Heavy and Light Trailer Pumps. The Boss was a Flt Sgt E.W. (Ernie) Stranix in November 1958 he was replaced by Gentleman Ron Shearn.

RAF Tengah was a very busy station with 60 Sqn RAF Venom FB1 Fighters and 14Sqn RNZAF Venoms, No 1Sqn RAF Lincoln Bombers and a few months later we also had 81Sqn Meteors come over from Seletar and 45Sqn RAF reformed with



A Lincoln Bomber (Photo courtesy of Tangmere Aviation Museum)

Canberra B2. The two Venom squadrons and the Lincolns made regular strikes up country against the Communist guerrillas the Lincolns would take off through the night with full bomb loads of 12 x 1000lb bombs on board; I think they were blamed for a lot of the children born there! I was lucky enough to scrounge a flight on a Lincoln on a daylight bombing raid; it was most impressive to see the shock wave rippling through the forest. It was a bit scary to sit out in the crash bays and watch a flight of Venoms take off with a 500lb bomb under each wing.

There were quite a lot of incidents while I was there ranging from nose wheel collapse to the worst which was on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1957 when a venom of 60Sqn was taking off when he suddenly banked over at about 200ft and crashed into a married quarter killing the pilot, two service wives and a small baby and an Amah (maid) was injured. On the evening of April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1957 my mate Alan Ledson was driving the ATC Landrover on flarepath duties when he was instructed to lay glim lamps to indicate the turn off point for 60Sqn pilots who couldn't see the intersection clearly, as Alan plus the duty electrician J/T Pete Arudel was carrying out this duty a Venom taking off hit the Landrover killing them instantly. There are photos on the association website of their funerals. The last big crash in my time was in November 1958 when a Canberra of 45Sqn had engine failure on takeoff and crashed into the swamp off the North end of the runway killing the pilot and navigator, the observer survived. One other incident of note was when a Kiwi Venom pilot was so busy watching his squadron Basha hut on fire that he landed with his wheels up, he ended almost level with the crash bays but after seeing a few flames licking round him the



HMT Empire Clyde: Photo courtesy of British Armed Forces and National Service Website.

# My Experience with Mickey Finn!

pilot was out and running, by the time we got there no more than a couple of minutes he was out of site in the squadron. One other event which was momentous was when I met my future wife in November 1957 her father was a Flt Sgt on 60Sqn, we both left Singapore on the same day, we got married on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1960 and celebrated our 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1959 I boarded the troopship 'Nevasa' for the journey home I was hoping the Canal would still be closed then we would go via South Africa but unfortunately it was reopened about six months before we were due home. I



*HMT Nevasa: Photo courtesy of British Armed Forces and National Service Website.*

felt more homesick at leaving Singapore than I did on leaving the UK I was still not 21, what a place to spend your teenage years. The Journey back took three weeks via Ceylon, Port of Suez, Gibraltar and finally Southampton where we docked on a freezing cold February morning. After this I never want to go on a cruise and I don't care if it's a luxury liner. Before leaving we were given our postings, mine was to RAF Bovingdon near Hemel Hempstead. After my two weeks disembarkation leave I reported to W.O. Dan Dare of anti regiment fame I must admit that I agreed with him on that score. The flying at Bovingdon was done by the RAF Metropolitan Communications Squadron and the USAF flying the Dakota I was at Bovingdon for eight months then went to our parent unit at Stanmore Park for demob, a chap named John Connolly was on the same basic course with me had been at Bovingdon the whole joined me. So that was the end of my time in the RAF but two years later in January 1962 I re-enlisted, but that's another story.

*Interesting story Ron looking forward to some more.*

If you go on the following website there are also pictures and a page dedicated to Alan <http://www.roll-of-honour.org.uk/1/html/ledson-alan.htm>

After leaving the RAF on the 12th July 1963 (golden bowlered) I changed my uniform that weekend and became an Air Ministry Fireman at No5 MU RAF Kemble which was an all civilian station, the only uniforms were the Station Commander, SATCO, and the Test Pilot, the MOD Police and the Firemen.

At 16.30 the airfield shut down for the night apart from the "MOD Plods" and the duty MT Driver.

On notification that a "Mickey Finn" was about to happen, the Mk5A and the DP1 was placed on standby to go to the then RAF Filton (Bristol), extra drums of foam compound were put nearby, these to be loaded onto the trucks before leaving for Filton.

Now, with me just coming out of the RAF and used to getting up at all hours of the night I was the first choice to be placed on standby even when at home.

On the receipt of a call at night, the call went first to the "MOD Plods" who then rang the MT Section for the Duty Driver to round up those who were on standby in a PCV, P.D.Q. when he got to my house he would shout through the letter box "Mickey Finn back in five" so saying TaTa to my Missus, grab a bag then out of the door into the PCV to Kemble, it was then a mad rush to load the drums onto the trucks. The F658's were already signed so it was off to Filton.

Driving at speeds on the open roads in them days at night was not funny, the lights on the Mk5A were C\*\*P, the lights on the DP1 were not much better, a few grass verges were negotiated on the way, but we still had to be there before the Vulcan's arrived because the Fire Section at RAF

Filton was only a Domestic Section which had a Landrover and a Dennis Wrt.

On our arrival we were placed on a Readiness Pan at the end of the runway awaiting the arrival of the Vulcan's, after landing they were marshalled into position for a scramble take off, when the engines were shut down us, the Fire Crew were stood down and shown a hut we could use. Inside were a few camp beds where we could get our heads down, later we were shown the mess, our meals consisted of Cornflakes and powdered milk (breakfast) 2 sandwiches of Spam or Corned Beef and apple or orange (lunch) and for Tea again 2 sandwiches of Spam or cheese and 2 packets of biscuits there was no supper as the mess closed at 16.30, on the good side copious supply of crash bay tea.

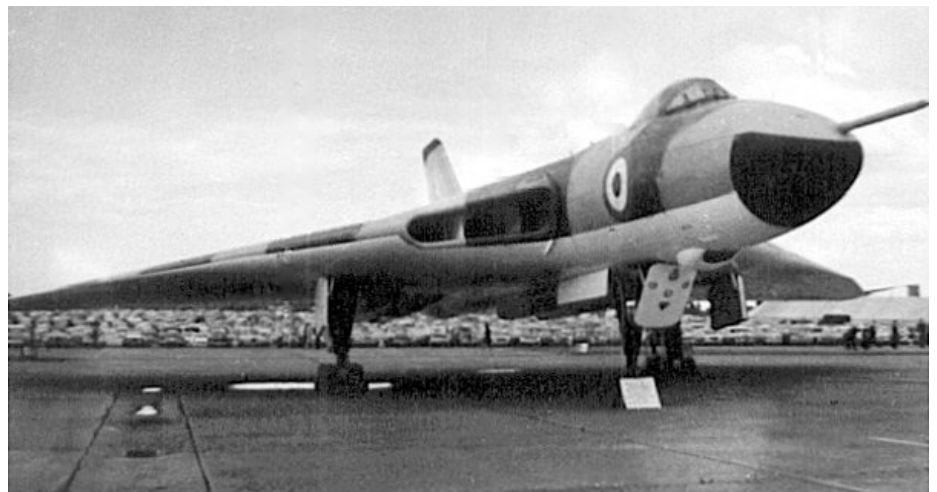
On the sounding of the alert bell it was a mad dash to the trucks on the flight line which consisted of an ACRT, Mk5, Mk5A and a DP1, the Mk5 and the ACRT came from RAF Gaydon, they arrive just after us. We normally had three alerts day or night. On the forth alert all the engines were started, the starter equipment was unclipped and pulled away, the signal for "Chocks away" was given and we knew this was a "Scramble" so with 12 engines screaming the three Vulcan's sped down the runway and they was gone "SILENCE"

So with the three day detachment over it was back to our stations, the drums of compound I left with the Filton lads, I told them it was good stuff for the garden

As Steve Davey 670 stated in the last edition of Flashpoint.

## DUTY DONE

*Mike Chapman 704*



*Vulcan in the 1960's at Filton (Photo attributed to Andy Webb)*

# Mk 6 RESTORATION PROJECT

Good news for Association members who are fans of the Alvis Pyrene Mk6.

23 AG 70 (pictured, with wrong registration mark) which was donated by the Association to the Museum of RAF Firefighting is to undergo a total restoration curtesy of associate member Tim Webster and his small team, Chris Parker and Dave Lee.

Tim has been restoring military vehicles of all types since 1966, all up to show winning standard. Chris has built and restored scale models and full sized steam engine and Landrovers; he was a garage owner and vehicle technician. Dave is an agricultural engineer and HGV Fitter

The team are also volunteers of the museum as well and have undertaken other restoration projects for the museum over a number of years in Tim's workshop in Market Harborough.

Tim said "it is planned to move the Mk6 to our workshops in Market Harborough, a complete strip down is the order of the day, continuous assessment and photographic records are to be kept. Once in component form, refurbishment and fabrication, renewal can begin and the timescale for this is two years. The end result will be a pristine 6 that will be accurate and complete and capable of winning Awards" Why the Mk6? "The Mk6 is an iconic vehicle that changed fire fighting thinking and it would have been some time before any work would have been carried out at the museum with so many projects going on and to have two restored M6's running side by side is an exciting prospect."



*The Team Left to Right Tim Webster Chris Parker and Dave Lee*

Just to add that Tim is funding the project himself, which is a great gesture?

Although we know the history of the vehicle movements between stations it would be good if any member has a photograph of it in service. I am in contact with Tim and you can send any photographs or information via me.

Mk6 23 AG 70 served in Coastal Command at St Eval, St Mawgan, and Kinloss from 1958 until 1967 before going to Driffield for refurbishment. It then went on to Strike Command stations which are unknown



until September 1971 then to St Athan in January 1972 until July 1973 when it returned to Leconfield for more servicing. From April 1972 until May 1976 it spent time back at St Athan and Hilton then went to War Reserve.

This is obviously the second restoration as the first was carried out by the 'Crash Team' of the association and Dave Hughes carried out a great deal of work on it.

The image shows it with a 5,000 g.p.m monitor fitted

Thanks to everyone's efforts of the past and future it is good to know that another Mk6 will be preserved for the future.

*Steve Harrison*



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## FRANK CASSIDY

From: Paul Ferguson



I have the sad news that former Royal Air Force Warrant Officer Frank Cassidy RAF Ret'd passed away this morning 8th March 16.

Frank had been battling with a long term illness and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Our condolences go out to his family at this time.

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## PAUL STUART

From: Gordon Ayles

It is with great regret that I announce the passing of Paul Stuart on Wednesday 18 May after a short illness. Paul started his fire service career at Biggin Hill in 1975. He served at AFCENT early eighties as well as Odiham and Wyton. Latterly he lived in Raunds near Kettering.

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## BRIAN SMITH

From: Nicola Bevin (Nee Smith)

Sadly Brian (Dad) passed away on the 4th July suddenly following a long illness. Brian loved being an RAF Fire-fighter; he was a real people person and was happy to be a guiding hand to junior ranks. He was a true professional but also had a great sense of fun; he would always share Christmas day with any singlies on his crew who couldn't get home for the holidays.

Brian served in the RAF for 22 years at the following postings (apart from the ones I can't remember) Manby, Scampton, Machrihanish, Cranwell, Coningsby, Gutersloh, North Luffenham,

Bishops Court, Northolt, Falkland Islands, Benson



## And in the Morning We Shall Remember Them

I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.

I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.

I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways.

Of happy times and laughing times and bright sunny days.

I'd like the tears of those who grieve, to dry before the sun

Of happy memories that I leave when life is done

Unknown author

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## BERNARD "WALLY" WALTERS

From: Brian Ford

Sadly I have to report the death of my good friend Bernard "Wally" Walters.

Wally Served at RAF Wyton from 1949 until 1955. He was involved in the Berlin air lift and was immensely proud of his time served as a Cpl "Aerodrome Fireman Driver".

God Bless you Wally and thanks for the Fun

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## RALPH GIBBONS

SEPTEMBER 2016

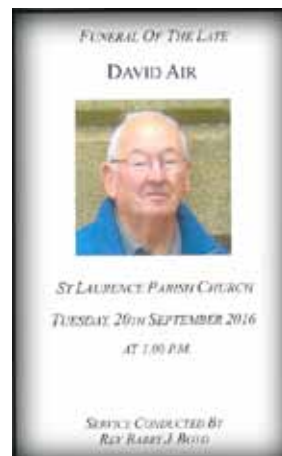
From: Mike Harris

Just heard the sad news that retired WO Ralph "Paddy" Gibbons passed away

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## DAVID AIR

From: Tom McCrorie



Sadly I have to say that on Sunday the 10th September my best pal David Air passed away after a long illness. Davey was 77 years old. He was a well liked and highly respected member of our trade having between 1960 and 1985 had a long and distinguished service. Davey was stationed at: Catterick, Middleton St George, Edinburgh Field (Australia), Kinloss, Gan, Catterick (Instructor) Cyprus, Kinloss, Catterick (Instructor) Kinloss, Catterick (Trade training)

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## ROBERT LOWE

From: Simon Lee

Sorry to have to report that WO retired Bob Lowe BEM has passed away on the 21st Sep 2016 after an illness.

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## CHARLES "JACK" MORRELL

SEPTEMBER 2016

From: Ron Brown

Just heard the sad news that Retired WO Jack Morrell MBE & BEM passed away yesterday

Jack was something of a legend of the RAF Fire Service; he enlisted in 1941 and after training at Sutton on Hull was stationed at: HQ 13 Group Newcastle, Scapa Flow, Malta, Gulf States, North Coates, Cardington, Halton, Buckeburg (Germany), Lichfield, Wunsdorf (Germany), Finningley, Catterick, Gibraltar, Locking Trade Standards (Based at Catterick but detached to Cyprus, Gulf States, Gan & Singapore) Gutersloh (Germany)

**STEVEN DORAN**

From: Neil Slade



Sadly, Membership Number 41, Steven Doran passed away this month. Steven Doran enlisted in 1946 and after training at Sutton-on-Hull was stationed at RAF Silverstone, Linton-on-Ouse and various Units in Austria and Germany during which time he was involved in the Berlin Air Lift.



# Steve Doran's Book: The Dairy of a RAF Fireman 1946-1949

*I mention Steve's book in my editorial and below is his introduction.*

**M**y book covers my three short and mostly enjoyable years in the RAF Fire Service from 1946 to 1949. I have kept the story as light hearted as possible because that is how I mainly remember my service.

Although times just after WW2 were still difficult and there was resentment by some that they had to serve for a short time in the services, most made the best of what they had and got on with it.

Some of my time was spent with Airmen still waiting for their number to come up after their wartime service, and it was from these that I very quickly learnt the way of the world.

And it was from these men that I learned the way of a Fireman's life, in a way I feel sorry for those who went in to mundane trades like Fitters, Armourers, Clerks etc, they went to work at 8 AM, attended a work parade, finished work at 5-30 and then wondered what to do for the rest of the day. Whereas the Fire Section when flying was finished made their own fun as you will read in the book.

To the non service reader it may seem that everything was a hit or miss affair, but when there was a call for action you can guarantee that a fireman would be in the lead, whether it was a serious affair or funny, and to quote another member, if there was anyone stuck in the toilet, it was sure to be a Fireman.

Very few received medals or credit for rescuing a Pilot, but when a joke was played on anyone, for some reason the Fire Section was on top of the list, I should imagine it is pretty well the same today 54 years on.

However we were envied by most people because all the Fire Sections were situated on or close to the edge of the airfield and this kept us away from the common herd, this was to our advantage as when we were carrying out our experiments there were few prying eyes.

I have translated all conversations from RAF English to Queen's English just in case anyone of a sensitive nature just happens to read it, so it is suitable for all ages.

There is a possibility that I might give the wrong impression about the general couldn't care less attitude among most servicemen at the time, but any Fireman when called upon to do his bit would do so without a second thought.

During the research for this book I tried to find out how many Firemen gave their lives in performing their duty during WW2 but sadly it seems the matter was not important enough for anyone to keep a record of.

I hope the reader gets a laugh from my reminiscences as much as I have putting them to paper.

*This is a taster and I hope that members who have not read it will make an effort to do so.*

*Steve Harrison*

# Fire Fighting Proficiency Shield

A nice little piece of RAF Fire Service history came to the museum in further donations from the Association via David Hughes and that was a Fire Fighting Proficiency Shield which was first awarded to RAF Cranwell in 1954, there are some 17 winner's badges on the shield, the last one presented in 1972 to RAF Cranwell! Seeing RAF Strubby on the shield I remembered that I had seen a reference to it somewhere, low and behold Bob Ewing had posted an image of a newspaper clipping announcing the win on the Association website.

Strubby went on to represent the RAF at the Royal Tournament and carry out a display with an ACRT, Mk6, Mk7 and DP

At some stage however the title of the Shield changed from FIRE FIGHTING PROFICENCY SHIELD to RAF FIRE SERVICES EFFICIENCY COMPETION. It says on the clipping that "Marks were awarded for efficiency in aircraft fire fighting and domestic fire fighting and for the professional knowledge of each fireman on the crash crews" The shield title mount at the bottom reads FIRE FIGHTING PROFICENCY SHIELD but on the reverse of the shield the new title mount is pinned on.

**STRUBBY R.A.F.  
FIRST IN  
COMPETITION**

**T**HE Fire Flight at R.A.F. Strubby are the Flying Training Command fire services efficiency champions for 1967. Neighbours R.A.F. Manby took third place in the same competition.

The competition, in which 17 stations participate, took place during September and November, and is judged on all aspects of fire fighting.

Marks were awarded for efficiency in aircraft and domestic fire fighting, and for the professional knowledge of each fireman in the crash crews.

Two fire officers visited Strubby and Manby on 4th October to set and judge the aircraft crash and domestic fire exercises.

Over the past three years, Strubby have improved their position from 11th to fifth to first.

The Fire Flight at Strubby provides a rescue and fire protection service for all aircraft operating from the station. This is a total of 17 firemen in the flight, some of them young airmen straight from basic training.

The N.C.O. is Flt. Sgt. C. Thompson, with Sgt. E. Firmager and Sgt. M. R. Lovett in charge of the two crews. F. Officer A. D. W. Grove, an air traffic control officer, is in charge of the flight.



RAF Strubby Fire Fighters 1967 Winners

Was the competition format different before the change? I wonder if any of our members know. I suspect it may just have been pump drills and I know you had to hit targets with a water jet. But it would be interesting to find out, so does anyone still have an itinerary of events, as we intend to do a display with an explanation of the history of this competition.

All the stations on this shield were in Training Command; were there competitions in the other commands and I wonder if any others have survived. They may have ended up in small museums or are still in private ownership. It would be great if anyone has any information.

The full list of the winners are 1954 Cranwell, 1955 Hullavington, 1956 Valley, 1957 Valley, 1958 Valley joint with Cranwell, 1959 No winner, 1960 Thorney Island, 1961 Oakington, 1962 Valley, 1963

South Cerney, 1964 Topcliffe, 1965 Little Rissington, 1966 Syerston, 1967 Strubby, 1968 No winner, 1969 Cranwell, 1970 Strubby, 1971 Topcliffe, 1972 Cranwell.



The restored shield, later the centre will hopefully be re-chromed

It would be good if any of our members was at any of the stations at the time and have any photographic record, which I would like a copy of if possible, for the display in the museum.

On a personal note I left Strubby in May 1967 and Ted Firmager was my Crew Chief, Bob Ewing arrived in November and our President Dennis McCann took over from Flt Sgt Thompson.

If anyone has more information or images my contact details are on the contacts page, I would be grateful for any response, thanks. Also thanks to Bob for his co-operation and messages

Steve Harrison 625



This Image shows Strubby Fire Section Personnel awaiting the A.O.C. who visited the Section to congratulate them on winning the Shield.



*Thanks to Que Eaton whose photograph shows fire recruits at RAF Sutton-On-Hull receiving instruction on a Fordson Gas Truck as opposed to the Austin K6 version*



**A GREAT DAY OUT**  
*Association members and museum volunteers had a great day together sandbags unloaded by the lorry load!!!*